

Editorship, Canonicity and Nostalgia
in Wang Duanshu's *Collection of Elegance* (1667)

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Abstract

This thesis explores a textual analysis of ‘Collection of Elegance’, a sub-collection of Wang Duanshu’s edited collection, *Classical Poetry of Notable Women* (1667), in order to reveal the gender power relations at the heart of the editing and publishing industry of the Chinese late-Ming and early-Qing elite life. This thesis falls into two thematic parts: the first, consisting of two chapters, asserts the significance of Wang Duanshu and particularly her editorial work as a subject of study. The second section, consisting of a further three chapters, offers a detailed insight into Wang’s editorial strategies and objectives focusing on the following three themes:

1. Wang Duanshu uses established male discourse of music critique to claim a role for women in the male elite cultural conversation of song-writing;
2. Wang Duanshu uses established male discourse of cultural ideal of late-Ming courtesans and their culture as expressions of imperial nostalgia and Chinese-ness;
3. through her ‘reproductive authorial role’ as an editor, Wang Duanshu elevates gentlewomen’s song and seeks intellectual recognition for its technical artistry.

In the late-Ming era, it was a privilege to be an author and critic of the song genre *qu*; a position accessible almost exclusively by the male cultural elite. Wang Duanshu challenged the conceptualization of authorship by bringing a critical lens to the gendering of authorial roles. This thesis seeks to understand the articulation of authorship as a contested notion in late-Ming print culture. Wang Duanshu’s dual role as curator of the texts and textual commentator is explored: Wang Duanshu’s role is not only editorial, but also authorial. Her reproductive authorship through the material presentation of works also re-introduces texts as part of the ongoing discourses of gender identities and women’s voices.

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Introduction

This thesis examines the editorial work of Wang Duanshu 王端淑 (1621–c.1701) and argues that her published anthology, *Ming yuan shiwei* 名媛詩緯 (*Classical Poetry of Notable Women* 1667), and particularly the sub-section *Ya ji* 雅集 ‘Collection of Elegance’ offers fresh insights into the relations of gender power present within the cultural production of the late-Ming era.¹ Wang Duanshu was a seventeenth-century Chinese professional writer and editor who gained a public career. A gentlewoman with exceptional talents, Wang achieved literary fame and recognition in the public world through her own achievements. She was an excellent painter; her paintings are still curated in the Palace Museum, Beijing – the former Imperial Palace of the Ming-Qing dynasties – and a few of them have also been listed in prestigious auctions, such as Christie’s.² Wang was active in editing and publishing during the early Qing (1644–1681). She edited the anthologies *Classical Poetry of Notable Women* (extant), *Ming yuan wenwei* 名媛文緯 (*Classics of Prose of Notable Women*, lost), *Lidai diwang houfei kao* 歷代帝王后妃考 (*Researches on Imperial Kings, Princes and Consorts*, lost) and *Shi yu* 史愚 (*Historical Stupidity*, lost); and also published her personal literary collections of *Yin hong ji* 吟紅集 (*Red Chantings* c.1651, extant), *Wu cai* 無才 (*Writings Without Talents*, lost), *Heng xin* 恆心 (*Writings of a Constant Heart*, lost), *Yi lou* 宜樓 (*Writings of Yi Tower*, lost) and *Liu qie* 留篋 (*Works left in a Writing Chest*, lost).³

Wang spent her childhood and education in the unique historical period of the late Ming era (1573–1644), its rich cultural soil and environment prepared Wang Duanshu for her later

¹ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, ed., *Ming yuan shi wei chu bian* 名媛詩緯初編 (*Classical Poetry of Notable Women*) Qing yin tang 清音堂 (Clear Sound Hall) 1667; hereafter referred to as *Notable Women* in the text, *MYSWCB* in the reference.

² Wang Duanshu’s landscape painting (6 leaves) is recorded in the online catalogue of the Palace Museum, http://en.dpm.org.cn/www_oldweb/English/E/E9/13-01.htm (last accessed 23, Sep. 2019); for the auctions of her paintings overseas, see Ellen Widmer, ‘Selected Short Works by Wang Duanshu,’ in *Under Confucian Eyes: Writings on Gender in Chinese History*, ed. Susan Mann and Yu-Yin Chen (Berkeley, 2001), 178-194, at 181.

³ Hu Wenkai 胡文楷 ed. *Li dai fu nü zhu zuo kao* 歷代婦女著作考 (*Textual Research on Women’s Writing of Past Dynasties*), ‘王端淑’ Wang Duanshu, [hereafter: LFZK], (Shanghai, 1957), 248.

achievements as a professional writer in the early Qing. This period not only created new expectations of feminine identity which led to the burgeoning of literacy among gentlewomen, but also witnessed the emergence of women, from both respectable and debased backgrounds as writers, editors and anthologists in the printing trade from the end of the sixteenth century onwards. The dynastic transition from Ming to Qing (1644–1661) was a traumatic and chaotic process intertwined with loyalist movements, resistance activities and the shattering of Chinese customs and norms (see Chapter 4). While the preservation of Ming culture was important, a late-Ming cultural legacy – with its liberal thought, literary practice and artistic fashion – found continuity in early Qing. Among these cultural legacies, ‘interest in women’s writing remained strong’.⁴ It is in this period of transition that Wang Duanshu’s editing of Ming women’s writing came into fruition. The transition from late Ming to early Qing also witnessed the decline of courtesan culture from its fashionable pinnacle to gradual vulgarization, while the ‘educated upper-class women appropriated’ literacy and cultural accomplishments ‘which had once been an integral part of courtesan culture’.⁵ The history of women’s culture from the late Ming to early Qing also provides a viewpoint for contemporary social, ideological and political change.

Studies focusing on Wang Duanshu have been conducted mostly by literary historians. Works by Ellen Widmer and Wai-Yee Li both examines Wang’s publishing and writing from her loyalist stance;⁶ Kang-I Sun-Chang focuses on Wang’s editorial objectives of *Notable Women* as an attempt of ‘canonisation’ of both women’s writing and Wang’s writing.⁷ Daria Berg points out Wang’s tone of editorial voice as an emulation of Confucian canon *Analects*,

⁴ Wai-Yee Li, ‘Early Qing to 1723’, in *Cambridge Literary History of China*, eds. Stephen Owen and Kang-I Sun Chang (Cambridge, 2010), 152–244, at 162.

⁵ Harriet Zurndorfer, ‘Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Confucian Moral Universe of Late Ming China (1550–1644)’, *International Review of Social History*, 56/19 (2011), 197–216, at 215.

⁶ Ellen Widmer, ‘Ming Loyalism and the Women’s Voice in Fiction’, in *Women Writers in Late Imperial China*, eds. Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang (Stanford, 1997), 368–379, and 392; ‘Retrieving the Past: Women Editors and Women’s Poetry, 1636–1941’, in *The Inner Quarters and Beyond: Women Writers from Ming through Qing*, eds. Grace Fong and Ellen Widmer (Leiden, 2010), 84–87 and 92–93. Wai-Yee Li, *Women and National Trauma in Late Imperial Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, Mass., 2014).

⁷ Kang-I Sun Chang, ‘Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women’s Poetry and Their Selection Strategies’, in *Women Writers in Late Imperial China*, eds. Widmer and Chang, 157–159.

while suggests Wang Duanshu's status as a 'professional editor', whose financial gain from her *Notable Women* publishing might be successful enough for her to turn down the post at the Qing Court.⁸ Berg's view offers a new interpretation on this historical incident of Wang Duanshu that marked her loyalist stance, and inspires this thesis to further look at Wang's editorial purpose as an 'enterprise' (Chapter 1).

Dorothy Ko's pioneering study on the seventeenth-century Chinese professional women writers, which highlights discussion on Wang Duanshu and her literary-social acquaintance Huang Yuanjie 黄媛介 (Chapter 1), affirms their prolific careers negotiated boundaries between 'private/public', 'inner/outer', 'male/female'.⁹ These gender negotiations and challenges to the norms achieved by these 'career women', however, as Ko terms, were 'temporary transgressions', and 'served to perpetuate the prevailing official gender ideology'.¹⁰ Research by Grace Fong on Wang Duanshu's editorial strategy of *Notable Women* suggests an 'all-embracing' tactic in its selection, in conjunction with the consideration of the author's talent and virtue.¹¹ These existing body of work on Wang Duanshu contributes to the knowledge of Wang's life, writings, and editing to a great extent, in which this thesis takes up several established views and examine further in the context of song tradition of *qu*.

These scholars, however, have tended to discuss Wang's editorial approaches under the rubric of late imperial Chinese female literary culture, anthologizing and editing practice, and has focused on women's agency as the reader, writer and editor in preserving women's writing, promoting female subjectivities and a feminine tradition of writing. In contrast, this thesis devotes sole attention on Wang Duanshu, and is a focused study on her edited work and editorial concerns. Further, unlike previous research that focuses on the orthodox genre of *shi*

⁸ Daria Berg, *Women and the Literary World in Early Modern China, 1580–1700* (London, 2013), 186–189.

⁹ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford, 1994), 129–137.

¹⁰ Ibid, 140.

¹¹ Grace Fong, *Herself an Author: Gender, Agency, and Writing in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu, 2008), 138–142.

詩 (poetry) for the most part, this thesis combines with the focus on the Chinese classical song tradition of *qu*, seeks an innovative understanding of Wang Duanshu's editing of *Notable Women*. Moreover, many lyrics translated by thesis author are translated for the first time in English, where no other translations appear to be available in the existing scholarships. The original translation of lyrics by thesis author will be identified in the references.

This thesis looks beyond the values of the female-edited women's literary anthology as a preservation of women's writing and a feminine tradition of writing, to focus on the meaning-making during the editorial process. It focus on Wang Duanshu's *Notable Women* and its subsection *Ya ji* 雅集 ('Collection of Elegance') as the main subject for this thesis, concerns the 'conjunction of sociocultural-economic-political forces, individual choices, and market appeal of connoisseurship of latest fashions, [and how] together [they] increasingly shaped the literary taste', and Wang's editorial strategy in publication.¹² *Qu* was a genre in vogue among the late-Ming and early-Qing elites. Despite its root in music entertainment as sung-verse and its elite but not orthodox and informal nature, the field of *qu* was male-dominant and socially exclusive by and large. Wang Duanshu's 'Collection of Elegance'— as the only known female-edited song collection at her time, offers new insights into how female writers and editor negotiate their power in this field, as part and parcel of challenging/affirming gender roles.

This thesis considers how the meaning of the texts is intricately bound to its physical format and seeks to understand how the editor (or author) instructs the readers *how to* read and how to 'think about the use of the text'.¹³ This approach allows for looking at a poetry anthology – the type of printed text not associated with a performance tradition and is more serious in tone – as an object in which its value does not merely lie in the literary artistry of

¹² Katherine Carlitz, 'The Social Uses of Female Virtue in Late Ming Editions of *Lienü Zhuan*', *Late Imperial China*, 12/1 (1991), 117–148, at 141.

¹³ Cynthia J. Brokaw, 'Reading the Best-Sellers of the Nineteenth Century: Commercial Publishing in Sibao', in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, eds. Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley, 2005), 184–231 at 219.

the curated texts. The physical, symbolical formatting of the texts creates new meanings for readers. This perspective offers a new understanding of female-edited anthologies of women's work, not only as an imprint that collectively reflects women's literary accomplishments but posits the edited collection between a tradition of feminine writing and a product of cultural fashion.

This thesis considers the existing research on late imperial Chinese female editor's anthologizing practice but, where current scholarship tends to focus on women's agency and subjectivity in the various roles of reader, author and editor, this thesis finds that this approach too often leads to a static interpretation that serves as a 'preservation of women writing and feminine tradition of writing'. There is still value and new insight to be found by re-engaging with these texts more dynamically to look beyond the values of female anthologized women's poetry collections to focus on how new meanings are generated through textual materialism, organization and paratextual commentaries.

The central focus for investigation in this thesis is *Ya ji* 雅集 'Collection of Elegance', a sub-collection at chapters 37 and 38 of the *Notable Women* anthology. This thesis argues this sub-collection is a cultural artefact of late-Ming gender dynamics and culture; a microcosm which conveys a glimpse into the contemporary music traditions and fashions. It is a textual performance space, transforming the songs from on-stage to on-page. The nature of the genre of the texts in this collection as sung/performance literature offers the convenience of adjusting the methodological approach into the application. This thesis views music texts as objects, cultural artefacts and commodified products readily available for consumption and 'connoisseuristic gestures of appreciation' (*wan wei* 玩味).¹⁴ This facet is particularly clear in songs produced in courtesans' gift-economy, for the reading of courtesans' songs evokes the sounding performance and sensation of viewing. Late-Ming independent arias, which were an elite but not orthodox genre, were a medium in which artistically conceived 'performance self' and externalized public persona could be exhibited and embedded in lyrical articulations

¹⁴ He Yuming, *Home and the World: Editing the "Glorious Ming" in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013), 13.

of songs. When the lyrics render themselves as silent texts on the page and a commodified book (as seen in courtesans' songs that were curated and published in the sensual 'Green Bower/brothel' themed book and encourages a sense of ownership and vicariousness), the printed pages also become a material space of self-fashioning.

The nature of the multiple genres of the texts in the *Notable Women* anthology, and the ways in which Wang approached them, facilitates and, indeed, requires a flexible methodological approach. This thesis views music-making and editing as an action, activity and social performance. The lyrical texts were composed to be performed with music and approaches them as music repertoire rather than merely literary pieces. Music performance is, as Small argues, 'not a one-way system of communication'; instead, it happens in a relationship – between person and person, individual and society.¹⁵ It is in these relationships that the meaning of the action of music creation lies. This interactive music performance also covers all participation besides the obvious contributions of composer and performer. The interpretation of music-making, through the conceptual idea of 'musicking' to look at how the participation in the process of making music (into a printed edition), functions as a social and even a political act. Therefore, this thesis focuses on the individualized or personalized 'musicking' not only how the author-performer delivers the songs but also how the editor engages with the music texts, and how these series of actions may refer to 'a set of aesthetic, social, or even political beliefs'.¹⁶

To understand this series of actions of musicking, editing or reading – new meanings created from this process that happen in specific historical moments – this thesis places the development of song-writing, editing and commentary from stage to page in a larger holistic historical context and in late Ming and early Qing print culture. Thus, this thesis engages with primary source materials from the late Ming and early Qing. This contextualist reading helps to decode the meaning of the texts, and other marginal texts that are collectively named as

¹⁵ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meaning of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, 1998), 6 and 13.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

paratexts – prefatory materials, editorial commentaries and biographical accounts – which functioned as ‘protocols for reading’ and ‘thresholds of interpretation’.¹⁷ It ‘was not until the late Ming that publishers, editors, and authors fully explored’ the potential for ‘the development of multivocality’ with paratexts.¹⁸ It is through these textual marginalia as the conveyers of messages that this thesis interprets the multi-faceted voice of the editor and the newly generated meanings of the musical texts.

This thesis positions Wang Duanshu not only as an editor but as a critic-writer who exerts a mode of curatorial practice defined as ‘reproductive authorship’. Drawing from Sieber’s observation that edited works are not presented as the author’s exclusive creation, the editor’s voice is expressed through the creation of elaborately conceived paratexts, commentary, order and pairing, woven ‘into the detailed materiality of particular editions’.¹⁹ Therefore, this thesis explores *Notable Women*, and in particular the ‘Collection of Elegance’, as collaborations with the focus of the analysis being on Wang Duanshu’s creative organization and paratextual commentary. This thesis looks beyond the songs to find the new meanings that Wang fashions through the textual materiality and editorial strategies.

This thesis aims to reveal that Wang Duanshu’s ‘Collection of Elegance’ stands apart from other male-mediated song collections of the late Ming as an important artefact of women’s authorship and agency in the norms of both cultural production and the wider society. At a time when the female voice was restricted to conventional and gender-specific tropes, Wang Duanshu employed established male editorial and stylistic practices to transcend gendered protocols of cultural production and women’s gendered role in culture making, while initiating a dialogue with the male discourse in the field of *qu*. This particular emphasis offers a new interpretation of Wang Duanshu’s editorial practice of *Notable Women*. This

¹⁷ Kai-wing Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China* (Stanford, 2004), 13; Stephen Greenblatt, ‘Introduction’, in eds. Stephen Greenblatt and Giles Gunn, *Redrawing the Boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Studies* (Princeton, 1990), 12

¹⁸ Shang Wei, “‘Jing Ping Mei’ and Late Ming Print Culture”, in *Writing and Materiality in China: Essays in Honour of Patrick Hanan*, (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), 187–219, at 207.

¹⁹ Patricia Sieber, *Theatres of Desire: Authors, Readers and the Reproduction of Early Chinese Song-Drama (1300–2000)* (New York, 2003), 170–171.

thesis aims to argue that, by taking up the ‘connoisseuristic gestures of appreciation’ in song criticism - a genre and critiquing style previously reserved for elite men, Wang asserts subtle critiques of contemporary society, crosses the gender boundaries, and helps to ‘bridge the gap between what was perceived as domains of men/women.’²⁰

However, other editorial concerns of Wang Duanshu, such as the consideration of the author’s virtue, and the emphasis on the feminine tradition of writing, in which previous studies have found by studying Wang’s editorial works on women’s poetry, also being carried through in her critiques of the female-authored song. This point indicates a certain degree of consistency in Wang’s critique during her editing process, yet, by juxtaposing ‘male voice’ with ‘female virtue’ in editorial concern, this thesis calls for a more nuanced interpretation of Wang Duanshu’s editorial work. Therefore, this thesis aims to propose that ‘Collection of Elegance’ (and also *Notable Women*) is an artefact situates in-between ‘canon/commerce’, ‘fashion/tradition’, ‘male discourse/female tradition’.

Building upon the existing literary scholarship of the late Ming and early Qing women’s culture, literary production and print culture, it is the aim of this thesis to highlight Wang Duanshu’s contribution to the genre of *qu*, and to establish Wang’s song collection as a key text for a thorough understanding of elite culture, gender relations and cultural production. The research objectives of this thesis are as follows:

1. to investigate how Wang Duanshu’s editorship of *Notable Women* and editorial strategies were entangled with personal, gender, social, commercial and power-play concerns, and contextualizing the ‘Collection of Elegance’ as a sub-collection in relation to the larger anthology;
2. to explore Wang’s editorial strategy of re-curating and reordering pre-existing textual materials, and the materiality of ‘Collection of Elegance’, and how the music texts therein

²⁰ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 138.

were shaped by the blends of late-Ming cultural fashion, the feminine tradition of writing and public dissemination of women's writing;

3. to interrogate Wang Duanshu's editorial selection criteria of pre-existing materials measured by her aesthetics of *qu* writing and performance, and thus to reveal her music aesthetics on *qu*; to explore Wang Duanshu's critique on *qu* in relation to literati discourse; and to discuss how employing the voice of the male elite and editing songs were a part of her socio-cultural negotiation;
4. to explicate Wang Duanshu's editorial gaze and her cultural nostalgia in her strategic curation and commentary articulation of the late-Ming courtesans' repertoires, demonstrating a nuanced navigation of prevalent loyalist sensibilities, and as an assertion of the female voice as an important element of political dialogue;
5. to examine Wang Duanshu's critical commentaries on gentlewomen's songs and their authors to demonstrate how Wang elevated and asserted gentlewomen's authorial identity as superior song-writers, thus challenging contemporary literati gendered social attitudes towards song-writing. It is this challenge that makes the 'Collection of Elegance' a unique and important artefact.

This thesis will draw together insights from across five substantive chapters, each addressing distinct but complementary and co-dependent research questions, to argue that Wang's work should be re-examined from an interdisciplinary approach to evaluate her importance in making a contribution to the genre of *qu*. The chapters each address one key research question. These questions isolate key issues relevant to understanding Wang's importance. The following section of this introduction will describe the intent and content of these issues while detailing the structure of the thesis. At this stage it is important to note that the arguments built, and the issues addressed, by this thesis will draw from a wide range of disciplines. The texts analysed are songs and the principal approach of this research is musicological. However, where appropriate, methods, techniques and insights have been drawn from literary history, textual analysis and cultural materialism. Furthermore, the analysis requires a contextual description of political, historical and sociological factors in

order to frame the cultural and musicological insights. In this way, this thesis is not a work of ‘pure’ musicology but adopts an interdisciplinary approach to achieve its research aims.

The significance of gender relations of power to this thesis is represented by their prominence in the research questions. The gender relations of power are a key and recurring theme throughout this thesis. Wang’s paratextual commentaries guide the reader through her song collection, making her authorial voice a strong influence in the way the texts are read. Through Wang’s authorial lens we explore the role of female editorship in a male-dominated print culture industry; the importance of family relations in textual dissemination and recognition, and women’s subordinate, often invisible, position as a result; and engage with how women were able to navigate these power relations as subtle but potent agents by employing their artistry as a socio-cultural and political tool. Wang offers her insights, which are contextualized and discussed in this thesis by drawing from other primary and secondary sources in order to demonstrate Wang’s intentions and biases.

The detailed research question of each chapter is as follows:

1. what do the extant documents relating to the life of Wang Duanshu tell us about her investment in the textual practices outlined later in the thesis?
2. how does paying attention to the material specifics (how the text is put together; how it works as a structure) of the sub-collection ‘Collection of Elegance’ help us understand Wang Duanshu’s specific contribution to discourses on feminine authorship?
3. how does Wang Duanshu’s compiling and editing here, in relation to the music-literary genre of *qu*, contribute to a widened understanding of the genre in the late Ming and early Qing?
4. to what extent do Wang Duanshu’s editorial and curatorial practices in ‘Collection of Elegance’ represent a coherent political programme grounded in cultural nostalgia?
5. to what extent was the ‘canonization of women’s songs’ used as a strategy by Wang Duanshu in tackling the problem of gentlewomen’s *qu* publication?

It is not unusual for an author's comments on historical works to provide insights into power relations and key issues of their own time. It is therefore also important to know Wang's own position at the time she was compiling the *Notable Women* anthology and writing her paratextual commentaries. The first chapter highlights the story of Wang's rise to prominence and the creation of her key work, *Notable Women*, which could not be discussed without looking more broadly at women's role in society and how that had an impact on Wang's status, practice and beliefs. Chapter 1 describes Wang Duanshu as a person, writer and editor from a primarily biographical lens, offering insights on women's social and cultural status as described above, but also engaging with Wang's agency in deciding to create one of the earliest and most ambitious anthologies of women's writing, and how she came to develop the authority to deliver such a project. For this reason, Chapter 1 has a sub-question necessary to provide a complete answer to the primary research objective. This sub-question asks how the delivery of *Notable Women* informs us about the competing interests of the social, commercial and literary worlds, and what being able to navigate these interests reveals about Wang Duanshu and the potential personal costs of her investment in the textual practices that this thesis explores. Wang's investment and the personal costs, in terms of social and cultural capital and not just financial, would also have offered reward. A nuanced understanding of the motivations and risks in play as Wang pursued this project helps us understand her political and cultural objectives as interrogated in the later chapters.

The research question explored by Chapter 2 narrows the focus of analysis from *Notable Women* to look at the sub-collection entitled the 'Collection of Elegance'. Building on the descriptions of the intersecting commercial, social and literary worlds of Chapter 1, this chapter examines the music fashions and print culture of late Ming. Wang worked within a pool of existing materials but repackaged and organized them into a new structure alongside paratextual commentaries which adorn the original texts with asides and biographical accounts. Thus, the chapter examines the 'Collection of Elegance' through Wang's editorial lens but with a broader understanding of the context in order to reflect upon her shaping of the distinctive meanings in the reused materials. Moreover, the chapter examines the texts as

material objects and cultural artefacts, whose physicality is an oft unexplored aspect of the collection's richness and value for historical study.

The materiality of historical texts, as Wall observes, 'speaks to the specific conditions by which meaning was and is transmitted, and to consider how a literary work becomes readable to its culture – to make visible the lens through which the "book" and the acting of public writing are viewed'.²¹ This aspect is employed to bring to the forefront of the argument new ways of interpreting Wang Duanshu's distinct contribution to women's discourses through her editorial practices of selection and textual construction.

The insights discovered in Chapter 2 inform the discussions of the later chapters. Wang's contribution to women's discourses is examined and explicated in distinct yet complementary facets of the relations of gender power. These gender relations of power provide a thematic core to the wider research questions of the musicological and historical significance of Wang Duanshu's work. It is in the later three chapters where Wang's contribution to understanding gender roles in the late Ming era, and through her own reflection in the early Qing period, is explored. Gender and power are never simple issues, and it is reductive to attempt to classify or categorize the many various elements or manifestations into one aspect. For this reason, there is significant thematic overlap in the final three substantive chapters. However, each chapter will focus on one theme in particular, while drawing from and informing the discussion of the others.

Chapter 3 asks how Wang's editorial strategies of selection and compilation broaden our understanding of the *qu* genre. It is through interrogating her editorial strategies that we see her engagement with elite male literati discourses of cultural excellence and then employ them to demonstrate women's own contributions. By doing so, Wang's editorial practice also implies a certain degree of challenge to the belief that the tradition of literary criticism is a preservation of male authority by claiming that right for herself. The argument builds upon

²¹ Wendy Wall, *The Imprints of Gender: Authorship and Publication in English Renaissance* (New York, 1993), 5.

the discussion of her use of textual space as a material object to explore Wang's aesthetic appreciation and showcase her critical skill as a part of her socio-cultural agenda. It is her forceful assertion of her own voice, and her use of that voice to demonstrate women's artistry in song-writing, that broadens the understanding of the *qu* genre.

Chapter 4 then builds upon this commonality to explore how women interrogated their gendered identity and navigated the socio-political space through constructing the 'performance self', both in public and in private. This chapter asks if Wang's editorial and curatorial practices exhibit more than a critique of male cultural elitism and extent to a political agenda criticizing the gender politics of her own time. Wang's use of nostalgia here is her most direct entry into the political arena. Wang evokes a nostalgia for the late-Ming era which carries implicit censure of the staid society of her own time. Wang's presentation of courtesan's songs demonstrates their deft use of elaborate, culturally-androgynous musical-social bargaining, and the fleeting adoption and discard of public-private domains in their lyrics, to defy and subvert gendered norms of identity and power.

The paratextual commentaries draw out the nuances behind the lyrics to show the depth of thought and feeling within the songs. The courtesan's playfulness, gender fluidity and erotic themes show a complex relationship with the operational power structures and reveal their use of performative identity as a mask and protection, adopting different guises in various public and private contexts. Despite Wang's intricate understanding of these performative selves and oppressions and repressions that they reveal, Wang's paratextual commentaries and careful use of structure casts these songs and the world they present in a favourable and nostalgic light. Wang does not idealize women's experience, and indeed does more than contemporary male literati to uncover the depth of feeling and artistry present in women's song. Nevertheless, addressing her contemporary audience, Wang showcases a 'better' world and seeks to evoke a longing for it. Not necessarily articulated by the audience, but perhaps no less potent for that, there is thereby an implicit longing for the gender fluidity and erotic playfulness the courtesan's lyrics present.

Centring the investigation on the gentlewomen-writer ‘group’ within the collection, Chapter 5 explores the ways in which Wang Duanshu elevated gentlewomen’s authorial status as superior writers compared to contemporary canonical literati-writers. Wang’s commentaries, when viewed in their wider social, cultural and historical contexts, serve as a foil that draw out how gentlewomen’s illusory non-appearance was thus not an absence, but a strategic exclusion. This chapter explores Wang’s editorial techniques and strategies in her presentation of gentlewomen’s song to demonstrate her advocacy of women song-writers and their greater recognition as part of the ‘complementary canon’, which echoes Wang Duanshu’s overarching editorial ploy in positioning the larger anthology of *Notable Women*. It argues that, through the medium of ‘Collection of Elegance’, Wang seeks in elevating not just women song-writers but the genre of *qu* to a new status. Adopting the critical language of the male literati elite, Wang integrates male discourse into her own authorial-editorial voice in an assertion of critical expertise that validates both her own status and her elevation of gentlewomen’s song. Moreover, this chapter will also draw build upon this discussion of Wang’s elevation techniques to make a broader argument that draws together the findings from the other chapters.

The genre of music that Wang Duanshu engages with in the ‘Collection of Elegance’ is *qu* – as mentioned above, a type of sung literature. More specifically, *qu* is a type of classic Chinese poetic form, consisting of irregular verses of ‘long-short’ phrasing, set tone patterns and rhyme scheme.²² In the smallest unit, a single *qu* – a song (*xiaolin* 小令) or an independent aria (*sanqu* 散曲) – is composed according to a *qupai*, namely the ‘tune title’ (*qupai* 曲牌) – ‘a pre-existing tune or melodic contours with a known title and nominally established literary and musical attributes, such as the number of phrases in the lyrics, the numbers and type of words in each phrase, rhyme schemes, and musical modes’.²³ The genre

²² Kar Lun Alan Lau, ‘History through *Qupai*: A Re-Examination’, in *Qupai in Chinese Music: Melodic Models in Form and Practice*, ed. Alan R. Thrasher (London, 2016), 17–50, at 19.

²³ Joseph Lam, ‘A Kunqu Masterpiece and its Interoperations: Tanci (the Ballad) from Hong Sheng’s Changsheng Dian (Palace of Lasting Life)’, *Journal of Chinese Oral and Performing Literature*, 33/2 (2014), 97–120, at 100.

of *qu* is a complicated system that encompasses many sub-forms. These sub-forms are shown in the illustration below:

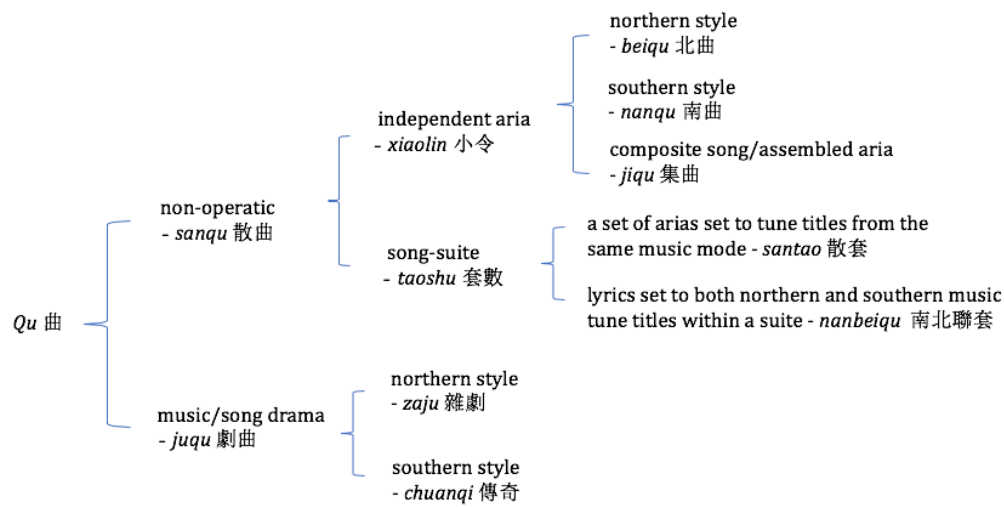


Figure 1. Qu and its sub-forms²⁴

In the case of the *qupai* composing system, ‘the level of complexity’, as Lau argues, ‘is compounded by the intertwined relationship between music and literature, deeply rooted within the tonal nature of Sinitic languages’.²⁵ Composing *qu* is not a formulaic writing simply by setting the words to pre-existing music based on prosodic patterns. Based on previous research, music-text relations in the *qupai* composing system are mainly practised by these three following methods:

1. text-preceding-melody approach, in which melodies are composed based on lyrics;²⁶

²⁴ Figure compiled by thesis author from information in various secondary sources, for instance, see Joseph Lam, ‘Ming Music and Music History’, *Ming Studies*, 1 (1997), 21-62; Patricia Sieber, ‘Rethinking the History of Early *Sanqu* Songs’, *Journal of Chinese Oral and Performing Literature*, 26/1 (2005), 83-98; Peng Xu, ‘The Music Teacher: The Professionalization of Singing and the Development of Erotic Vocal Style of Late Ming China’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 75/2 (2015), 259-297; Lau, *Qupai in Chinese Music: Melodic Models in Form and Practice* (London, 2016).

²⁵ Lau, ‘History through *Qupai*’, 17.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 19.

2. text-following-melody approach, words and syllables are chosen to fit pre-existing melodies;²⁷

3. melody-following-text approach, the compositional process likely involves greater altering of pitch, melodic contour and rhyme according to the text.²⁸

According to Chinese scholar Gao Houyong, in the Song dynasty (960–1279) *ci* 詞 – lyric poetry – strictly follows the second method, while *qu* follows the third. The song lyricist Jiang Kui 姜夔 (1151–1221), whose methods of composing follow the first approach, left an extant collection with notated songs written by himself, which allows for a rare glimpse of literati’s music practice.²⁹

In terms of music, there was a ‘northern-southern’ dichotomy by the time of mid-Ming (1450–1572). This is not to say that there are fundamental differences in compositional methods; instead, the distinctiveness of ‘northern-southern’ styles of *qu* lie in the music at a melodic level, as Lau summarizes:

the northern style of *zaju* or *beiqu* (northern songs) typically employs the heptatonic scale, i.e. E-F sharp-G-A-B flat-C-D, which features the nonfixed ‘tendency’ pitches, along with the relatively syllabic text-melody relation, frequent use of ascending and descending contours, and a generally faster tempo;³⁰

the scale used in the ‘southern songs’ are largely pentatonic, i.e. G-A-C-D-E, the melodies have a stronger emphasis on ornamentation and melisma, which results in more static melodic contours and a slower music pace.³¹

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 22 and 40, n.37.

²⁹ Ibid., 19 and 40n37.

³⁰ Ibid., 25.

³¹ Ibid. *Kunqu*, an elite form of southern-style *qu* during late Ming, has been listed as one of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO since 2001, and has been revived. Many of the *kunqu* repertoires, especially operatic pieces, are still being performed today. Although the music might not be as accurate as the original sixteenth- and seventeenth-century performance due to the oral tradition in Chinese traditional music transmitting, the modern re-construction and re-production of these early modern repertoires give us imagination and taste of what *qu* performance sounds like. For an example, see the video of the present-day celebrated *kunqu* singer, Zhang Jun (1974–), performing an operatic aria to the tune ‘Leisurely Eyebrow Painting’ from scene 32 ‘Zither Seduction’ 琴挑 of *Yu zan ji* 玉簪記 (*The Jade Hairpin*), composed by the literatus-dramatist Gao Lian (1573–1620), at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tp8q2T-l108> (last accessed on 20 September 2019).

This thesis does not concern music-analytics, for the melodies of the songs studied in this thesis are unknown. Yet, the concept of ‘performability’ is interrogated in this thesis, while the analysis is grounded in historical literary music critiques and discourse. This thesis will mention a number of different music source types, for ease of reading, these are outlined in the following diagram:



Figure 2. *Qu*-related types of imprints known to have been circulating in late imperial China³²

It is important to clarify some of the terminology and key concepts used throughout this thesis. The details and nuances of genre within music, and its technical, compositional methods, are beyond the remit of this thesis. Thus, the above information is presented not as a contribution but adopted as a platform of broadly accepted terms and definitions upon which the argument is built. It is the hope of this author that further study will show the value of greater exploration into the variety of sub-forms of *qu* genre and how they developed, and how different forms and compositional methods were used, in order to cast more light on this

³² Figure compiled by thesis author from information in various secondary sources, for instance, see Judith Zeitlin, ‘Between Performance, Manuscript, and Print: Imagining the Musical Text in Seventeenth-Century Plays and Songbooks’, in *Text, Performance, and Gender in Chinese Literature and Music*, eds. Maghiel van Crevel, Tian Yuan Tan and Michel Hockx (Leiden, 2009), 263–292; Tian Yuan Tan, *Songs of Contentment and Transgression: Discharged Officials and Literati Communities in Sixteenth-Century North China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010); Patricia Sieber, *Theatres of Desire: Authors, Readers, and the Reproduction of Early Chinese Song-Drama* (London, 2003).

fascinating part of Chinese music history. It is for reasons of concision and focus that these issues are not explored in this thesis.

Many other terms used throughout this thesis, such as ‘literati’, ‘courtesan’, and ‘elite’, have their origins in Western cultural studies. However, they have also been used in Chinese studies applied with their culturally specific meaning in the context of Chinese late Ming society. Chinese *shi* 士 - ‘literati’, more than being ‘well-educated people who are interested in literature’, it connotes a cultural group and political class appears as multiple male-exclusive societies gathered in the lower Yangtze area, as Tina Lu argues,

Societies for study, schools of poetry, and factional politics were inseparable from each other, all of them central to elite life in the last decades of the Ming Dynasty. Membership in a literary society was a potent means of self-identification, composed in equal parts of political affiliation and cultural orientation.³³

Chinese male literati were educated under Confucian schooling system, in which most of them may be degree holders. When a literatus takes up posts in the court or local offices scattered all over China, they are more aptly called *dafu* 大夫 - ‘scholar-officials’. Their Confucian ideologies not only represented the social moral standards of Ming society, but also acted as a medium between the imperial government and commoners.

Chinese ‘gentlewomen’ (*nü shi* 女士), in which refer to the mothers, wives, and daughters of male literati and scholar-officials, like their European counterparts, they are women with good social standing and upright behaviour. Chinese gentlewomen were physically restricted in their chambers and expected to follow Confucian domestic and social duties, which were summarised as *san cong side* 三從四德 - ‘three obediences and four virtues’ – namely to follow their father, husband, and son, and perform womanly speech, virtue, deportment, and work.³⁴ Gentlewomen’s life within households of literati and scholar-officials benefitted them to daily immersion in music, literature, and access to knowledge.

³³ Tina Lu, ‘The Literary Culture of the late Ming (1573–1644)’, in eds. Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature* Vol. II (Cambridge, 2010), 63-151, at 75.

³⁴ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 143.

Despite gentlewomen's Confucian duties as wives, mothers or daughters and their restricted physical mobility, 'it is hardly surprising that', as Ko remarks, 'gentlewomen were among the first in the female population to receive a sophisticated education.'³⁵

Majority of the late-Ming gentlewomen that are discussed throughout this thesis, which include Wang Duanshu, gained such social status by birth. Huang Yuanjie (Chapter 1), for instance, despite was 'born into a poor branch of an illustrious clan', was addressed as 'Lady Huang' in a dedicated biography to her.³⁶ Gentlewomen, alongside their fathers and husbands – the Chinese literati and scholar-officials, together constitute the late-Ming 'elites' and the governing class. Wealth may be the least criterion when it comes to the measurements of their social standings; late-Ming elites, whether male or female, are marked by their fulfillments of gendered Confucian duties, literary and artistic achievements, and moral virtues. These socio-cultural criteria, as this thesis shows, are reflected in Wang Duanshu's biographic sketches to entry authors, how she divided sub-collections within *Notable Women*, as well as in her contemporaries' writings about Wang herself.

When the late-Ming elites became marginalised within the governing class, in which very often a result from not be able to hold a government post or consequently declining financial circumstances, drove them to blur class boundaries to become 'professionals'. Writing, editing, publishing, painting became more than a personal literary and artistic endeavour, the late Ming elite-cum-professionals made a living out of their cultural labour and production. While officialdom is exclusive to men, therefore the former situation can only happen to male elites, gentlewomen became 'professionals' when their families declining finances in need of aid. These 'career women', who transcends physical and gender boundaries to make a living through teaching ladies in other elites' households, commissioned to write or paint for money, as Ko argues, 'were merely substitute husbands', their violation

³⁵ Ibid, 251.

³⁶ Ibid, 118, 121.

of the ideal gentlewomen was ‘an expedient measure to ensure the survival of the family’, ‘in the name of loyalty to the family that allegiance to three obediences’ (*san cong* 三從).³⁷

In the printing industry, despite professional editors of the late Ming bears the marketplace in mind, they asserted their elite status and sought to protect elite value through instrumental use of the paratextual materials. Paratexts, as Genette defines, refers to ‘materials other than the main texts, that are relevant to the appearances of the published book’ – preface (*xu* 序), commentary (*ping* 評), advertising features, statements of editorial principles (*fan li* 凡例), and printing formats – ‘all those features in an imprint that link the author’s intention, mediated by the book designers and producers with the reader’s response’.³⁸ It is these features, as mentioned earlier, functioned as ‘thresholds of interpretation’ through which *Notable Women* and ‘Collection of Elegance’ are examined. As this thesis aims to show, paratextual material spaces, for both Wang Duanshu and her contemporary female and male professional editors who hailed from an elite background, ‘worked as a mirror for the reader, reminding them of the editor’s social cachet’.³⁹

Courtesans’ physical presence in the elite circles also reflects the increasingly blurred boundaries of class within late Ming society. Unlike the common prostitutes whose favours were strictly sexual – ‘lean in doorways, proffering smiles at all comers indiscriminately’,⁴⁰ the function of the late Ming courtesan was a ‘cultural hostess’ who was educated and cultivated in skills such as conversation, knowledge of classical literature, poetry, dancing, and musical performance.⁴¹ Like their Venetian contemporaries, the late Ming courtesans ‘against a system of gender ideologies that defined a woman’s social position and intellectual

³⁷ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 137.

³⁸ Katherine Carlitz, ‘Printing as Performance: Literati Playwright-Publishers of the Late Ming’, in *Printing and Book Culture in late imperial China*, eds. Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley, 2005), 284.

³⁹ Gerard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, (trans.) Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge, 1997), 3.

⁴⁰ Judith Zeitlin, “‘Notes of Flesh’ and the Courtesan’s Song in Seventeenth-Century China”, in *The Courtesan’s Arts Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon (Oxford, 2006), 75-99, at 77.

⁴¹ Harriet T. Zurndorfer, ‘Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Confucian Moral Universe of Late Ming China (1550-1644)’, *International Review of Social History*, 2011, Vol.56, No.19, 201-202.

pursuits as private, devoted to domestic concerns and moral welfare of her family,’ ‘projected a highly sophisticated public image intended to gain entry into the elite circles of public life.’⁴² Though late Ming courtesans’ livelihood depends on patronage and they had access to the elite circles, the Ming law placed them as *jian* 賤 – debased,⁴³ registered as *yueji* 樂籍 - music servants whose mean social and moral position were beyond the regulation of Confucian rules.⁴⁴ As this thesis demonstrates, the late-Ming elite-cum-professional editors, which includes Wang Duanshu, bears the social status of courtesans in mind and intentionally distinguish themselves from, or/and criticised the debased morales of the courtesan class during the editing process.

This thesis has also benefited from many translated works of Wang Duanshu’s writings, paratextual materials in *Notable Women* and *Red Chantings*, critiques of music and theatre, vignettes, miscellaneous remarks written by late-Ming and early-Qing literati, and other female-authored writings. Where the translation of the primary source from existing secondary literature is presented as a quotation in the thesis, such translations will be marked in the referencing footnotes. Where the translation is my own, it will be marked as such in the referencing footnotes. Where the primary source is presented through paraphrased discussion in the thesis, rather than a direct translation-quotation, the original texts in Chinese (typed in traditional rather than simplified writing) will be presented in the referencing footnotes. Occasionally, where the original Chinese texts are short, they will be presented after the English translation in the main body of the thesis.

Moreover, the romanisation of Chinese person’s names, names of places, reign titles, and titles of imperial dynasties are all spelled in pinyin; where these names are still spelled in the Wade-Giles system in secondary sources, they will be switched to the pinyin system in this

⁴² Margret F. Rosenthal, ‘Veronica Franco’s *Terze Rime*: The Venetian Courtesan’s Defence’, *Renaissance Quarterly*, 1989, Vol.42, No.2, 227, 232.

⁴³ Katherine Carlitz, ‘The Daughter, the Singing-girl, and the Seduction of Suicide’, in *Passionate Women: Female Suicide in Late Imperial China*, eds. Paul S. Ropp, Paola Zamperini and Harriet Zurndorfer (Leiden, 2001), 25.

⁴⁴ Sophie Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011), 5-6.

thesis, while keeping the Wade-Giles spelling if the Chinese names are included in the titles of the secondary sources that are referenced in the footnotes.

Chapter 1

Between Canon and Commerce: Wang Duanshu's Editorship of *Classical Poetry of Notable Women* (1667)

1.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter introduces Wang Duanshu (1621–c.1701) and her editorship of the anthology *Classical Poetry of Notable Women* (1667).¹ The core research question of this chapter is as follows: what do the extant documents relating to the life of Wang Duanshu tell us about her investment in the textual practices outlined later in this thesis? A secondary question in this chapter asks how Wang's editing of *Notable Women* constitute a multifaceted display of commercial, social and literary interests. This chapter argues that *Notable Women* itself is significant, not only for its academic standards in scholarly editing, but also as a project that magnifies Wang's socio-literary authority and possibly her future prosperity in the printing trade. The manner in which this chapter attempts to answer these questions is laid out in more detail below.

This chapter lays out the context of Wang's family background, and her domestic and social literary network in early Qing (1644–1681) elite society. It demonstrates how Wang Duanshu rose to fame within a seventeenth-century Chinese historical context, in which female talents are celebrated, and learned women began venturing into the public world of literary scenes and the publishing industry. Moreover, it briefly sets forth the process of how Wang Duanshu published her individual literary collection, *Red Chantings* (c.1650),² in order

¹ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, *MYSWCB*. Throughout this thesis the primary source consulted is the digitized facsimile, 1667 first edition on the Ming-Qing Women's Writing Database, at <https://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/english/index.php>. The title number of the anthology in the database, on the date of correcting this reference (7 March 2020), is 188. Hereafter all prefatory materials and sub-collections within *Notable Women* will be cited by their individual titles.

² Wang Duanshu 王端淑, *Yin hong ji* 吟紅集 (*Red Chantings*), c. 1670, facsimile reprint in *Qing dai shi wen hui bian* 清代詩文彙編 (*The Collective Works of Qing Dynasty Poetry and Prose*) [hereafter *QDSWHB*], vol. 82 (Shanghai, 2010), 1–111.

to illustrate how Wang's wider socio-literary connections with prominent literati were established through her husband.

The second part of this chapter examines Wang Duanshu's editorship of *Notable Women*, a multi-author anthology of women's writings, to assess Wang's multi-dimensional editorial concerns, approaches and motives behind her scholarly editing. It examines the anthology by tracing its structural features of both textual and paratextual materials. In particular, this chapter proposes that the anthology itself was not only an on-going editorial project, but that it was also an unfinished publishing enterprise product, by exploring the "incompleteness" of the texts. Finally, this chapter concludes with a discussion of how Wang's ambition in scholarly anthologising and editing was a new literary endeavour. This new public pursuit reflects not only Wang's commercial interest in publishing, but also her socio-literary authoritative concern to elevate and even establish herself as a gentlewomen editor, poet and historian.

Wang Duanshu's *Notable Women* 'is one of the earliest and most ambitious anthologies of women's writing'.³ This anthology, with its ambitious scope (the entire anthology contains approximately 2,000 works by around 1,000 female authors) and comprehensive inclusion of all established genres of *shi* and *ci*, as well as more liberal genres of fiction, *qu*, and vernacular writings, has been examined in previous scholarship. While the existing body of work on Wang Duanshu contributes to the knowledge of Wang's life, writings, publishing activities and editing, little research has been done on the richness of the materials in *Notable Women* in terms of its diverse genres and matching sub-collections. There are also notable errors and disagreements in the arguments of the little scholarship that does exist. For instance, Widmer, in her research on Wang Duanshu's overarching editorial strategy of *Notable Women*, perhaps mistakenly states that the empty chapter of fiction is 39 while it is actually chapter 31;⁴ 39 is not empty but a chapter of miscellaneous writings, which include

³ Widmer, *Under Confucian Eyes*, 182.

⁴ Ellen Widmer, 'Retrieving the Past', in *The Inner Quarters and Beyond*, 81-105, at 86-87.

popular song, ballads and couplets.⁵ There are differing opinions on the anthology's lacuna in the contents pages; I agree with Fong's opinion that chapter 31 should contain poems written by fictive female characters, rather than fictions written by women as Widmer suggests.⁶ Wang's editorial decision of inclusion and exclusion of sub-collections determined by genre, as Robertson has briefly come across in the genre of fiction,⁷ and the impact of the genre in women's literary choices, deserves further discussion by an in-depth reading of the diverse individual sub-collection and genre in relation to *Notable Women*, so as to unveil the complexity of the anthology.

Therefore, the discussion of the ordering, categorizing and sequencing of the sub-collections within *Notable Women*, particularly how genre concerns different sub-collections and how sub-collections relate to the entire anthology, constitute a significant part of the investigation of Wang's editorial approach in this chapter. It shows Wang's classification of sub-collections, which divided, categorized and sequenced based on multiple criteria, is also a microcosm of contemporary Chinese society, gender, class and literary practices, and provides indications about her attitudes and sensibilities of genres that received prosperity during the Ming period. Most importantly, this editorial context in terms of sub-collection and genre sets forth the central subject of investigation of this entire thesis: *Ya ji* 雅集 'Collection of Elegance' (chapter 37-38).⁸ This editorial context helps us to understand why *qu* as a performance genre is included in a literary anthology, the physical and textual positioning of the sub-collection of 'Collection of Elegance', and the physical features of the printed pages and their symbolic meaning. Such an exploration allows a comprehensive overview of the anthology's materiality, sheds light on the diversity and complexity of the anthology beyond

⁵ Wang Duanshu, 'Za ji 雜集' (Collection of Miscellaneous Writings), *MYSWCB*, 39.1a–39.6b.

⁶ Fong, *Herself an Author*, 204, n65.

⁷ Maureen Robertson, 'Voicing the Feminine: Constructions of the Gendered Subject in Lyric Poetry by Women of Medieval and Late Imperial China', *Late Imperial China*, 13/1 (1992), 97–98; 'Literary Authorship by Late Imperial Governing-Class Women and the Emergence of a "Minor Literature"' in *The Inner Quarters and Beyond*, 375–386, at 378.

⁸ Wang Duanshu 王端淑 ed., 'Ya ji 雅集' (Collection of Elegance), in *MYSWCB*, chapter 37-38, n.p.: Qing yin tang 1667, hereafter mentioned by 'Collection of Elegance' in the text.

that of merely a poetry collection. This chapter, thus, explores the borderlines of Wang's editorship, between canon and commerce, between orthodox and entertainment.

1.2 A Short Biography of Wang Duanshu

Throughout this thesis, I have drawn on biographical materials to understand the complex social and cultural context in which Ming female authors inhabited and their writings were produced. It is vital to understand this historical context to give a credible reading of the materials that are discussed throughout the thesis. Biographies are one significant element of this context. Biographical information highlights that Wang Duanshu's editorship was not simply a textual practice; rather, it is embedded in a real social-historical context and shares commonalities with past and on-going cultural practice, concerns and interests.

It is worth noticing that biographical accounts constitute a significant part of the paratextual writings within *Notable Women*. These writings, written by Wang herself, have the potential to give information regarding the selection process of the editor and Wang's attitudes towards the writers and their work. Biographies take up a considerable space among the preliminary materials of *Notable Women*, including three biographies. In addition, the prefaces to *Notable Women* written by Wang's literati associates contain some biographical elements. The following discussion retraces Wang's domestic life and literary connections through the biographical information found within *Notable Women*. To give a more rounded picture of her rising fame and her professional career as a writer and editor, these biographical insights into Wang Duanshu reveal her daily life experiences and her social position set in the scene of the late Ming and early Qing periods in seventeenth-century Chinese elite society.

1.2.1 *The girlhood, family background and marriage*

Wang Duanshu was born in 1621 to Wang Si-ren 王思任 (1575–1646), a prominent late Ming scholar-official, and Lady Yao.⁹ A biography dedicated to Wang Duanshu by Wang Zhenshi 王軫石 (1598–1662) and included in the preliminary materials of *Notable Women* tells of a childhood game in which Wang ‘liked to cut up paper for banners and made her mother the general and housemaids soldiers, while she marched among them commanding and plucking the banners as a game’.¹⁰ This anecdote of Wang Duanshu’s boyish childhood game seems also to indicate her character later on, as, according to her husband, ‘by nature [she was] addicted to history books and would sneer at the usual womanly work’.¹¹ Not until a year before she was married to Ding Shengzhao and moved to Beijing did she start her learning of ‘womanly’ work.¹²

Wang Duanshu’s childhood education reflects the late-Ming trends of the expansion of women’s education, especially among the elite governing, literati-gentry class. Wang Si-ren’s view of women’s literary talents indicates his openness to Wang Duanshu’s education. He observes that ‘writings by famous women have been circulating in the Wu-Yue region in recent years. They were valued like precious jade and made the ladies more famous than their husbands’.¹³ Wang Duanshu’s two sisters, Wang Jingshu 王靜淑 (date unknown) and Wang Zhenshu 王貞淑 (date unknown), were both educated and versed poets.¹⁴ According to Wang Zhenshi’s biography, Wang studied the *classics* alongside her brothers when she was a

⁹ Wang Zhenshi 王軫石, ‘Wang Duanshu zhuan 王端淑傳’ Biography of Wang Duanshu, *MYSWCB*, 1.a [hereafter Wang zhuan]; Meng Chenshun, ‘Ding furen zhuan 丁夫人傳’ Biography of Mrs. Ding, 1.a [hereafter Meng zhuan].

¹⁰ Wang Zhenshi, ‘Wang zhuan’, 1.b. 喜為丈夫粧，常剪紙為旗，以母為帥，列婢為兵將，自行隊伍中，拔幟為戲 translation by Wai-Yee Li in *Women and National Trauma*, 113.

¹¹ Ding Shengzhao 丁聖肇, ‘Xu 序’ *Preface to Yin hong ji*, 內子性嗜書史, 工筆墨, 不屑事女紅, 黛餘燈隙, 吟咏不絕 in Hu Wenkai 胡文楷 ed., *LFZK*, (Shanghai, 1957), 249. Ellen Widmer (trans.), ‘C. 40. Ding ShengZhao (1621–1700?), in *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*, eds. Kang-I Sun Chang, Huan Saussy and Charles Yim-Kwong (Stanford, 1999), 764–765, at 764.

¹² Wang Duanshu 王端淑, ‘Bei qu 北去’ (Into the North), 十五習女紅, 十六離閨閣, 遠嫁去燕京, 父母恩情薄 in *Yin hong ji*, vol. 82, *QDSWHB*, 6–7.

¹³ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 157.

¹⁴ Both sisters work can be seen in *MYSWCB*, on the entry of elder sister Wang Jingshu, ‘Zheng ji 正集’ Main Collection, 15.6a, 6b, 15.7a, 7. b, and 15.8a; on the entry of younger sister Wang Zhenshu, ‘Zheng ji’, 17.3b.

child.¹⁵ It appears that Wang Duanshu had excellent memorisation skills, as she could apparently recite any poetry and prose after just one reading.¹⁶

Learning alongside her brothers, Wang Duanshu's early education was nurtured by her father, an erudite scholar himself. Wang Si-ren also taught her by telling stories of virtuous ladies from past eras, and Wang learned the stories by heart. This indicates that learning womanly virtue was a part of a gentlewomen's early education.¹⁷ Although Wang Si-ren predicted that Wang Duanshu would be well-known for her poetry and prose one day, by stating that 'if she was a man, her prose writing would be the best of her time',¹⁸ this claim reflects the social limitations on women's participation in the public realm. Wang Si-ren felt pity for his daughter as a girl who had great talent, as he remarked, 'my eight sons together cannot add up to one daughter';¹⁹ Ko argues that this indicates that his daughter 'alone had the talent to be his successor' and the 'most talented heir'.²⁰

Wang Si-ren's own social networks, such as his acquaintance with Qian Qianyi 錢謙益 (1582–1664), who had once served as Ming prime minister, also widened the later literary circles of Wang Duanshu. Qian wrote a preface (dated 1661) to Wang Duanshu's *Notable Women*; Wang Duanshu might also have had certain social connections with Qian's second wife, the celebrated late Ming courtesan-cum-gentlewoman Liu Rushi 柳如是 (1618–1664).²¹ A poem that was written by Wang Duanshu entitled 'Poem and Painting commissioned by Qian Muzhai on His wife Liu's Behalf to Celebrate the Birthday of His Eldest Aunt',²² was also curated in the 'Subsequent Collection' (chapter 42) of Wang's *Notable Women*. Meanwhile, Qian Qianyi edited *Liechao shiji* 列朝詩集 (*Collective Poems of the Successive*

¹⁵ Wang Zhenshi 王軫石, 'Wang zhuan', 1.b. 時諸母皆生子，遂從諸兄弟就外傳

¹⁶ Ibid. 授四書，毛詩，過目即成誦

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Meng Chenshun, Biography of Wang Duanshu in *Notable Women*, 1.b.

¹⁹ Ruan Yuan 阮元, *Liang zhe you xuan lu* 兩浙輶軒錄 (*Light Vehicle in Zhe Areas*), in vol. 40, Qing Dynasty edition, Wang Duanshu's entry. Digitized and transcribed text available on 愛如生 *Chinese Classical Writing Primary Source Database*.

²⁰ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 131.

²¹ Ding Qiguang 丁啟光, 'Hou ji 後集' (Subsequent Collection), *MYSWCB*, 42.2b

²² Ibid.

Reigns 1652) which was among the previously published collections consulted by Wang Duanshu during her editing process of *Notable Women*.²³

Wang Si-ren's own experience of making a living through writing poems and essays might also have influenced Wang Duanshu's later choice to pursue a professional literary career. Berg argues that although Wang's family certainly enjoyed the privilege of cultural sophistication of the elite class - that is, the participation in literati arts, especially the composition of poetry - financially, the family was not known to be affluent.²⁴ Like her father, Wang Duanshu was commissioned to write and was paid for it. Apart from writing occasional poems on behalf of her husband,²⁵ Wang Duanshu also wrote poems which were then attributed to her other social connections and acquaintances, as writings presented in her *Red Chantings* collection show.²⁶

Wang Duanshu's marriage to Ding Shengzhao 丁圣肇, although started as a family arrangement when she was seven years old,²⁷ turned out to be a 'companionate' one. Dorothy Ko defines companionate marriage in seventeenth-century Chinese social contexts as 'a union between an intellectually compatible couple who treat each other with mutual respect'.²⁸ Wang Duanshu, although not interested in womanly work herself, was very devoted to her husband Ding Shengzhao. For example, Wang sold some of her jewellery to buy a concubine for her husband.²⁹ Ding Shengzhao, in turn, was supportive of Wang's passion for reading and writing. Although well-versed himself, he openly recognized Wang's exceptional talents

²³ Judith Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine: Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Literature* (Honolulu, 2007), 79–80. Zeitlin noticed that Wang was influenced by Qian in her editorial decision to include poems attributed to ghosts and immortals, and Wang and Qian's anthologies shows some overlaps in these sections.

²⁴ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 188.

²⁵ On poems that Wang wrote on Ding's behalf, see ed. Ding Qiguang, 'Hou ji 後集' (Subsequent Collection), *MYSWCB*, 42.4a, 42.5a, 42.11a, 42.11b, 42.13b, etc.

²⁶ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, *Yin hong ji* (*Red Chantings*), vol. 82, *QDSWHB*, 19–24. For instance, Chapter 5 of *Red Chantings* collected poems that Wang Duanshu dedicated to her female acquaintances, such as Dong Susu, Mrs. Wu, Mrs. Zhou and a few poems written for her husband or others' behalf.

²⁷ Wang Zhenshi, 王軫石 'Wang zhuan', 1.b.

²⁸ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 179.

²⁹ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Zheng ji' Main Collection, *MYSWCB*, 17.9b. Wang's biographic remarks she bought Chen Suxia as a concubine for Ding in 1644, after Wang sold some of her own jewellery.

and did not appear disapproving by Wang's lack of interest in her womanly duties. Both Wang Duanshu's *Red Chantings* and *Notable Women* include prefaces written by Ding. He concluded his preface in *Red Chantings* with 'I have nothing of my own to add, except to say that my wife is my good friend. She and I are like a pair of wild ducks or geese. My wife's work magnifies and inspires me'.³⁰

Wang and Ding's marriage was not a traditional 'female-inner, male-outer' model. Ding acted as, according to Dorothy Ko, a 'deputy' who promoted his wife's work in literary circles.³¹ Ding also appears to have acted as an agent for promoting Wang's publications, helping her works enter the public sphere and circulate among the world of the early Qing cultural elite. For instance, Wang Duanshu's *Red Chantings* was published under the sponsorship of a literary society of which Ding appears to have been a member.³² Ding also presented the manuscript of Wang's poetic writings to Mao Qilin 毛奇齡 (1623–1716), an early-Qing Imperial Academy scholar-official, requesting Mao for a preface for the publication.³³ This manuscript was later published as Wang's individual collection, *Liu qie ji* 留篋集 (*Works Left in a Writing Chest*).³⁴

This biographical information is not simply accounts of Wang Duanshu and her family background; they are of great value, providing glimpses of what life would have been like for a gentlewoman, the challenges of her life in a Confucian hierarchical society and the new opportunities that these women might have encountered in the social upheaval of early seventeenth-century China. From Wang's father, a late Ming cultural elite and scholar-official, his attitudes towards women's education and publishing activity reflect the

³⁰ Ding Shengzhao 丁圣肇, 'Yin hong ji xu', *LFZK*, 249; trans. Ellen Widmer, 'Selected Short Work by Wang Duanshu', 179.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 136.

³² Wang Duanshu 王端淑, *Red Chantings*, Chapter 20, 'Jin ling qi gai zhuan 金陵乞丐傳' (Biography to a Beggar from Nanjing), *QDSWHB*, 86-87.

³³ Mao Qiling 毛奇齡, *Xihe heji* 西河合集 (*Collective Works of Master of West River*) [hereafter: XHJ], vol. 30 *Preface Section*, *Gui xiu wang yu yin liu qie ji xu* 閨秀王玉映留篋集序 (*Preface to Gentlewoman in Yu Ying's Collection - Works left in a Writing Chest*), digitalized facsimile and transcribed texts on 愛如生 *Erudition Chinese Classical Writing Primary Source Database*.

³⁴ Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 136.

bourgeoning literary of women, and the appreciation, even connoisseurship, of women's talents from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards.

This social development in the changing attitudes towards women's education is grounded in the publishing boom when women became new readers and new cultural consumers from the sixteenth century. Meanwhile, as the following chapters will show, the sixteenth-century Chinese courtesan culture shaped a new ideal of 'womanhood', in which talent, alongside a woman's virtue and beauty, had a great influence on the seventeenth-century Chinese gentlewomen's culture.³⁵ The idea of a 'companionate marriage', as Wang Duanshu and her husband's union shows, brings the intellectual companionship previously existed in 'courtesan-literati romance' to the domestic life of the couples positioned in Chinese elite society.

However, new opportunities also juxtapose with old challenges. From the example of Wang Duanshu, we see the stigma of gendered limitations on women playing a role in the public sphere of *wen* 文 - literature and *zheng* 政 - politics, in which Wang Si-ren feels a pity that despite his daughter's great talent, she 'cannot' be the best prose writer of her time due to her expected gendered social performance. We also see Wang Duanshu's husband's role as an agent in promoting her writings to the male elite and thus bridging the gap between the private sphere and the public world. As the following discussion in this chapter shows, Ding Shengzhao might also have played a role in the publication of another personal literary collection of Wang Duanshu.

³⁵ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 143.

1.2.2 Wang Duanshu and her domestic female literary networks

Wang Duanshu entered the public sphere and established networks through her husband, while her domestic writing networks are barely mentioned in the discussion of previous Anglophone scholarship. The exploration of Wang Duanshu's domestic literary network, by tracing those female writers whose works were included within *Notable Women*, not only portrays a fuller picture of Wang's literary connections during the time when she was pursuing a public career as a professional writer and editor, but also illustrates how gentlewomen in the early seventeenth century 'emerged on the literary scene as producers and consumers of culture'.³⁶

The formation of networks of women with literary interests, as Robertson argues, was one aspect of women's literary culture in late imperial China for which there are no known counterparts on anything like the same scale for earlier periods.³⁷ The existence of domestic poetry networks of gentlewomen shows the climbing proportion of gentlewomen as consumers and producers of culture in the seventeenth century. The 'cultural privilege of gentlewomen being able to write, edit, and publish', as Berg argues, 'has previously been dominated by celebrated courtesans during the late Ming period'.³⁸ The commonly shared domestic literary and artistic pursuits not only built bonds and established networks among gentlewomen in the private sphere, but expanded the limited physical mobility of gentlewomen, and the writings they produced 'had the power to connect women across time and space', to 'transcend from private to public through publication'.³⁹

Wang Duanshu's poetry selection of her female relatives' works shows a strong domestic woman's writing tradition in both her natal and marital sides of families. Their

³⁶ Daria Berg, 'Female Self-Fashioning in Late Imperial China: How the Gentlewoman and the Courtesan Edited *Her Story* and Rewrote *His/tory*', in *Reading China: Fiction, History and the Dynamics of Discourse. Essays in Honour of Professor Glen Dudbridge*, ed. Daria Berg (Leiden, 2007), 238–290, at 250.

³⁷ Robertson, 'Voicing the Feminine', 99–100.

³⁸ Berg, 'Female Self-Fashioning in Late Imperial China', 249–250; also, *Women and the Literary World*, 6–9.

³⁹ Berg, 'Female Self-Fashioning in Late Imperial China', 251.

writings appear in the ‘*Zheng ji* 正集’ (Main Collection, chapters 3-18) of *Notable Women*, a sub-collection that curates work of ‘gentlewomen and wives of up-right commoners’.⁴⁰ These writings are also poetic accounts of domestic social gatherings that the Wang sisters and female in-laws attended. These private events display the close domestic ties of Wang Duanshu and a social-literary connection that was made through family bonds. When these writings were made public through printing, these poems that remark on female-exclusive private events ‘exposed the writing’s permeability and destabilized apparently fixed boundaries’ of private and public, home and outside.⁴¹

Wang Duanshu’s marital family also demonstrates a family-centred literary link between female family members (see Appendix A). Three poems by Chen Suxia 陳素霞 (1634-1662), the concubine who Wang bought for Ding in 1644, are included in the ‘Main Collection’ of *Notable Women*.⁴² A biography of Chen Suxia written by Wang Duanshu’s gentlewoman friend Gao Youzhen 高幽真 (date unknown) is also included in the prefatory material of *Notable Women*. Based on Gao’s biographical account, Chen was a very talented lady who was not only gifted in phonology and calligraphy, but also was also good at womanly work, especially embroidery.⁴³ Wang Duanshu’s inclusion of Chen’s poems in *Notable Women* is perhaps a tribute to Chen’s eight years of devoted service to Wang’s husband (before she died at the age of 28). As Wang remarks, ‘by including some fine verses of hers, so that I would like every talented person throughout this country to know that my husband had this sweet beauty’.⁴⁴ Wang’s inclusion of poems by her husband’s deceased concubine could be regarded as an example of ‘the incorporation of women’s talent into the family’s repertoire of cultural capital’, as Ko defines the modes of distribution in seventeenth-century private Chinese family print.⁴⁵ Although *Notable Women* was not a product of *sike* – private print –

⁴⁰ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, ‘Zi xu 自序’ (Wang’s Preface to *MYSWCB*), 2b, [hereafter: Zi xu].

⁴¹ Grace Fong, ‘Introduction’, in *The Inner Quarters and Beyond*, ed. Fong and Widmer, 1-15, at 10.

⁴² Wang Duanshu 王端淑, ‘Zheng ji’ (Main Collection), *MYSWCB*, 17.10a, 17.11a.

⁴³ Gao Youzhen 高幽真, ‘Su xia zhuan 素霞傳’ (Biography to Chen Suxia), 1.a, 1.b, 2.a, 2.b. *MYSWCB*

⁴⁴ Wang Duanshu, ‘Zheng ji’ (Main Collection), 17.10a, 17.11a.

⁴⁵ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 39.

Wang's inclusion of Chen and other female family members' writings certainly put a brand of the features of elite publishing and print on her edited anthology.

Wang Duanshu's editorial decision to include writings by younger members of her family illustrates her role as an 'inner chamber teacher', who takes responsibility for the literary tutoring of the next generation of female writers. Wang brought up Chen Suxia's daughter, Ding Junwang, after Chen's early death. Gao Youzhen, Chen Suxia's biographer, claims that Wang Duanshu cherished Ding Junwang as if she were her own child.⁴⁶ One poem written by Ding when she was only twelve years old was included in the 'Main Collection'.⁴⁷ Wang remarked that, although Ding's writing was still not refined, her poem itself expressed genuine feelings.⁴⁸ Wang not only encouraged Ding Junwang 丁君望 'to catch up more with the advanced writers',⁴⁹ but the remarks also showed her pride as a step-mother by including this poem. Wang's poem entitled, 'Responding to My Young Daughter Junwang', was published in *Red Chantings*.⁵⁰ In this poem, Wang Duanshu praises Ding for conducting herself in a dignified manner when receiving guests. Wang's action of 'responding' to her daughter's verses and praising her etiquette hints at the pride Wang Duanshu held for Ding as a mother as well as a teacher.

The example of Ding Junwang shows Wang's devotion to the cultivation of younger generations of women writers from the domestic sphere. Besides Wang's step-daughter, other female relatives also received their domestic education from Wang through their family bonds. Wang's role as an inner chamber teacher in these cases differ from her experiences of teaching gentlewomen for a living and was probably driven by a motivation to pass down the tradition of learning within the family. Wang Duanshu's own childhood, as demonstrated in the biographies mentioned above, had benefited from knowledge passed down from her father

⁴⁶ Gao Youzhen, 'Su xia zhuan', 2a.

⁴⁷ Wang Duanshu, 'Zheng ji', 17.15a

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, *Da zhi nü shi shi jun wang* 答稚女詩示君望 (Responding to My Young Daughter Junwang), Chapter 9, 'Yin hong ji' *Red Chantings*, QDSWHB, 35.

and learning alongside her brothers. Ding Shengzhao also explains that Wang Duanshu inherited the family learning of poetry and prose from her father Wang Si-ren, whose literary talent was one of the best of the time.⁵¹

Wang Duanshu's female family members also contributed directly towards her *Notable Women* anthology project. Ding Qiguang 丁啟光 (date unknown), a cousin of Ding Shengzhao, whose works are included in the 'Main Collection', was also responsible for the editing and paratextual writings of the second half of 'Subsequent Collection' (chapter 42).⁵² Ding Qiguang's editorial contribution to *Notable Women* shows the collaboration of gentlewomen in writing and publishing, and also reflects the consumption and the production of culture was integrated into gentlewomen's lives in seventeenth-century China.

1.3 Wang Duanshu as a Professional Woman

In analysing seventeenth-century Chinese elite women's socio-literary networks, Dorothy Ko defines three kinds of women's literary communities based on different modes of networking: domestic, social and public. The most well-known gentlewomen's literary networks, among Wang's contemporaries, were the domestic poetry clubs of Shen Yixiu 沈宜修 (1590–1635) and her daughters, and of Shang Jinglan 商景蘭 (1605–1676) with her daughters and female-in-law.⁵³ In Ko's discussion, Shen Yixiu's network is described as a 'domestic' one, while the community centres around Shang Jinglan is labelled as a 'social' one.⁵⁴ Although Shen and Shang's networks were both family-orientated, the difference between 'domestic' and 'social', lies in the fact that Shang's literary circle also included non-family members.

⁵¹ Ding Shengzhao 丁圣肇, 'Ding sheng zhao xu 丁圣肇序' (Preface to *Classical Poetry of Notable Women*), 4.b., 5. a. [hereafter: Ding xu].

⁵² Ding Qiguang 丁啟光, 'Hou ji 後集' (Subsequent Collection), *MYSWCB*, 42.1a–42.19a.

⁵³ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, on Shen Yixiu, 202–207; on Shang Jinglan, 226–232.

⁵⁴ Ibid. See also Ko's definition of different types of women's literary networks, including courtesans, 15–17.

The other model of networking, which Ko defines as public community and is represented by the members of the first female-exclusive poetry club ‘Banana Garden’ (*Jiao yuan* 蕉園) that was active in the mid-seventeenth century, were gentlewomen with either family connections or social acquaintances and all lived in the city of Hangzhou.⁵⁵ This type of network highlights not only family and social ties among its membership, but also the physical locality of the club members; the community also builds on the literary fame of its members: literary works were produced and published as local cultural accomplishments.⁵⁶

Wang Duanshu stands out among the talented gentlewomen of the early seventeenth century as a professional writer of the public world, who establishes high profile literary networks with other gentlewomen beyond her family connections, and a public literary network through her husband. This section retraces Wang Duanshu’s social and public network through her written and edited works, to explore how she transcended boundaries and simultaneously acted as a member of three different kinds of literary connections. This web of connections reveals Wang Duanshu as an active agent in the seventeenth-century literary scene, demonstrating how Wang gradually built a professional career and how her reputation rose as a gentlewomen writer.

1.3.1 *Wang Duanshu and social networks of gentlewomen*

Wang Duanshu’s *Notable Women* anthology also documents her contacts and social activities among her wider female networks in the early Qing elite society. For example, a social gathering during the day lantern festival hosted by gentlewoman Hu Zixia 胡紫霞 was attended by Wang Duanshu and her elder sister Wang Jingshu.⁵⁷ Wang Duanshu’s connection with Hu Zixia may have been established during Wang’s employment as a teacher of Hu’s

⁵⁵ Ibid., 234–237. Also see ‘Negotiating Gentility: The Banana Garden Poetry Club in seventeenth-century China’, in *The Quest for Gentility in China: Negotiations Beyond Gender and Class*, eds. Daria Berg and Chloe Starr (London, 2007), 74–75.

⁵⁶ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 234.

⁵⁷ Ding Qiguang 丁啟光, ‘Hou ji’ (Subsequent Collection), 42.7a 上元夕浮翠吳夫人招, 同黃皆令陶固生趙東瑋家玉隱社集拈得元字

daughter.⁵⁸ Wang Duanshu also appears to have been acquainted with Huang Yuanjie, another prominent professional gentlewoman writer and painter of the early Qing period and who was also present at the social gathering held by Hu.⁵⁹ Poems written by Wang Duanshu and Huang Yuanjie 黃媛介 (fl. 1650) and printed in *Notable Women* indicates their acquaintance:⁶⁰ these two professional gentlewomen may have also shared broader social acquaintances and networks, as Wang's poem describes an occasion when she wrote a poem on a painting by Huang that was purchased by Gong Ruhuang 龔汝黃.⁶¹

Although they could be regarded as exceptional cases for the period in question, both Wang Duanshu and Huang Yuanjie's ventures into public professional life indicates that the early Qing was a period of change in terms of the expansion of women's literacy. This social development also manifested in the public acceptance and recognition of women's talents. In 1661, the year Wang's preface to *Notable Women* is dated, the prominent early-Qing playwright, Li Yü 李漁 (1610-1680), invited Wang to preface his newly-composed song drama, the *Bi mu yu* 比目魚 (*Soul Mates*). Li's other drama, *Yi Zhong yuan* 意中緣 (*Ideal Love Match*), was prefaced one or two years earlier by Huang Yuanjie.⁶² Like Li Yü, both Wang and Huang were living as professional writers in post-war Hangzhou after the Ming dynasty fell. The writing of prefatory material to song drama, however, was held by those in a privileged position and dominated by the literati. Li's very act of asking women to preface his

⁵⁸ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Zheng ji' (Main Collection), 12.4b, 女祥禎授業予門; 'Yi ji 遺集' Collection of Omitted Writings, 32.4a, entry of Wu Zhenhan 吳貞愍.

⁵⁹ *Writing an inscription on Huang Jieling's Painting*, and the two poems in 'Zheng ji' Subsequent Collection, 42. 14b, 42. 16b, 'Ji Huang jieling mei hua lou er shou 寄黃皆令梅花樓二首' (*Sending to Huang Jieling in the Cherry Blossom Tower*). Jieling is the stylish name of Huang Yuanjie; see also 'Zheng ji' (Main Collection), 9.20a. 丙申予客山陰, 雨中承丁夫人王玉映過訪居停祁夫人許弱雲即演雲童劇偶賦誌感

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Wei Gong ruhuang ti huang jieling hua 為龔汝黃題黃皆令畫' (Writing a Poem on a Painting by Huang Jieling Purchased by Gong Ruhuang), in Ding Qiguang 丁啟光 ed. 'Hou ji' (Subsequent Collection), MYSWCB, 42.14b

⁶² Huang Yuanjie's preface to 'Yi Zhong yuan 意中緣' (*Ideal Love Match*) was signed without a date. However, another prefatory contributor, Fan Xiang, signed his preface in 1659. Cai Yi 蔡毅, ed. *Zhongguo gudian xiqu xuba huibian 中國古典戲曲序跋彙編 (Compiled Collections of Colophons and Prefaces to Chinese Classic Music Drama)*, (Jinan, 1989), vol.12, 1497–1498. [hereafter: ZGXQXH] Wang Duanshu's social connection, for instance, can be seen in Wang's poem.

work, as Chang argues, ‘was in itself a gesture of recognising a woman as a distinct entity who deserves to be heard for her opinions’.⁶³ Li Yü was among the male intellectuals who recognized women’s intelligence and adored women’s talents. His invitations to Wang Duanshu is further evidence of Wang’s current celebrity status as a gentlewoman editor, critic and writer in the public sphere before the eventual publication of *Notable Women*.

1.3.2 Wang Duanshu’s public connection through Ding Shengzhao

Wang Duanshu’s husband, Ding Shengzhao, was proactive not just in promoting Wang’s writings but also as an intermediary for Wang with his social circle, especially among male scholars. Wang Duanshu wrote many poems that pay tribute to various occasions and were dedicated to Ding’s friends. These writings were selected and curated in *Notable Women*,⁶⁴ showing that in her role as author, Wang Duanshu ‘lived’ an active social life, at least among her husband’s social networks.

Among the dedications that indicate both Wang Duanshu and Ding Shengzhao had close relations with the recipients is an essay that was presented to Qian Zifang 錢子方 and Zhou Youyuan 周又元 and written on Ding’s behalf.⁶⁵ In this dedication, Wang recalls the hardship that she and Ding faced during their journey returning south. Wang vividly depicts the poverty-stricken situation: ‘although books and scrolls filled up the carriage, the rice we have left even could not fill a vessel ... a collar has broken on my ragged gown, and soon the sleeves would be worn-out and even could not cover my elbows’.⁶⁶ She describes the couple’s desperate situation and the help and sponsorship they received from Qian Zifang and Zhou

⁶³ Chun-Shu Chang and Shelly Chang, *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China: Society, Culture and Modernity in Li Yu’s World* (Ann Arbor, 1998), 207.

⁶⁴ Ding Qiguang ed., ‘Hou ji’ (Subsequent Collection), such as poems for parting (42.4a), congratulations on childbirth (42.5a), poems remarking on a favour (42.11b), and poems corresponding to a prose (42.13b).

⁶⁵ Wang Duanshu, ‘Dai fu zi zeng Qian Zifang jian cheng Zhou Youyuan 代夫子贈錢子方兼程周又元’ (Presenting to Qian Zifang and Zhou Youyuan), ‘Hou ji’, *MYSWCB*, 42.11a.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

Youyuan, as Qian and Zhou generously sponsored the couple and bought them a boat, so that they could return to their hometown safely despite the windy and snowy weather.⁶⁷ This dedication is a gift in which Qian and Zhou's virtuous deeds are publicly praised.

It is unclear, however, as Ko points out, whether Wang was presented as a dependent of Ding or as 'a fully-fledged member on her own terms at these social occasions'.⁶⁸ A poem by Mao Qiling 毛奇齡 (1623-1713) remarks on a birthday banquet occasion clearly listing Wang as Ding's wife.⁶⁹ In addition, Mao's attributed preface to Wang's individual collection, *Works left in a Writing Chest*, only mentions Ding as the one who brought Wang's manuscripts to him to request a preface.⁷⁰ Meanwhile, Mao mentioned both Wang's and Ding's fathers, Wang Si-ren and Ding Wenzhong, indicating the respect and fame that both families received from scholars. This example clearly indicates the importance of Ding in publicizing Wang within his wider social networks.

Although these social networks do not directly help our understanding of Wang Duanshu's editorship of her anthology, they indicate that Wang was an active agent in the public sphere, and her writings and literary activities are situated in a larger cultural elite society. Consequently, to understand her roles as a professional writer and editor, her writings needs to be viewed in broader socio-cultural trends and historical contexts as an integral part of a holistic structure of Wang's thoughts and actions.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 133.

⁶⁹ Mao Qiling 毛奇齡, Poem with Five-Character Lines, 'To Magistrate Ding and his Wife Madam Wang Yuying's Fortieth Birthdays, One in August and another in June' *XHJ*, vol. 170. Yu Ying was the style name for Wang Duanshu, which would replace Wang's first name Duanshu on occasions. Wang and Ding were both born in 1621.

⁷⁰ Mao, 'Yuyin liu qie ji xu' 玉映留篋集序, (Preface to gentlewoman Yu Ying's collection, *Works left in a writing Chest*). *XHJ*, vol. 30, Four-Treasury edition, digitized facsimile and transcribed texts on 愛如生 *Erudition Chinese Classical Writing Primary Source Database*. Mao did not mention that Wang was present when the manuscript of her *Poems Left in Boxes* was presented to him by Ding Shengzhao.

⁷¹ Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation*, 47. I found this perspective that examines Wang's literary acquaintance with contemporary professional writer and dramatist Li Yü 李漁 useful to look at Wang's life and work. Li and Wang had both lived through the Ming-Qing transition and were active in early Qing society as professional writers. Their life and work, thus, share commonality in terms of the socio-cultural-political contexts.

1.3.3 *The publishing of Red Chantings*

Despite their privileged backgrounds, Wang and her husband experienced hardship during the Ming-Qing transition. In this political-driven period, Ming loyalists including Wang used their own writings to record life after the dynastic fall. Ding's prefaces to Wang's *Red Chantings* (c.1650s) and *Notable Women* portray their impoverished, yet cultured, life of exile.⁷² Ding moved his own family and Wang Duanshu back to their hometown in southern China following the incidents of his father's death and the suicide of the Chongzhen emperor, the last ruler of the Ming dynasty.⁷³ After the couple returned to their hometown Shaoxing 紹興 and settled in the estate of Ding's father, the couple continued to live in poverty, but this did not deter Wang Duanshu's literary writing. 'Dressed in coarse clothing and with the cottage equipped with only dusty cookware and a dim lamp', Ding claims that 'my wife wrote more loyalist poetry than ever before'.⁷⁴ Wang's poems and essays 'filled up her make-up box', 'it fully documents her seventeen years of experience in exile'.⁷⁵

The publication of *Red Chantings*, an individual collection of Wang's own poetry and prose written during the seventeen years of her solitary life in exile,⁷⁶ was sponsored by a group of Ming loyalists and literati friends of her husband (see below).⁷⁷ These loyalist writings also mark the transition of Wang Duanshu's works across the boundary from the private sphere (the papers in her make-up box) to a publicly-sponsored collection. The *Brief Introductory Note to the Printing of Red Chantings* was signed by 47 members of the *Tong*

⁷² Ding Shengzhao, 'Xu' Preface to *Yin hong ji*, LFZK, 249. See also MYSWCB, 'Ding xu', 1.b, 2.a.

⁷³ Ding, 'Xu'序, 249. Ding's original accounts as: 'We lived in Beijing for several years. Then my father was humiliated by Wei Zhongxian, the dynasty fell, and the emperor suffered his tragic demise at Coal Hill. At that point I took my family south.' 先太史憤傷於熹廟闖人, 先帝變興, 煤峯泣血。予遂攜家南歸, 翁園謫庵小樓處, 于白马岩田庐数年, 得林峦花鸟之情, 为帘窥镜感之助, 荆布塵甑, 鬢舞惊燕淡如也。而诗意盈冉, 集曰吟紅, 不忘一十七載黍离子墨迹也。 Full preface is translated by Ellen Widmer, in *Women Writers of Traditional China*, eds. Chang, Saussy and Yim-Kwong, 764–765.

⁷⁴ Ding Shengzhao, 'Xu' Preface to *Red Chantings*, LFZK, 249; trans. Widmer, *Women Writers*, 764.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ One-Autumn Society 同秋社, 'Ke yin hong ji xiao yin 刻吟紅集小引' (Introductory Note to *Red Chantings*), *Yin hong ji*, QDSWHB, 3–4.

qiu she 同秋社 (One-Autumn Society), an early Qing literary society with Ming loyalists such as Zhang Dai 張岱 (1597–1684) as members.

Wang Duanshu's connection with Zhang Dai may have been initiated by her husband Ding Shengzhao, who was also a member of the One-Autumn Society. In fact, Wang Duanshu and Zhang Dai, both natives of Shaoxing, knew each other before the publication of *Red Chantings*. Six of Wang Duanshu's loyalist biographies were previously published in Zhang Dai's *Shi kui shu* 石匱書 (*Writings in the Stone Caskets*).⁷⁸ This mutual agreement between Wang and Zhang to publish the loyalist biographies in Zhang's collection, as Widmer interprets, was an act of 'appropriation' of Wang's writing with Wang's own permission.⁷⁹ The position of a biographer was traditionally considered masculine, and this could have limited Wang's own literary practice in selecting genres. This gendered authorship issue for female writers existed mainly due to their unconventional female role in literary practice. For female writers who were restricted by expected gendered performance in literary practice, such 'appropriation' thus became an 'accident of preservation'.⁸⁰ Wang Duanshu's refusal to Zhang Dai's requests to publish these six biographies at the beginning indicates her modesty as she was ashamed of the vulgar words of her writing.⁸¹ However, the more Wang refused Zhang Dai's request, the more Zhang Dai himself wished to include these writings in his collection.⁸²

Wang Duanshu points to Zhang Dai's publication of her loyalist writing later in *Red Chantings*, claiming that, as these biographies had already been published in *Writings in the*

⁷⁸ Li, *Women and National Trauma*, 116. Li argues that there are six biographical accounts of loyalists and martyrs from the Ming-Qing transition by Wang Duanshu incorporated into Zhang Dai's *Shi kui shu* 石匱書 (*Writings in the Stone Caskets*). These six pieces are also included in Wang Duanshu's *Yin hong ji*: 20.1a–20.9b.

⁷⁹ Ellen Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book* (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 309. Widmer argues that such 'appropriation' of Wang's writing is by her own permission, and also an 'accident of preservation', as there are almost no traces of collected or individual classical stories by women that have survived today.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Jin ling qigai zhuan 金陵乞丐傳' (Biography to a Beggar from Nanjing), Chapter 20, *Red Chantings*, QDSWHB, 87.

⁸² Ibid.

Stone Caskets, she ‘does not dare to change or delete a word’.⁸³ A comparison by literary historian Gao indicates that words and whole sentences did change in her own published versions of these writings. The vulgar words that Wang refers to could be the colloquial style of her writing in Zhang’s edition, which she may have felt embarrassed about and considered unpublishable.⁸⁴ The revised version of this biography in *Red Chantings* suggests that Wang was paying attention to the opinions of her readers; she did not wish her ‘vulgar words’ to ‘show off her skills in front of experts’.⁸⁵ Such authorial intention of showing modesty can also be seen in what Wang states in the ‘Nanjing beggar’ biography: she modestly claims that such writing was a mere act of passing the time while she had no intention of ‘womanly work’ living in exile during the Ming-Qing transition period.⁸⁶

Despite Wang Duanshu’s modesty claim, publishing politically-driven writings placed women like her beyond their ‘gender-specific’ virtues.⁸⁷ During the political disorder of the Ming-Qing transition, social instability created ‘imaginative space for political aspirations or political actions’, which were not admissible in periods of stability when gender roles were fixed, as women were unable to take examinations or hold government posts.⁸⁸ Furthermore, as Li argues, loyalism as a literary theme did ‘create a sense of common cause and encouraged a measure of independence and self-assertion for a few writing women’.⁸⁹ Female writers who undertook the loyalist’s stance, whether by means of addressing political critiques and concerns in writing or being actively involved in loyalist resistance, went beyond the inner chambers, transcended gender roles and challenged gender boundaries in the patriarchal social system.⁹⁰ Wang Duanshu’s loyalist writing, thus, not only demonstrates her

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Yuen-Chuan Kao, *Research of Wang Duan-shu and her literature*, unpublished doctoral thesis (Taipei, 2012)131-132.

⁸⁵ Wang Duanshu, ‘Jin ling qigai zhuan’, 86.

⁸⁶ Ibid. Wang Duanshu says in the opening of this biography she modestly claims that 時以喪亂之後，家計蕭然，暫寓梅山，無心女紅，聊借筆墨，以舒鬱鬱。

⁸⁷ Wai-Yee Li, ‘Early Qing to 1732’, in *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, 152-244, at 154.

⁸⁸ Wai-Yee Li, ‘Women Writers and Gender Boundaries during the Ming-Qing Transition’, in *The Inner Quarters and Beyond*, 179-214, at 179–180.

⁸⁹ Wai-Yee Li, ‘Female Voices Appropriating Masculine Diction’, 101.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

political stance, but also allows her voice to enter a domain that was previously exclusive to men.

The complicated and often fragile relationship among textual, social, personal and professional networks are evident in the texts and context that are discussed in Wang's socio-literary networks. By mapping these connections, such discussion sets up the contexts in which texts and prints were often produced in the late Ming and early Qing elite society, as well as an analytical lens to help us understand the importance of *qu*, and how music was produced, consumed and transmitted in the seventeenth century. Wang Duanshu's example of networks mirroring modes of text production was not simply a literary practice; instead, it was embedded in the larger community and often conveyed with shared elite tastes, aesthetic and artistic-literary sensibility.

1.4 The Process of Selecting and Curating Material for *Notable Women*

This section firstly explores how Wang Duanshu's socio-literary network may have contributed to the material gathering and editing process of *Notable Women*. The selection of materials for an anthology ultimately, as Berg argues, reveals the editor's agenda and historical-social circumstances.⁹¹ Born towards the end of the Ming dynasty, Wang Duanshu was educated under late Ming and became an active member of the learned early Qing elite society in the first half of the seventeenth century. The period of Wang Duanshu's known life not only witnessed the emergence of women in publishing as writers, editors and anthologists from the end of the sixteenth century onwards, but also the formation of a female poetic tradition and literary culture.⁹² An overview of Wang Duanshu's selection strategy – what her source materials might have been and what she decided to include – reflects the socio-cultural

⁹¹ Daria Berg, 'Cultural Discourse on Xue Susu, A courtesan in Late Ming China', *International Journal of Asian Studies*, 6/2 (2009), 171-200, at 178.

⁹² Grace Fong, 'Gender and the Failure of Canonization: Anthologizing Women's Poetry in the Late Ming', *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 26 (2004), 129-149, at 130; Widmer, *The Beauty and the Book*.

circumstances of the public access to women's writing in the first half of the seventeenth-century.

1.4.1 *Collection of material*

In his preface to Wang's *Notable Women*, Ding indicates that Wang had started her collection of materials for *Notable Women* before their exile from Beijing to their hometown in south-east China during the dynastic fall.⁹³ Ding Shengzhao's preface to Wang's *Notable Women* underlines her great efforts of curating and preserving women's work, and gives vivid recollection of their journey south as:

although the journey was extremely dangerous, my wife still travelled with a few published works and scrolls that contained newly-composed writings of her female relatives. At night, she used these collected scrolls and writings as pillows; rats and leaking roofs ruined the papers, but I did not know these incomplete manuscripts contained refined and elegant verses until I opened and read them.⁹⁴

Previous research on the compiling and editing process of *Notable Women* suggests that Wang Duanshu might have worked with and supervised a team of collators who mainly consisted of her family members in Beijing and her native province.⁹⁵ Wang may have also accessed works by her contemporary female writers via postal communication from readers and writers themselves.⁹⁶ It is unclear, however, to what extent Wang obtained materials through her own social connections, or through the efforts of her husband and other family members.

Certainly, the 'Supplementary Collection' only consists of Wang Duanshu's poetry and prose, and can be regarded as Wang's personal collection that was attached to the end of

⁹³ Historians also define the period from 1644 to c.1662 as 'post-Ming'. The Prince of Fu established the southern Ming court in Nanjing. The end of the Ming loyalist resistance in southern China, as Ellen Widmer claims that 'the succession of the Kangxi emperor in 1661 and the executions of Ming loyalists that began shortly thereafter. This change ... also eliminated the networks of male loyalists'. Ellen Widmer, 'Ming Loyalism and the Women's Voice in Fiction', 373.

⁹⁴ Ding Shengzhao, 'Ding xu' 丁序, *MYSWCB*, 1.b.-2. a.

⁹⁵ Ellen Widmer, 'Retrieving the Past', 84-85.

⁹⁶ Widmer, 'Retrieving the Past', 85. Widmer points out that Wang Duanshu's 'letter box and those of family and friends were sources for contemporary women', and the letter correspondence between some poets wishing to publish with Wang is included in *Chi du xin yu* 尺牘新語 (*Modern Letters*) 1668 third edition.

Notable Women as the last sub-collection, was edited by Wang's cousin-in-law Ding Qiguang. The main source for chapter 25 is a multi-author collection of courtesans' songs and poetry: *Qing lou yun yu* 青樓韻語 (*Stylish Verses of Green Bowers* 1614), a fashionable, commercial publication from the late Ming period. It was found by Ding Shengzhao at a book market.⁹⁷ In particular, Wang states that she did not obtain this source until the main body of the *Yan ji* 豔集 (Collection of Erotica) had been compiled and edited.⁹⁸ The input of family members for *Notable Women* in editing and material collection, apart from the cases of Ding Qiguang and Ding Shengzhao's contributions, is hard to confirm.

1.4.2 Source materials of *Notable Women*

Wang Duanshu's inclusive attitude towards the curating of material allowed for a collection that, in her words, was 'comprehensive and exquisite'.⁹⁹ The entire anthology contains approximately 2,000 works by around 1,000 authors. The size of the collection suggests that a large pool of material was available to Wang during the years of compilation. It is possible that, as Widmer suggests, 'a progress of library building was also underway'; it seems more likely that Ding and Wang built up their stock of materials as the project evolved.¹⁰⁰ The vast majority of the texts that Wang draws on, especially by those writers who lived before her time, were selected from previous publications. This point is clearly stated at the beginning of Wang's editorial principle, in which she claims that her editing relied upon many of the pre-existing publications as sources for the collection.¹⁰¹

This large pool of pre-existing material was produced in a society in which Wang Duanshu grew up and received her education. These materials reflect the burgeoning

⁹⁷ Wang Duanshu, 'Yan ji 豔集' (Collection of Erotica), *MYSWCB*, 25.1a.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Wang Duanshu, 'Zi xu', 2.a; here I quote the translation by Haun Saussy, *Preface to Mingyuan Shiwei*, in *Women Writers*, 692.

¹⁰⁰ Widmer, 'Retrieving the Past', 86.

¹⁰¹ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Fan li 凡例' (Editorial Principles), 2.b. She remarks that 'this collection is drawn from anthologies edited by famous men as well as compendia and collections of great scholars'.

learnedness of women since the Ming dynasty and prepared her for this ambitious task in the early Qing era. The late Ming period (from the 1570s to the 1640s) witnessed the first hightide of women's literature and an unprecedented interest in women's writing. The contemporary editing, anthologizing and publishing became not only a task for literati but also for learned women as well.¹⁰² Apart from individual collections, women published jointly with their male and female kin. Other writings, such as folklore stories and legends, and commercial works, as mentioned above, also provided sources for Wang's collection.

The late Ming period also witnessed the blossoming of liberal genres and many books of various vernacular genre were produced to appeal to the popular market. Under this intellectual influence, Wang's *Notable Women* included sub-collections and works selected from fiction and drama.¹⁰³ As Chapter 2 will show, music imprints of art- and folksong collections were also among Wang Duanshu's sources. The diversity of Wang Duanshu's source materials reflects her breadth of reading, as her biographer claimed: 'from the *Classics* to Dark Learnings and anecdotal histories, she reads them all'.¹⁰⁴ Wang's broad selections also testify to her claim of making an anthology 'comprehensive and exquisite', rather than being an editorial ploy. This comprehensive and collective display of women's writing produced during the late Ming and early Qing makes Wang Duanshu's *Notable Women* 'one of the earliest and most ambitious anthologies of women's writing'.¹⁰⁵ Wang's editorial strategies and the anthology itself also inspired female successors in their own projects of

¹⁰² Berg, 'Female Self-Fashioning in Late Imperial China', 244–245.

¹⁰³ On the entry by Xu Xian, Wang refers to the novel, *Much-Told Story of West Lake*. See *Notable Women*, 12.20b. In terms of drama, for the entry by Liang Zhanyi, in 'Za ji', *MYSWCB*, 39.3a, Wang Duanshu attached the information of Yang Huilin, a female friend of Liang Zhanyi, and remarks that Li Yü's *Ideal Love Match* song-drama was composed for Yang Huilin.

¹⁰⁴ Wang Zhenshi 王軫石, 'Wang xu', *MYSWCB*, 4.b. 讀書自經史及陰符老莊內典稗官之書無不瀏覽淹貫。Dark Learnings, or Xuanxue (玄學 *Hsüan²-hsüeh²*), is a metaphysical post-classical Chinese philosophy from the Six Dynasties (222-589), bringing together Daoist and Confucian beliefs through revision and discussion. The movement found its scriptural support both in Daoist and drastically reinterpreted Confucian sources. "Dark Learning", came to reign supreme in cultural circles, especially at Jiankang during the period of division. The concept represented the more abstract, unworldly, and idealistic tendency in early medieval Chinese thought. Xuanxue philosophers combined elements of Confucianism and Taoism to reinterpret the *I Ching* 易經, *Tao Te Ching* 道德經 and *Zhuangzi* 莊子.

¹⁰⁵ Ellen Widmer (trans.), 'Selected Short Works by Wang Duanshu', 182.

compiling women's poetry and served as a model for later curation strategies seen in eighteenth-century women's anthologies.¹⁰⁶

1.5 Wang Duanshu and her Editorial Strategies of Notable Women

Investigation of Wang's approaches in material selection, grouping and sequencing helps to answer questions about how editorial strategy is related to the finished materials. This section raises another issue: how did Wang's individual editorial strategy affect our understanding of *Notable Women*, and what kinds of mediation does the editorial strategy represent? This section includes examination of the organization and ordering of the collection into sub-collections, how the physical features guide the readers, and the socio-cultural means of the 'format of the text'.

Through a close reading of the textual and paratextual materials of the anthology, this section focuses on the kind of *persona* or 'notion of the self' being mediated through the editorial process. This 'self' is not only manifested in Wang Duanshu's editorial persona through her voice but also refers to the 'self' that female writers fashioned through Wang Duanshu's perspective. This investigation of the editorial strategy reveals Wang's literary aesthetics and sensibility towards ongoing trends and shared culture concerns among the intellectual elite, further testifying to Wang as a reputable public writer and editor at the centre of the elite tradition and society.

¹⁰⁶ Barbara B. Peterson, 'Wang Rushu', in *Notable Women of China: Shang Dynasty to the Early Twenty Century*, ed Barbara B. Peterson. (New York, 2000), 320–321.

1.5.1 Categorization by the author's social status and historical period

To achieve a collection that would not only be 'exquisite' but also 'comprehensive',¹⁰⁷ Wang also carefully categorized and sequenced the sub-collections within *Notable Women* using various strategies. Widmer states that Wang's editorial policy of listing the works of singing girls alongside that of gentlewomen would 'have been slightly iconoclastic'.¹⁰⁸ In fact, Wang's ordering strategy indicates her moral stance and consideration from a gentlewoman editor's stance, in which she distinguishes between ladies like herself and the courtesans. Wang states her plan of sequencing very clearly in her attributed preface (dated 1661):

The wives of kings, princes, and dukes, along with other palace ladies, I put them in a *Palace Collection*
... Wives of High Officials, gentlewomen, and so down to the principal wives of upright commoners formed my *Main Collection*
... After them, I put those women who had turned away from disorderly lives in an appendix at the end of *Main Collection*
... I put poems of women who remain in the pleasure quarters and end their lives there in a *Collection of Erotica*.¹⁰⁹

Social status, therefore, is the primary basis of the ordering and categorization of the collection. This ordering shows Wang Duanshu's concern for her editorial presentation of social class, especially as these texts would be made public through print.

Publishing women's writing in a Confucian hierarchical society, many literati adopted this ordering strategy when editing women's poetry anthologies from the 1550s onwards. Such carefully ordered sub-collections based on social rank, as Wang's classification has shown, detailed the position of female writers down to a micro level. For instance, works by ex-courtesans – 'women who had turned away from disorderly lives' – were separated from 'poems of women who remain in the pleasure quarters' ('Collection of Erotica'), which were placed immediately in a sub-collection after the 'Main Collection' as an appendix (see Table

¹⁰⁷ Wang Duanshu, 'Fan li', 3b, 4a.

¹⁰⁸ Ellen Widmer, 'Selected Short Work by Wang Duanshu, Translator's Preface', 179.

¹⁰⁹ Wang Duanshu, 'Zi xu', *MYSWCB*, 2b, 3a. Saussy (trans.), 'Preface to *Mingyuan Shiwei*', in *Women Writers in Traditional China*, 692.

1.1). In other words, Wang Duanshu perceived courtesan writers who later elevated their social status, often by marrying literati or scholar-officials, as being of the gentry class, yet they remained subordinate to the gentry-born women in the domestic and social sphere.

Wang Duanshu's classification of female authors is a microcosm of contemporary Chinese society, gender and class. Her editorial strategy of sequencing these sub-collections by social rank, meanwhile, says a great deal about her own attitudes. Dorothy Ko has observed that a woman's place within family and society was fluid, permeable and exchangeable in seventeenth-century China.¹¹⁰ The late Ming period witnessed a fashion for literati and even officials to take courtesans or singing girls as concubines. Therefore, Wang Duanshu's 'slightly iconoclastic' ordering strategy,¹¹¹ was also a reflection of the social conditions that allowed for women such as courtesans to co-exist in gentry households. This context also appears to have allowed gentlewomen such as Wang Duanshu to publish 'their most private thoughts' and 'verses associated with courtesans', without 'renouncing her claims to filial piety', or 'diminishing their cultural identity' as a good woman, wife or daughter.¹¹²

1.5.2 *Categorization by poetic style*

There are sub-collections within *Notable Women* that show a mixture of entries in terms of social ranks, and are categorized by a criteria of poetic style and genre. Unlike the orthodox form of poetry collated in the majority of sub-collections that are sorted by social ranks, these writings need certain justifications perhaps to legitimize their existence in the anthology. Yet, Wang Duanshu's own rationalizing for this editorial decision is linked with pre-established

¹¹⁰ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 252. Ko remarks, 'that female social markers – wives, concubine, professional artist, singing girl, and courtesan – were seldom permanent. A woman travelled from one station to another through life's many stages, especially in traumatic times of dynastic transitions.'

¹¹¹ Ellen Widmer, in *Under the Confucian Eye*, 179.

¹¹² Nancy Armstrong, 'Chinese Women in a Comparative Perspective: A Response', in *Writing Women in late Imperial China*, eds. Ellen Widmer and Kang-I Sun Chang, 397-422, at 410-411.

practices and in this specific classification by poetic style, Wang has ‘followed the footsteps of men and emulates the very example of Confucius’.¹¹³

In particular, Wang Duanshu allocated ‘poems of the “ambling fox” and “mulberry Pu river” sorts’ into an independent sub-collection entitled ‘Intercalary Collection’ (chapters 22–23) and placed it before the ‘Collection of Erotica’ (see Table 1.1). Even though writers included in the ‘Intercalary Collection’ were not necessarily from humble origins (some of them were even gentry women), the poetic styles that were chosen by these female writers within this sub-collection were traditionally associated with erotic and sensual thoughts that could lead to moral corruption.¹¹⁴

The earliest literary articulation of “ambling fox” and “mulberry Pu river” can be traced to *Airs*, the first section in the *Book of Odes*.¹¹⁵ The poems in *Airs* were collected from the ancient states of Zhen and Wei, and were initially love songs sung by commoners. It is said that many of the ‘poems’ in *Book of Odes* were sung by women, or at least are narrated from women’s perspectives to express love, passion and even sensual, erotic feelings.¹¹⁶ In the original poetry of *Airs*, “ambling fox” is ‘a motif for the male philanderer’, and “mulberry Pu river” is an abbreviated expression for ‘tunes heard among the mulberry on the river bank of Pu’ (*sang pu zhi yin* 桑濮之音); both are music compositions associated with open scenes of courting.¹¹⁷ This ‘licentious music’ was regarded as morally corruptive by Confucius, as Lam points out, and has resulted in the large absence of women in the Confucian literary and music canon, and the banishment of the presence of women’s music in public performances and texts in consequence.

¹¹³ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 176.

¹¹⁴ Joseph Lam, ‘The Presence and Absence of Female Musicians and Music in China’, in *Women and Confucian Culture in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*, eds. Dorothy Ko, JaHyun Kim Haboush, and Joan Piggott (Berkeley, 2003), 97–101.

¹¹⁵ The first anthology of poetry in Chinese history and anthologized by the sage Confucius himself.

¹¹⁶ Present day scholars regard this feature as hinting women’s voice and history in ancient China. See Anne B. Kinney, ‘The *Book of Odes* as a Source for Women’s History’, unpublished paper.

¹¹⁷ *Women Writers of Traditional China*, eds. Chang, Saussy and Yim-Kwong, 694.

That is not to say that by referring to ‘the “ambling fox” and “mulberry Pu river” sorts’, Wang Duanshu’s generalization of the poetic style in the ‘Intercalary Collection’ is an indication that these poems are risqué. This is due to the cultural representation of ‘these sorts’ in Chinese elite discourse, in which the ‘licentious music of Zheng and Wei’ was a synonym for ‘vulgarity, bawdiness, and immoral’ behaviour.¹¹⁸ Wang shows her editorial concerns for womanly virtue by extracting the poetic writings that may contain sensual and erotic contents and placing them in an individual sub-collection.

Wang Duanshu’s editorial decision of including the ‘bawdy poems’, however, was not made without reasonable justification. Many late Ming male critics, such as He Liangjun 何良俊 (1506–1573), drew analogy between the love songs collected within *Book of Odes* and the contemporary ‘fashionable tunes’ (*shi qu* 時曲).¹¹⁹ As chapter 3 will explore in detail, the late Ming elite regarded the popular songs (at their time and in *Airs*) as expressing genuine, authentic feeling and emotions. During the late Ming period, the intellectual elite linked the eroticism expressed in many of the songs included in *Airs* with a counter-Confucian orthodoxy measure in critical and paratextual writings.

Confucius inclusion of *Airs* in *Book of Odes* (*Shi jing* 詩經) was used by the literati to sanction their own inclusion of risqué materials. As Volpp argues, ‘*Airs* were frequently cited ... in ... texts that dealt with romance to defend against obscenity’¹²⁰ The most representative statements regarding this point were made by the late-Ming professional editor Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574–1646). In the self-authored preface to his edited folksong anthology *Shan’ge* 山歌 (*Mountain Song* c.1619), Feng declares that editing erotic folksongs was an act of ‘borrowing the true feelings of men and women and uncovering the falseness of

¹¹⁸ Kathryn Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs in 16th- and 17th-century China: Reading, Imitation, and Desire* (Leiden, 2005), 89–90.

¹¹⁹ He Liangjun 何良俊, ‘Ci qu 詞曲’ (Remarks on songs and Lyrics), chapter 37 ‘Si you zhai cong shuo 四有齋叢說’, Yu Weimin 俞為民 and Sun Rong-rong 孫蓉蓉 eds., *Lidai quhua huibian 歷代曲話彙編 明代編* (*Comments on Qu from Imperial Dynasties Ming Dynasty Section*), vol.1 (Anhui, 2009), 464–465. [hereafter: LDQHHB] 觀十五國風，大半皆發於情，可以知矣...即西廂記與今所唱時曲，大率皆情詞也。

¹²⁰ Sophie Volpp, *Worldly Stage: Theatricality in Seventeenth-Century China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2011), 107, n51.

Confucianism’, for which he claims that ‘despite ... the vulgarity of songs from Zhen and Wei states, however, Confucius recorded them’.¹²¹ Many songs collected in *Mountain Song*, for instance, were also narrated from the woman’s perspective and some were sung by courtesans as repertoires.

Moreover, *Book of Odes* was closely tied in late Ming literary culture with various published women’s poetry anthologies. Many poems curated in the *Book of Odes*, as mentioned above, are said to be songs sung by women – a primary reason that many late-Ming literati anthologists used for taking an interest in anthologizing women’s poetry and writing.¹²² Wang Duanshu’s editorial rhetoric also rests upon the literary canon of *Book of Odes*, and its connection with the women’s poetic tradition; the pinnacle literary status of *Book of Odes* lies in its canonical position as the first ever poetry collection in Chinese history, edited and anthologized by the sage Confucius. Similar to Feng Menglong’s argument in defending erotic folksongs from the late Ming period, Wang states:

If a poetry ... is very beautiful but vulgar, or wanton and absurd, I also preserve it. Is this going too far? I say not. When Confucius edited the classics of poetry, he did not completely omit poems of Zheng and Wei. Instead, he limited himself to a few from each. You can see this for yourself.¹²³

Wang’s very act of pointing to the editorial practice that was carried out by the sage Confucius echoes the literati editorial tradition of the late Ming period of employing *Book of Odes* as the earliest model of anthologizing women’s poetry. Confucius’ anthologizing practice of collecting songs from Zhen and Wei – two ducal states that were historically notorious for their indulgence in licentious music – allows Wang to legitimize her editorial

¹²¹ Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, ‘Xu shan ge 敘山歌’ (Preface to *Mountain Songs*), in Wei Tongxian 魏同賢 ed. *Feng Menglong quanji* 馮夢龍全集 (*The Complete Works of Feng Menglong*) (Nanjing, 2007), 1. [hereafter FMLQJ] Oki Yasushi (trans.), *Shan’ge, the ‘Mountain Songs’: Love Songs in Ming China* (Leiden, 2011), 4–5. 雖然桑間濮上國風刺之尼父錄焉,是以為真情而不可費也。

¹²² Xu Sufeng, ‘The Rhetoric of Legitimation Preface to Women’s Poetry Collections from Song to Ming’, *NAN NÜ*, 8/2 (2006), 271–288. Xu examines various Ming dynasty women’s poetry anthologies that mention *Odes* as the earliest model of anthologizing women’s poetry, such as Tian Yiheng’s 1557 preface to *Lady Scribes of Poetry* and Zheng Wen-ang’s 1620 *Poetry by Notable Women, Ancient and Current*.

¹²³ Wang Duanshu, ‘Fan li’, 2a. Widmer (trans.), in *Under Confucian Eyes*, 190.

decision to include sensual poems in her anthology without harming her own reputation as a gentlewoman editor.

The specific editorial consideration and justification that underpins the ‘Intercalary Collection’ raises a few considerations regarding the interpretation of Wang Duanshu’s motive and criterion in editing and curation. On the one hand, to follow the steps of Confucius was an action that could be perceived as crossing gender boundaries by engaging with the authoritative, orthodox canon. On the other hand, Wang Duanshu’s editorial practice was situated in the fashion of late Ming trends referring to the tradition of *Book of Odes* as an unorthodox defence and as the basis for publishing women’s writing. It is a paradox reflection of the practice of ancient sage, and the spirit of its contemporary time in pursuing *qing* 情 (the notion encompasses love, passion and subjectivity): the hallmark of late Ming culture and the anchor of late Ming literary practice. Wang Duanshu’s editorial strategies, thus, is a mixture of the ‘traditional’ and the ‘fashionable’.

1.5.3 Categorization by genre

Wang Duanshu’s editorial engagement with contemporary fashion extends to the practice of selecting, categorizing and ordering the sub-collections within *Notable Women* by genre. The ‘Song-lyric Collection’ (chapter 35–36), ‘Collection of Elegance’ (chapter 37–38) and ‘Miscellaneous Collection’ (chapter 39) are dedicated to the genre of lyric-poetry, *qu*, and random writings, respectively. These sub-collections were placed after the bulk of poetry that constitute the main body of the anthology (see Table 1.1). Wang Duanshu addresses the reason for including non-poetic genres in her outline of editorial principles as: ‘by compiling them, I can provide readers with a complete view of women’s writings’.¹²⁴

Wang Duanshu rationalizes the existence of these genres in a poetry anthology by claiming that ‘lyrics are certainly an extension of classic poetry; miscellaneous writings are

¹²⁴ Wang Duanshu, ‘Fan li’, 2b, 3a. 并及之，以備全覽

composed with poetic flavour.’¹²⁵ Wang’s perspective shares a similar view with her contemporary literati editors. In his attributed preface (dated 1629) to *Gujin ci xuan* 古今詞選 (*Unification of Ancient and Current Lyrics* 1633), dramatist Meng Chengshun 孟稱舜 (fl. 1657, who also prefaced Wang’s *Notable Women*) claims that ‘poetry became *ci* (song-lyric), song-lyric became *sanqu* (art song), the song-lyric is an extension of poetry, and the ancestor of art songs’.¹²⁶ In both Wang and Meng’s view, these genres are derived from the orthodox poetic tradition. Yet, the relationship between poetry and sub-genres of lyric poetry, *sanqu* and popular tunes are interconnected, while showing the trajectory of the vernacularization of the practice: from the orthodox genre of poetry, towards more informal, narrative and even performance-related liberal genres. During the late Ming publishing boom, imprints of these vernacular genres, ranging from fictions, drama miscellanies and songbooks were popular. Wang’s inclusion of sub-collections divided by these genres, might have well be another act of keeping up with the current fashions.

In Wang Duanshu’s editorial principle she gives a more detailed explanation of the evolutions of genres and likens this development to an idiom of ‘water running to course and mountains reaching completion’ (*shui qiong shan jin* 水窮山盡), as her statement goes:

The so-called ‘to come to an end after endless mountains and rivers’, people in ancient days always delight when new things appear. This also applies to poetry and prose, when ‘correctness’ ends, then ‘elegance’ succeeds.

所謂水窮山盡，古人賞心，多在不盡之處，其在詩文亦然，正不足而雅續之。

Therefore, there is poetry first, and then lyric poetry, after that there is arias and songs, then the ditty tunes from streets and alleyways. I have collected them all to provide the readers with a complete view.

故有詩復有詩餘也，有詩餘復有散曲也，復有里巷歌謠而為雜著也，並及之，以備全覽。¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Wang Duanshu, ‘Zi xu’, 3a. 填詞固詩之餘，雜著有詩之意 Saussy (trans.), ‘Preface’, 692.

¹²⁶ Meng Chengshun 孟稱舜, ‘Gujin citong xu 古今詞統序’ (Preface to *Unification of Ancient and Current Lyrics* 1629), scholarly edition (Shenyang, 2000), 3–4. 詩變而為詞，詞變而為曲，詞者，詩之餘而曲之祖也。

¹²⁷ Wang Duanshu, ‘Fan li’, 2b. (trans.) author. Also see Widmer (trans.), *Under Confucian Eyes*, 190.

This short and vague explanation is a key point in understanding Wang Duanshu's editorial ploy in editing the sub-collections of informal genres. As Chapter 5 will show, this claimant carries forward ideas of previous attempts of 'legitimising' alternative genres, and questions the 'canonicity' of women's writing. It shows that the formation of a canon is a multifaceted process that blends genre, gender and social class. Wang's selecting and ordering strategy, as discussed through multiple dimensions above, not only shows her attention to the anthologizing and editing traditions in relation to the historically established canon and contemporary trends, but also, by including the collection of other genres, the addition of diversity and complexity – these can be summarized and illustrated in Table 1.1.

Through mapping the anthology's structure of sub-collections, Table 1.1 summarizes the materiality of the anthology showing the diversity in the categorizing, sequencing and grouping of sub-collections by authors, genres and social ranking. The collection itself is a microcosm of late Ming and early Qing society, in which women from all social strata co-existed in a gendered sphere and as agents in cultural production. It also displays the comprehensiveness of women's writing practice in poetic styles and genres, and reflects the late Ming market demands in vernacular writing; the latter was the basis for Wang Duanshu's material selection. Wang's entrusting of the editing of the 'Subsequent Collection' to her female cousin-in-law Ding Qiguang (Appendix A) and her female friend Gao Youzhen, as both discussed in previous section (1.2.2), indicates women's social connections and networks in venturing the late Ming and early Qing publishing world. By including a sub-collection dedicated to her own writing, Wang appears to use *Notable Women* as a public forum for fashioning herself among notable women writers. As the following section shows, the inclusion of her writing, along with the positioning of her editorial commentaries in order to elevate herself, her edited works and her writings as a part of a 'women's canon' was one of Wang's ambitious motivations for publishing *Notable Women*.

Table 1.1. A list of sub-collections within *Classical Poetry of Notable Women* (1667)¹⁷⁷

<i>Chapter no.</i>	<i>Title of sub-collection</i>	<i>Type(s) of author</i>	<i>Category of works</i>	<i>Editor</i>
1	<i>Gong ji</i> 宮集 Palace Collection	Wives of kings, princes and dukes, along with other palace-dwellers	Poetry	Wang Duanshu
2	<i>Qian ji</i> 前集 Preliminary Collection	Those who had lived at the turning of the Yuan and Ming dynasties		
3–18	<i>Zheng ji</i> 正集 Main Collection	Wives of high officials, gentlewomen and the principal wives of upright, common people		
19–20	<i>Zheng ji fu</i> 正集附 Appendix to Main Collection	Women who had turned away from a disorderly life		
21	<i>Xin ji</i> 新集 New Collection	Those who had lived the years preceding the change in government and the early years of the Qing dynasty		
22–23	<i>Run ji</i> 閨集 Intercalary Collection	Gentlewomen who were fallen or forced into a disorderly life	Poems of the “ambling fox” and “Mulberry Pu River” sort	
24–25	<i>Yan ji</i> 艷集 Collection of Erotica	Women who remained in the pleasure districts to the end of their lives	Poetry	
26–28	<i>Zi ji Huang ji Wai ji</i> 緇集黃集外集 Buddhist, Daoist and Foreign Collections	Buddhist nuns, Daoist priestesses and foreigners		
29–30	<i>Huan ji</i> 幻集 Collection of Mysteries	Spirits, ghosts, prognosticators		

¹⁷⁷ Type(s) of author are based on the descriptions provided in Wang Duanshu, ‘Zi xu’ 自序, *MYSWCB*, 2.a-3.b; title of sub-collection and chapter numbers are based on Wang Duanshu, ‘Mu ci’ 目次, *MYSWCB*, 1.a-24.a.

31	<i>Bei ji</i> 備集 Fictional Collection	Female characters in fiction	Poetry, no entry, the printing will be forthcoming	
32–33	<i>Yi ji</i> 遺集 Collection of Omitted Writing	Female writers whose work was either lost, burned or destroyed	Records of names with short biography	
34	<i>Ni ji</i> 逆集 Collection of Rebellions	Rebellious and immoral women	Poetry	
35–36	<i>Shiyu ji</i> 詩餘集 Song-lyric Collection	Female writers from varied social strata, a mixture of gentlewomen writers and debased women like courtesans	Lyric poetry	
37–38	<i>Ya ji</i> 雅集 Collection of Elegance		Art songs and arias	
39	<i>Za ji</i> 雜集 Collection of Miscellaneous Writings		Random writings	
40	<i>Hui ji</i> 繪集 Pictorial Collection	Female writers whose poetry has vanished, or those who were skilled calligraphers but have left behind no poetry	Records of names with short biography	
41	<i>Hou ji</i> 後集 Subsequent Collection	Wang Duanshu	No entry, the printing will be forthcoming	Gao Youzhen
42			Poetry	Ding Qiguang

1.6 Wang Duanshu and her Motivations for Editing Women's Writing

Wang Duanshu's multi-dimensional editorial strategies illustrate one of the milestone examples of 'women's broadening sense of literary authority since the seventeenth century.'¹⁷³ The positioning as a critic of other women's poetry, as Fong observes, 'conforms to the ideological injunction of gender segregation', while the edited anthology 'is a gendered critical space and a communal site' where female writers share textual 'intimacy' and 'express more gender-specific view on writing'.¹⁷⁴ In this section, an exploration of Wang Duanshu's editorial motives through the retrieval of evidence in paratextual materials shows her intention to build a textual 'community' and space for female writing. Meanwhile, her self-appointed role as editor of these writings shows not only her discontentment of the 'restrictions on women's literary practice' and the resulting loss of women's writing, but also illustrates Wang's self-appointed 'position of interpretive authority on the part of the reader'.¹⁷⁵ This section explores the extent to which Wang's editorial motives in *Notable Women* are a complex mixture of genuine concerns for preserving women's writings, publishing as a commercial enterprise, and editing as a way of self-fashioning.

1.6.1 *Preserving women's writing as a self-appointed 'duty'*

Ding Shengzhao's prefaces to both Wang Duanshu's personal collection *Red Chantings* and her edited anthology *Notable Women* note that, despite living in extreme poverty during the exile years of the turbulent Ming–Qing transition period (1644–1662), Wang never gave up writing or editing, as well as gathering materials for the *Notable Women* project. Wang's passion for material gathering, writing and editing seems to have puzzled her husband. Ding's attributed preface to *Notable Women* involves a dialogue between himself and Wang, revealing the superficial yet primary motive for Wang pouring her efforts into the *Notable Women* project:

¹⁷³ Fong, *Herself an Author*, 122.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 121.

I asked my wife: you cannot be recommended as an official or take part in the civil service examination, so why worry yourself?¹⁷⁶

My wife answers: each generation has its talented scholars, so that in each generation, the history of the powerful can be recorded, the music for entertaining can be composed. There are always people to record and circulate these works, so it should be nobody's fault if they fall into obscurity. As to those women who have been restricted to their boudoir so far, their words cannot even reach beyond the inner chambers, let alone be recorded and circulated. So, who is responsible for the preservation or the loss of these writings? Therefore, no matter if the authors be wives of kings and lords, courtesans, nuns, ghosts or rebellions, I exclude none.¹⁷⁷

Wang's motive for editing *Notable Women*, as stated in her straightforward response to Ding, was an urge to preserve women's writing. Realizing the inequality of the historical and social condition that led to women's poetry falling into obscurity, the compiling and editing of *Notable Women*, as Wang herself stated, had become 'a duty'.¹⁷⁸ The sense of duty in preserving women's writing might also explain why her selection includes writers from such a wide social spectrum – this strategy could, as Widmer claims, contribute to the 'editorial informality' and also the 'uneven tone' of the anthology.¹⁷⁹ The two sub-collections, 'Omitted Writings' and 'Pictorial Collection', containing only names with brief biographies further suggest Wang's strong belief in preserving women's writing. In Wang's preface to Omitted Writings, she explicitly identifies a system that discriminated against women wanting to write and publish:

Women live deep within the inner chamber and occupy themselves exclusively with womanly duties and household management ... They may have two or three poems secretly tucked away in their writing boxes, but how can an outsider gain access to them and see their profundity?¹⁸⁰

Wang's short preface firstly shows that she was versed in womanly conduct in canonical texts, as the expression of *wei nügong jiushi wei shi* 惟女紅酒食為事 – 'only deal with the

¹⁷⁶ Ding Shengzhao 丁圣肇, 'Ding xu', *MYSWCB*, 2.a.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.b, 3.a, 3.b.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.b. 固余職分內事也

¹⁷⁹ Widmer, 'Retrieving the Past', 87.

¹⁸⁰ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Yi ji 遺集' (*Collection of Omitted Writings*), *MYSWCB*, 32.1a, 32.1b.

Widmer (trans.), *Under*, 191. 且女子深处闺阁惟女紅酒食為事，內言不達于外間。有二三歌詠密藏笥篋，外人何能窺其元奧。

womanly duty of serving food and wine’ – is a classic allusion to *Book of Odes*.¹⁸¹ This specific description of womanly conduct is also included in Lü Kun’s (1536-1618) *Gui fan* 閨範 (*Female Exemplars* preface dated 1591), suggesting its profoundness in defining the expected gendered social performance of women, even in the relatively libertine late Ming society.¹⁸²

Wang Duanshu’s short preface, however, signals her discontentment of the restrictions on women even in the domestic sphere, by counting the reasons for the loss of women’s writing: as a consequence of the suppression by ‘old-fashioned fathers and brothers’;¹⁸³ and the destruction of women’s writings by ‘unfilial sons and grandsons’.¹⁸⁴ The restricted, even hostile, domestic environment in which women wrote leaves almost no possibility for women to participate in the public sphere of *wen* 文 (literature) under the Confucian hierarchical social structure. Ding’s question to Wang in the dialogue-style preface shows this same barrier that Wang Duanshu encountered in her efforts to complete and publish *Notable Women*, as she could not, after all, ‘be an official or take part in the civil service examination’.¹⁸⁵

Wang Duanshu’s short preface to *Omitted Writings* is also a self-conscious expression of the obstacles that she would encounter as a female writer and editor in endeavouring to publish. Her husband, Ding Shengzhao, also sensed this inferred ‘self-pity’ (*zi lian* 自憐) in Wang Duanshu, but that this ‘self-pity’ was deemed inferior to Wang’s pity for the ‘unpreserved women’s talent and writing’.¹⁸⁶ Wang’s own preface to *Notable Women* also included the understanding that ‘it particularly pains her to find that so little of the poetry of

¹⁸¹ Lü Kun 呂坤, ‘Gui fan 閨範’ (*Female Exemplars*), Chapter 1 ‘Jia yan shi jing 嘉言·詩經’ (Virtuous Words – *Book of Odes*), in *Lü Kun quan ji* 呂坤全集 (*Complete Works of Lü Kun - Second Part*), Wang Guoxuan and Wang Xiumei eds. (Beijing, 2008), 1435–1436. The original passages in *Book of Odes* goes 乃生女子，載寢之地，載衣之褐，載弄之瓦。無非無儀，唯酒食是議，無父母詒罹。

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, ‘Yi ji 遺集’ (*Collection of Omitted Writings*), *MYSWCB*, 32.1a, 32.1b.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. (trans.) Widmer, *Under Confucian Eyes*, 191.

¹⁸⁵ Ding Shengzhao 丁聖肇, ‘Ding xu’, *MYSWCB*, 2.a.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. 憐才之心過於自憐

the women of the past survives'.¹⁸⁷ These statements commonly point to Wang Duanshu's seemingly genuine concerns for the preservation of women's writing. Due to the severe loss of women's writing in previous eras, Wang might have seen the anthology of *Notable Women* as an opportunity for promoting women's writing and its preservation. This aspect is reflected in the on-going editing process of Wang's anthology.

1.6.2 *The incompleteness of the book*

The 'Subsequent Collection' is one example of the 'incompleteness' of the first published edition of *Notable Women* in 1667, and indicates that the compiling and editing of the anthology was an ongoing process. The word *si ke* 嗣刻 – 'forthcoming printing' indicates that the project was incomplete, the ongoing process of waiting for content and likelihood of further editions. It is worth noting that, in her editorial principle to *Notable Women*, Wang clearly states that this sub-collection, consisting of 'several old poems of her own', was edited by her husband, while the printed first edition of *Notable Women* shows Wang entrusting the editing of this sub-collection to her female literary network. This contradiction between the planned editorial arrangements and the actual editing suggests the on-going editing progress of *Notable Women*, in which revisions and changes were made alongside the publishing process.

¹⁸⁷ Wang Duanshu, 'Zi xu', 2.a. Saussy (trans.), 692. 尤恨千古以上之詩媛詩不多見

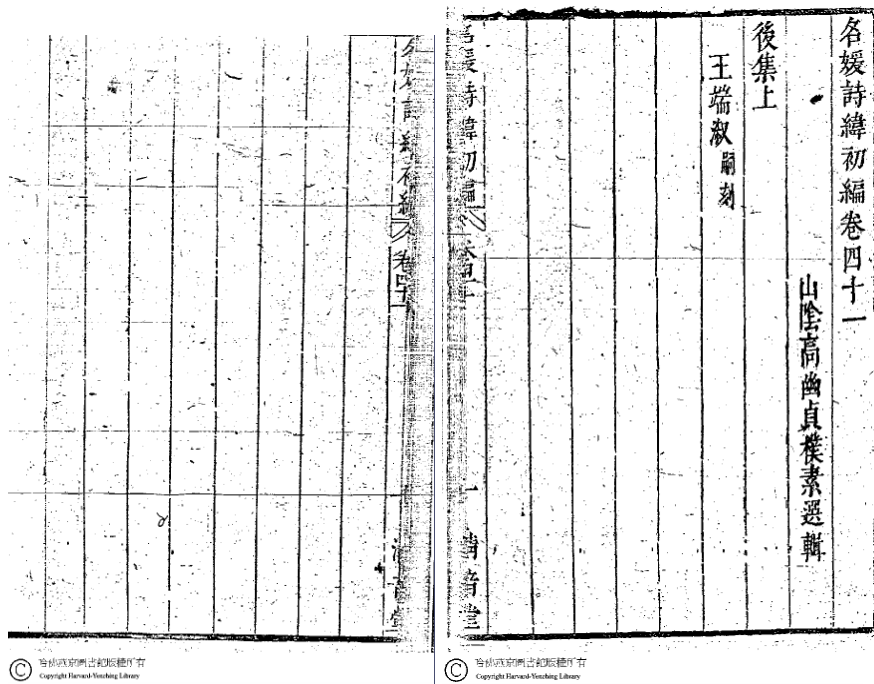


Figure 1.1. Chapter 41 of *Notable Women*. The headings on the right indicate that Gao Youzhen, Wang Duanshu's friend and biographer of Chen Suxia, is responsible for the editing of the collection. The empty page only has the name 'Wang Duanshu' and the word 嗣刻- 'forthcoming printing'.¹⁸⁸

Another sub-collection illustrating Wang's on-going editorial process is 'Fictional Collection', which Wang states is 'forthcoming' in the table of contents.¹⁸⁹ Wang elaborates: 'the entries of this chapter will come from fiction by various writers'.¹⁹⁰

In comparing the unfinished 'Supplementary Collection' and the absence of contents for the 'Fictional Collection', as Widmer and Robertson both interpret the latter as 'a sign of a general female attitude to hold back from narrative genres in literary practice' and suggests the boundaries for gentlewomen editors such as Wang Duanshu.¹⁹¹ The reluctance of a

¹⁸⁸ Gao Youzhen 高幽貞 ed. 'Ming yuan shi wei chu bian houji shang 名媛詩緯初編後集上' (Subsequent Collection, Part one), 41.1a., 41.1b. *MYSWCB*

¹⁸⁹ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Ming yuan shiwei chibian mucu 名媛詩緯初編目次', Table of Contents, 18.b. [hereafter: Mu ci] Fong argues that Wang intended to use fiction as one of her sources to cull examples of poems written by female characters, rather than, as Widmer assumes, this chapter will contain fiction written by women. I agree with Fong's argument in terms of the missing contents of this chapter; however, either suggestion would require literary practice with fiction, which was forbidden for women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, as fiction and other narrative prose were not considered 'appropriate' or 'legitimate' for women writers until later.

¹⁹⁰ Wang Duanshu, 'Mu ci', 18.b.

¹⁹¹ Widmer, 'Ming Loyalty and the Women's Voice in Fiction', 367 and 372–374

literary association with vernacular fiction in practice, however, might not have been a barrier that was exclusive to female writers and editors. In her study of the literati's editorship of Chinese song-drama, Patricia Sieber argues that, unlike drama-related publications, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century literati were less forthcoming about their association with narrative fiction as it was 'most commonly published under pseudonyms'.¹⁹² Unlike the justifications for including sensual and erotic poetic writings due to the 'licentious music of Zheng and Wei' in canonical texts of *Book of Odes* and contemporary praises in such writings' 'authenticity' of emotion, Wang's textual elaboration of fictive writing has no justification. Wang's editorial decision in this instance also shows women's literary practice in narrative genres, if not restricted by the conduct of womanly virtues, followed the dominant tradition of literati writing.¹⁹³

1.6.3 *Publishing as an enterprise*

The prestige that Wang achieved as the editor of *Notable Women* has brought her future opportunities for publishing and financial advancement. Widmer draws attention to a few letters that are collected in the enlarged third edition of *Chi du xin yu* 尺牘新語 (*Modern Letters* 1668) that discuss Wang's *Notable Women*, with one specific letter by Zhu Kuangding stating that a copy of *Notable Women* is already hard to come by.¹⁹⁴ It is worth noting that this correspondence that indicates the attraction of Wang's anthology among elite readers was only published a year after *Notable Women*. It seems that Wang's anthology achieved commercial success although no further information is known on how many copies were sold or of any financial reward for Wang. Yet, as Berg deduces, if 'Wang could afford to turn down the offer from the first emperor of the Qing dynasty to be summoned as a tutor for the

¹⁹² Patricia Sieber, *Theatres of Desire: Authors, Readers, and the Reproduction of Early Chinese Song-Drama* (London, 2003), 86–87.

¹⁹³ Robertson, 'Literary Authorship by Late Imperial Governing-Class Women', 378.

¹⁹⁴ Widmer, *Under the Confucian Eyes*, 193, n20.

palace ladies, besides her Ming loyalism, ‘Wang must have felt that she could survive financially without such a position’.¹⁹⁵

The commercial success of Wang Duanshu’s anthology may have also contributed to her idea of publishing supplement editions. In addition to her intention to print chapters 31 and 41 – two sub-collections within the 1667 edition of *Notable Women* that were marked as ‘the printing is forthcoming’ (*si ke* 嗣刻) – Wang also repeatedly expressed her intention to acquire more materials and expand the contents of *Notable Women* in the original prefatory and paratextual material. At the end of the section on editorial principles, Wang requests more materials from her readers to be submitted to a bookshop in Hangzhou so as to continue to add contents;¹⁹⁶ in the beginning of the ‘Pictorial Collection’ (chapter 40), Wang modestly claims that her documentation has many ‘lacuna’, and she calls for contributions from ‘famous lords and rich officials’ and others who possess information on the female writers and their works that she missed out in the 1667 edition, that they ‘will not hesitate to make suggestions’, so that she ‘may go on adding to the list in subsequent printings’.¹⁹⁷ Wang did not specify the types of works that she wished to obtain for future editions. It reflects a rather inclusive attitude by Wang Duanshu in seeking materials of any sub-genre or prose form.

Wang Duanshu may have even received a book contract or offers for publishing these subsequent editions by the time she finished the first edition of *Notable Women*. The commercial bookstore which Wang calls for more material to be sent to – the *Lin yun ge* 凌雲閣 (Clouds Reaching Loft) – is located in Hangzhou, an economic, cultural and publishing centre in south-eastern China; in contrast, the 1667 first edition of the anthology was published by *Qing yin tang* 清音堂 (Clear Sound Hall) in the capital Beijing in north China. The Hangzhou bookstore, thus, might not have served only as a depository for submissions of potential material, but may also have contracted the future editions of Wang Duanshu’s anthology. Wang’s editorial intention of continuing to edit and expand *Notable Women* also explains the timescale of the 1667 edition: the project had been started around 1639; prefaced

¹⁹⁵ Berg, ‘Editing her Story, Writing His/tory’, 189.

¹⁹⁶ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, ‘Fan li’, 3.a, 3.b. 乞郵致杭州林雲閣書坊, 以便續為增入

¹⁹⁷ Wang Duanshu, ‘Hui ji 繪集’ Pictorial Collection, 40. 1a. 遺漏頗多, 名公鉅卿知之者不妨賜教, 以便陸續增刊, 共成盛事。Widmer (trans.), *Under*, 191.

by Wang in 1661; was under revision and expansion in 1664; and was finally published in 1667.¹⁹⁸

Despite Wang's original intention of publishing *Notable Women* to fulfil a duty of preserving women's writing that would otherwise have fallen into obscurity, the project of anthologizing and editing women's writing, based on this additional evidence, might have become a profitable scheme and even a long-term career path for Wang Duanshu. Wang's pledge to 'famous lords, rich officials and others who possess information' 名公鉅卿知之者 was aimed to 'finish this great enterprise' 共成盛事 through 'publishing supplementary editions gradually' 陸續增刊.¹⁹⁹ Wang described the 'enterprise' with the word *sheng shi* 盛事, literally meaning 'prosperity'. This prosperity might well mean the potential future opportunity for a professional woman like Wang Duanshu to continue to edit and publish. Like her social acquaintances, Li Yü and Huang Yuanjie, the intellectual and artistic world of post-war Hangzhou offered professional and even 'entrepreneur' opportunities for a talented person. Due to the severe loss of Wang's edited and written work, or at least based on the known record of Wang's lifetime publishing, it appears that the 1667 printed edition of *Notable Women* was the only edition, and no other supplement or reprinted edition is known to have been published.

1.6.4 *Canonizing women's poetry*

Wang Duanshu's editorial focus was primarily on writers of the Ming dynasty; she clearly explains in her preface that by restricting 'herself to more recent writers' she could 'speak with certainty'.²⁰⁰ This 'certainty', presented through Wang's comments and biographical accounts, contributes a significant amount of the paratextual materials. Wang's attitude within her comments and biographical accounts also shows her carefulness in presenting a critical discernment of her project.

¹⁹⁸ Widmer, 'Selected Short Works by Wang Duanshu', 217.

¹⁹⁹ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Hui ji', 40.1a.

²⁰⁰ Wang Duanshu, 'Zi xu', 2a.

Wang Duanshu's attempt to establish a canonical status of women's writing is also prevalent in how she envisaged the entire anthology. Wang Duanshu cleverly tweaked the idea through wordplay, entitling this anthology as *shi wei* (literally meaning 'weft' of poetry) in parallel to *shi jing* (literally meaning 'woof' of poetry) just as *Book of Odes* or *Classics of Poetry*. By claiming that 'without the weft threads, there would be no woof threads',²⁰¹ Wang argues that 'without the women's writing, there will be no arch-canonical texts of *shi jing*' 不緯則不經.²⁰² The canon of *Book of Odes* is significant to Wang Duanshu's editorial rhetoric, as the example of the Wang's 'Intercalary Collection' discussed in this chapter has already shown. Wang Duanshu's inclusion of her own poetry in *Notable Women* shows her ambition to promote herself not only as an editor but also as a writer in the 'complementary canon that answers to the six *Classics*'.²⁰³ As a *classic* and canon of poetry itself, *Book of Odes* was used, as Fong observes, as a sanction for women to express themselves through poetry in a confident manner.²⁰⁴

Yet, women cannot engage with writing until the act of writing is 'undertaken only after they have fulfilled their proper domestic duty'.²⁰⁵ Wang Duanshu's presentation of women's writing appreciates the limitations enforced by this mode of production, as do other female editor's in their own editorial practice. As Wang's preface to *Notable Women* laments: 'Alas, it is only after the intricate labours of our sex – embroidery, the reeling of silk, and all our other tasks have been completed – that we women are able to borrow from the Classics to complete the patterns of our writing'.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Ibid., 1.b.; also, in Kang-I Sun Chang, *Ming and Qing Anthologist of Women's Poetry and their Selection Strategies*, 158.

²⁰² Wang Duanshu, 'Zi xu', 4a. Kang-I Sun Chang, 'Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women's Poetry and Their Selection Strategies', in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, eds. Widmer and Chang, 147-170, at 158.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Fong, *Herself an Author*, 122.

²⁰⁵ Wang Duanshu, 'Zi xu', 3.b.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. (trans.) Saussy, 'Preface', 692.

1.6.5 Canonizing Wang Duanshu's critical voices

The 'format of texts' of *Notable Women* reveals how Wang Duanshu symbolically speaks with authority on behalf of the socially sub-ordinated female authors.²⁰⁷ Wang's critical voice, which mirrors how the female editor of late-imperial China sought to establish a female tradition of textual production, needs to be interpreted by looking at the physical printing format of the contents page.

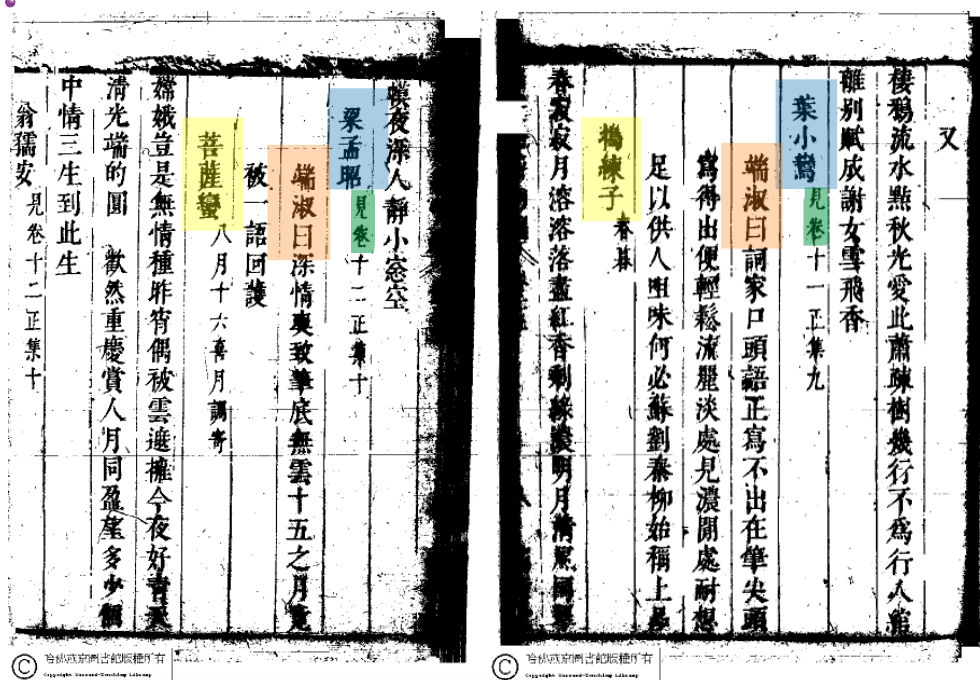


Figure 1.2. Facsimile page of *Notable Women* from the 'Song-Lyric Collection' (chapter 35).²⁰⁸

Read in the sequence from right to left, and the characters are printed vertically. This page shows two lyric-poetry entries: one by Ye Xiaowan and another by Liang Mengzhao. The blue highlights the name of the authors, the green highlights the characters 'see chapter', meaning these two entries already appear in other sub-collections, and Wang Duanshu refers to their biographies in the 'Main Collection', chapters 9 and 10, respectively. The orange highlights 'Duanshu Says', the way in which Wang Duanshu starts her commentary on entries. The yellow highlights the *cipai* (metre and tonal patterns) of the entry of the authors' lyric-poetry, and the texts of the lyric-poetry are followed by the titles on the left.

²⁰⁷ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 190; Fong, *Herself an Author*, 140.

²⁰⁸ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Shi yu 詩餘' (Song-Lyric Collection), *MYSWCB*, 35.8a, 35.8b.

As we can see, the texts are physically arranged by the sequence of author's name, followed by Wang's commentary and finally the initial text of the entry. Biographical accounts are given after the author's name in a smaller font. Not every entry is paired with biographical details. If the entry of an author has already appeared in a previous sub-collection(s), and the biographical accounts have already been provided, then these names are marked with 'see' and a reference to a specific sub-collection and/or numbers of specific volumes.

Wang's comments, in contrast, are not only all tailored to each entry of an author and their works, but also the comments appear before the author's texts. Wang claims that 'every edited volume supplies criticism that reflects the editor's reading'.²⁰⁹ These criticisms of the poetry within *Notable Women*, which always begin with 'Duanshu says' (see Figure 1.2), as Berg argues, are 'true to the spirit' of classic *Analects* where Confucius's words are recorded and begin with 'the master says'.²¹⁰ This narrative style suggests Wang's intention of elevating, or even canonizing, her own critical discernment. Thus, the comments provided by Wang are not merely paratextual materials; they become the interpretative key to transmitting and conceptualizing the meanings of the texts that run through the entire anthology. From this point of view, Wang's approach of sequencing her own comments in a narrative style that emulates the style of Confucius could also be explained as an act of placing her position and identity as editor-critic, whose editorial power controls the re-curated materials.

Wang Duanshu divides the entire anthology into 42 chapters over 12 volumes, placed in two sleeves with volumes one to nine as the first bundle and ten to twelve as the second (see Table 1.2). The first volume of the anthology contains only prefatory and other paratextual materials: there are five prefaces, one introductory note by Wang, two biographies dedicated to Wang, one biography dedicated to Chen Suxia (Ding's concubine), Wang's editorial principles and the table of contents.

²⁰⁹ Wang Duanshu, 'Fan li', 2.b.

²¹⁰ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 190.

Table 1.2. The structure of book binding of *Notable Women*²¹¹

<i>Sleeve no.</i>	<i>Fascicle no.</i>	<i>Chapter no.</i>
1.	1.	Prefatory materials
	2.	1–4
	3.	5–7
	4.	8–10
	5.	11–12
	6.	13
	7.	14–16
	8.	17–19
	9.	20–24
2.	10.	25–30
	11.	32–36 ²¹²
	12.	37–42, with one colophon

Prefatory and paratextual material, which precedes all other materials, as both a material and textual gesture, as Sieber observes, ‘takes on increased significance as a stand-alone’.²¹³ This gesture can be seen in *Notable Women*. The increased proportion of prefatory materials, in comparison to Wang’s personal collection, *Red Chantings*, (the latter only includes her husband’s preface, a preface written and signed by members of the One-Autumn Society and a preface by Wang’s uncle), also reflects Wang’s increasing fame between the publication of *Red Chantings* and *Notable Women*. Moreover, the book binding of *Notable Women*, in which ‘the entire first fascicle are prefatory materials of several types’, similar to the ‘most lavish editions’ of fictions published in late imperial China.²¹⁴ Therefore, not only did Wang aimed for an anthology that is exquisite in contents, but also the anthology as a commodity, was aimed for high-end quality.

Wang Duanshu’s dominant role as the sole editor of *Notable Women* is also articulated through these prefatory materials, and her editorial comments on the authors and works.

²¹¹ Despite not being able to see the physical copy of *Notable Women*, this table is generated from the fascicle numbers of the digitised facsimile copy provided on Ming-Qing Women’s Writing; on types of book binding and how the material elements affect the reading experience, see Anne Burkus-Chasson, ‘Visual Hermeneutics and the Act of Turning the Leaf: A Genealogy of Liu Yuan’s *Lingyan ge*’, in *Printing and Book Culture in late imperial China*, eds. Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley, 2005), 371–379.

²¹² Although the title of chapter 31, ‘Bei ji 備集’ (Factorial Collection), appeared in the ‘Mu ci 目次’ table of contents, 18.b., in the printed 1667 publication there is no actual chapter 31.

²¹³ Sieber, *Theatres of Desire*, 113.

²¹⁴ Robert E. Hegel, *Reading Illustrated Fiction in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, 1998), 305

Among the prefatory materials, Wang Duanshu contributed not only a preface, but also an outline of her editorial principle (dated 1661), and a short introductory note on the occasion of sending the manuscript to the press.²¹⁵ Moreover, Wang also included short introductions at the beginnings of some sub-collections, which often acted as her editorial statements explaining why each sub-collection was included in the *Notable Women* anthology.

The project itself was well-known in literary circles before its final publication, as the preface by former Ming prime minister Qian Qianyi is dated to 1661, six years before the anthology was finally published. Such public recognition from a prominent late-Ming literatus certainly would have helped the promotion of the book to a wider audience. The dedication of the first volume to prefatory material alone is significant in the construction and growth of Wang Duanshu's fame. The printed pages of this first volume, therefore, constitute a materialized space in which to display Wang Duanshu's social connections with both prominent literati and female literary networks,²¹⁶ and her position as an editor and a poet at the heart of seventeenth-century elite society.

1.6.6 *Editing as socio-literary authority*

Towards the end of her outline of editorial principles, Wang makes an apology to her potential readers that:

I have spent years completing this anthology and have gone through hardships in collecting materials and editing. This means that the works I obtained first were printed first, and the ones that came later were given to the printer later, so the sequence is untidy. It is not that I deliberately made it chaotic.²¹⁷

²¹⁵ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Zi xu', 'Fan li', and 'Wei ke mingyuan shiwei chubian xiaoyin 微刻名媛詩緯初編小引' (Short Introductory Note to *Classical Poetry of Notable Women*).

²¹⁶ Literati attributors include Qian Qianyi, Xu Zhaoxiang, Han Zeyu, Meng Chenshun, and Wang's husband Ding Shengzhao; women contributors include Wang Zhenshi, who dedicated a biography to Wang Duanshu, and Gao Youzhen, a pupil and a female clan of Wang Duanshu who dedicated the biography to Chen Suxia. Ding Qiguan edited chapter 42 'Hou ji 後集' of Wang's own writing.

²¹⁷ Wang Duanshu, 'Fan li', 3a. Widmer (trans.), *Under*, 190

Wang's claim of false modesty in her editorial principles is contradictory to her actual editorial strategies. Rather than being 'untidy' or even 'chaotic', the ways in which the sub-collections within *Notable Women* were ordered and categorized reveal a carefully constructed, multifaceted editorial concern. Perhaps this false modesty narrative was an act of textualized 'social performance': that this apology on the messiness of ordering was a way to show Wang's humbleness as an editor of an ambitious women's anthology among her predecessors.

Wang's literary authority contributed to her perceived androgynous among male social connections.²¹⁸ Wang Duanshu's uncle - Wang Shaomei 王紹美, had already remarked in his preface to her *Red Chantings* that 'our family has produced a famous scholar; it is a *she* who hails from the inner chambers'.²¹⁹ In Qian Qianyi's preface, he defines *Notable Women* as 'both a history and a *classic*' 亦經亦史,²²⁰ which promotes, even confirms, both the canonical status of this anthology and Wang Duanshu's role as editor in the literary field. Mao Qiling also praises 'her history book is not inferior to the Han dynasty historian, so why would she weave brocade and invite pity with the poem on the loom?'²²¹ Wang Duanshu signs herself as 'female literatus' (*nü shi* 女士) or 'lady historian' (*nü shi* 女史) in the works that she writes by literati's invitation.²²² These honorific titles masculinises Wang Duanshu's status as an 'honorary man'. The dedicated biographies to Wang Duanshu and prefaces contributed by her

²¹⁸ Zuyan Zhou, *Androgyny in Late Ming and Early Qing Literature* (University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 207. Zhou argues that Wang's androgynous image was presented through Huang Chonggu, a cross-dresser and female official portrayed in the song-drama, *Nü zhuang yuan* 女狀元 (Female Top Candidate), uses this fictive protagonist to 'justifies her own adoption of the male occupation as a professional writer, artist, and teacher of the inner chambers'

²¹⁹ Wang Shaomei 王紹美, 'Yin hong ji xu 吟紅集序' (Preface to *Red Chantings*), chapter 1, first preface. 嗟乎! 家有名士, 乃在香奩。This preface is not available in the *QDSWHB* 清代詩文彙編, it is cited by Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 133.

²²⁰ Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, 'Ming yuan shiwei xu 名媛詩緯敘', *MYSWCB*, 3.a [hereafter: Qian xu]

²²¹ Chen Weisong 陳維崧, Mao Xiang 冒襄 and Wang Shilu 王士禛, *Fu ren ji* 婦人集 (*Collection of Talented Women*) in *Xiang yan congshu* 香艷叢書 (*Series of Erotica*) vol.2, on Wang Duanshu, cited a poem written by Mao Qiling comment on Wang's talents. Wai-Yee Li (trans.), *Women and National Trauma*, 116.

²²² Wang Duanshu, 'Qin lou yue zong pin 秦樓月總評' (General Comments on *Moon at Qin Pavilion*), *ZGXQXH*, vol.12, 1476. Wang Duanshu signed her name as 'Nü shi wang duanshu shu 女士王端淑書'. Ko translates *nü shi* 女士 as 'man-like women: women who does male deeds', *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 117. Wang Duanshu's landscape painting (6 leaves), in the third leaflet Wang Duanshu signed as 'Shanyi nüshih Wang Duanshu - lady historian Wang Duanshu from Shanyin county'.

husband and other literati displays Wang's access to an exclusive social circle among elite scholars.²²³ To publish and promote women's writing, Wang's editorial activity also serves the purpose of self-promotion. This self-promotion also sees in her own sixty-three poems that collected as the last sub-section of *Notable Women*, as Chang observes that Wang 'was attempting to enter the canon herself by "logrolling"'.²²⁴ The success of *Notable Women* again confirmed the identity and status of Wang Duanshu in the public sphere, as honorary historian and scholar.

1.7 Chapter Conclusion

Wang Duanshu's *Notable Women* is indeed a multifaceted product that blends personal, commercial and socio-literary interests. It not only displays her domestic and social networks with gentlewomen and literati in the late Ming and early Qing society, but also her editorial attention to diverse genres and poetic styles, demonstrating her breadth of learning. The anthology itself, which is carefully ordered and categorized by social ranking, poetic style and genre, shows Wang's scholarly sensibility in historically established practice, as well as ongoing contemporary literary and cultural trends. The anthology is also a microcosm of women and cultural power, gender and class negotiation of seventeenth-century China. We see the diversity of female agencies – nobilities, gentlewomen of the governing class, entertainers, religious nuns – with women hailing from all social strata acting together in the Ming public intellectual sphere.

Wang Duanshu's textual engagement, especially with those pre-existing literati edited sources and her authorized critique elaborating on literati and canonical discourse, 'voicing her aspiration of following the example of the ancient worthies', showcases her erudition. If editing women's writing, rather than the works of male literati, appears to be more appropriate, or, at least, in the comfort zone of a female editor, Wang's new reading and

²²³ Here I adopt Patricia Sieber's perspective of the 'power of aesthetics and social performance' that is embedded in 'reproductive authorship'. See Sieber, *Theatres of Desire*, 83–122.

²²⁴ Kang-I Sun Chang, *Ming and Qing Anthologist of Women's Poetry and their Selection Strategies*, 159.

interpretation of the old sources advances an implied critique of literati discourse.²²⁵ Wang's drawing on literati mediated sources and discourses may have also reassured her identify and social status among the elite; Wang not only positions herself personally as a professional writer of the public world within a web of socio-literary connections, but also textually posits herself a professional writer of the public world, within the coterie of the elite.

This chapter brings together many aspects of previous studies on Wang Duanshu and her editorial works. It aims to give a holistic picture of how *Notable Women* as a successful printing product came-into-being. This chapter also highlights the analysis of the physical feature of *Notable Women* – a facet that has been barely touched in the existing scholarships. This chapter points out that, the first fascicle of *Notable Women*, in which 'the entire first fascicle are prefatory materials of several types' (Table 1.2), a resonance of the 'most lavish editions' of fictions published in late imperial China.²²⁶ This argument shed new lights on the nature of Wang's anthologising purpose of *Notable Women*, not merely as textual preservation of women's writing, but as a high-end product and artefact with potentials of developing future 'enterprise'.

The main purpose of this chapter is to establish the scene and context that underpin the analysis conducted in later chapters. Specifically, this chapters introduces who Wang Duanshu is, sets the scene of cultural life in elite society and her role in it. With this understanding in place, and building on the key terms discussed in the Introduction to the thesis, the later chapters will have a more nuanced critique of roles of female song-writers in late-Ming and early-Qing era. Chapter 1 also benefit us from a contextual understanding of Wang's editorial strategy as a commentary of the society at the time.

This context forms an important foundation on which to build an understanding of Wang's editorship of 'Collection of Elegance', which is examined in the next chapter. Through analysis of the materiality of 'Collection of Elegance', we can see how the overarching approach in editing *Notable Women* has been carried through to the editing of

²²⁵ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 195.

²²⁶ Robert E. Hegel, *Reading Illustrated Fiction*, 305

this sub-collection of songs. Similar to Wang Duanshu's approach of engaging with literati materials and discourses, the next chapter seeks to understand Wang's editorship of song and her concerns that are embedded within the wider conversation of the late-Ming and early-Qing elite culture.

Chapter 2

Wang Duanshu's 'Collection of Elegance': An Analysis of Materiality, Text and Contexts

2.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter revisits the question of Wang Duanshu's editorship, and her editorial strategies in material selection and ordering discussed in the previous chapter but focusing on the sub-collection, 'Collection of Elegance'. This chapter aims to answer the question: how does a focused reading of the material specifics (how the text is put together and how it works as a whole structure) of the sub-collection 'Collection of Elegance' help us understand Wang Duanshu's contribution to discourses on feminine authorship? 'Collection of Elegance' is a multi-author collection of *sanqu* that was originally placed as chapters 37 and 38 in *Notable Women*. It is a compilation of songs, suites and dramatic arias that were composed by female writers of the mid- to late-Ming period. This chapter explores 'Collection of Elegance' as a material space, in which the printed texts are 'music objects',¹ reflecting not only late-Ming music printing trends, but also the fluid boundaries of social class and unique gender dynamics in association to the wider late-Ming society.

This chapter interprets Wang Duanshu's editorship of 'Collection of Elegance' using two approaches that have been developed in reading late-Ming popular prints, including drama miscellanies and popular songs. A key concept is the 'recycling of texts'.² Ming editors worked with a pool of pre-existing textual and visual materials during the process of creating

¹ Joseph Lam, 'Eavesdropping on Zhang Xiaoxiang's Musical World in Early Southern Song in China', in *Sense of the City: Perceptions of Hangzhou and Southern Song China, 1127–1279*, eds. Joseph S.C. Lam, Shuenfu Lin, Christian de Pee and Martin Powers (Hong Kong, 2017), 25–54, at 29–30.

² He Yuming, *Home and the World: Editing the "Glorious Ming" in Woodblock-Printed Books of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Cambridge, Mass., 2013), 82–104, 119–131, 142–150 and 164–170. He's research examines commercially printed late-Ming drama miscellanies and popular songbooks to examine how texts are recycled (the title page, the printing layout, the printing errors): the 'format of the text' shaped the distinctive meanings of the book.

their books. The editors' central role is to shape the distinctive meanings of the reused material. 'Collection of Elegance' is also a product of the printing process with its contents re-curated, reworked and reorganized from a pool of materials. As this chapter will show, unlike late-Ming commercially printed drama miscellanies that intentionally brought visual stimulants – through illustrated title pages, the trifold registers of printed texts with fashionable jokes and drinking games – to the fore as 'repackaging' and market ploy, the 'luxuriousness' of Wang's 'Collection of Elegance' rests firstly with the 'rich assortment of paratextual elements',³ as has discussed in the previous chapter.

The selection of materials for an anthology, as Berg argues, ultimately reveals the editor's agenda and historical circumstances.⁴ That 'historical circumstance', as this chapter will argue, embodies not only contemporary music fashions and printing trends but also the performance contexts and their socio-cultural meanings. This chapter adopts the second notion of 'materiality', exploring the music objects as a cultural artefact, as well as the cultural negotiation during the process of the song's textualization.⁵ The editor's attempts to re-shape the recycled materials 'is intricately tied to its materiality'.⁶ From this perspective, this chapter sees the sub-collection not merely as part of a women's poetry anthology; instead, it regards 'Collection of Elegance' as a patchwork of 'the culture of the day',⁷ and an artefact contextualizing the modes of public distribution of women's *qu* during the late-Ming period.

This chapter, therefore, introduces the textual packaging and materiality of 'Collection of Elegance'. The packaging of the texts, 'so frequently erased when a work's history is drained from it', argues Wall, 'speaks to the specific conditions by which meaning was and is transmitted, and to consider how a literary work becomes readable to its culture - to make visible the lens through which the "book" and the acting of public writing are viewed.'⁸ Meanwhile, this chapter argues that the ordering strategies of 'Collection of Elegance',

³ Guo Yingde and Xiao Qiaoling, 'Fresh Faces for those Full of Emotions: Zhu Suchen's *Qin Lou Yue*', 65-89, at 66, 69 and 70.

⁴ Daria Berg, 'Cultural Discourse on Xue Susu', 178.

⁵ Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*. See Lowry's analytical approach of late-Ming popular songbooks at 73–77.

⁶ He, *Home and the World*, 138.

⁷ Ibid., 139.

⁸ Wendy Wall, *The Imprints of Gender: Authorship and Publication in English Renaissance* (New York, 1993), 5.

although arranged superficially in authors' social orders, are based on a dynamic of different modes as well as lyrical themes, while the book itself is a musical exploration of 'affect' that consists of a linear unfolding of moods within the sequence.

2.2 Tradition and Trend of *qu* Publishing Practice from the 1570s to 1660s

2.2.1 *Music as fashion among male cultural elites in the Wanli era (1573–1620)*

There are many newly composed sounds from literati's households lately, passionate and romantic music bustling together, arias circulated either in print or manuscripts, the quantity of them is as much as the mists above the sea.⁹

In this opening comment in the 'Collection of Elegance', Wang Duanshu summarizes the phenomenon of the literati's unprecedented passion for music and music-making in late-Ming society. It states the fact of the increasing popularity of music entertainment, either in composing or domestic performance, and the dramatic growth in music-related textual production, circulated in both print and manuscript forms. Despite making such a comment in the early-Qing time, Wang's remarks would have fit perfectly in the narratives of contemporary literati's artistic pursuits or in the earlier late-Ming context. The timespan of the compiling of 'Collection of Elegance', between 1639 and the 1660s,¹⁰ maps onto the final year of the Ming dynasty and the first two decades of the Qing dynasty, a historical period when *qu* was a genre that was favoured among the male intellectual elite.

Despite Wang not identifying the households where music activities flourished, it is highly possible that her claim is directly connected to her own life experience rather than second-hand impressions. Geographically, it is highly possible that Wang refers here to the literati households that were located in the lower Yangzi region, also known as the Jiangnan area, where many scholar-officials were gathered and where the Suzhou style of music that

⁹ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Ya ji 雅集' (Collection of Elegance), *MYSWCB*, 37.1a. All translations are my own, except where otherwise indicated.

¹⁰ Wang Duanshu, 'Fan li', 1.b. Wang clearly states that 'this project began in 1639 己卯 and continued to 1664' 甲辰.

was adored by the elite *qu* connoisseurs, writers and critics since the 1570s originated.¹¹

Wang Duanshu was also a resident of the Jiangnan region: she was raised in Shanyin 山陰 (now Shaoxing city); when she was ten years old, she moved to Nanjing 南京 (also in the Jiangnan region), the southern capital of the Ming empire and also the cultural and economic centre of southern China, where her father took up a post. She spent years as a professional writer in Hangzhou, another culturally important city in Jiangnan region with a prosperous printing industry. Her father, Wang Si-ren, admits that he did not possess knowledge in music but contributed paratextual materials to the revised drama edition of *Mu dan ting* 牡丹亭 (*The Peony pavilion* 1598), a masterpiece of late-Ming song-drama that embodies the ideal of *qing* (incorporating passion, emotion, sentiments and subjectivity) par excellence.¹²

The Wanli era 萬曆 (1573–1620) was a true golden age of *qu*. It witnessed a rise in the fashionable pursuit of private music residents and domestic troupes; and many of their owners, as Wilt Idema points out, ‘took an active interest in all aspects of theatre – some did not hesitate to mount the stage themselves to perform’.¹³ Similar to the phenomenal growth in the private sector of the printing industry in the sixteenth century, the increase in private domestic music and theatre troupes was intertwined with the showcasing of an owner’s affluent, material cultural aspiration and social status.¹⁴

Wang Duanshu’s literary connection to Zhang Dai gives a representative example of the late-Ming cultural elite’s indulgence in commentary music fashion. Zhang’s early-Qing memoir *Tao’an meng yi* 陶庵夢憶 (*Dream Reminiscence of Tao Hut*),¹⁵ although loyalist in nature, is illustrative of how music played a significant role in the late-Ming elite’s private

¹¹ Joseph Lam, ‘Imperial Agency in Ming Music Culture’, in *Culture, Courtiers, and Competition: The Ming Court (1368–1644)*, ed. David M. Robinson (Cambridge, Mass., 2008), 269–320, at 300–301. Also see Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 126–127.

¹² Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 72; Wang Siren 王思任, ‘*Pi dian yu ming tang mudan ting ci xu* 批點玉茗堂牡丹亭詞敘’ (Commentary Preface to *Peony Pavilion* from White Camelia Hall), in *LDQHBB*, vol.3, 48–49. Wang remarks, ‘I know nothing about music, my judgement of *Peony* is roughly based on its scripts’. 予不知音律，第粗以文義測之。

¹³ Wilt Idema, ‘Drama after the Conquest: An Introduction’, in *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*, eds. Wilt Idema, Wai-ye Li and Ellen Widmer, (Cambridge, Mass., 2006), 375–386, at 175.

¹⁴ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 78.

¹⁵ Zhang Dai 張岱, ‘*Tao’an meng yi* 陶庵夢憶’ (*Dream Reminiscence of Tao Hut*) [hereafter: *Dream Reminiscence*], in *Ming qing xiao pin wen xi lie* 明清小品文系列 (Vignettes from the Ming and Qing) (Beijing, 2015).

and social life. Zhang Dai was a music aficionado; he had a domestic music troupe that had been part of his family's private estate since his grandfather during the Wanli reign.¹⁶

Zhang Dai recorded his attendance at music performances with his fellow late-Ming contemporaries, and suggests that such social music events were not uncommon:¹⁷ in fact, Zhang's records reflect music and theatre as significant occasions for the late-Ming elite's homo-social bonding,¹⁸ based on shared identities and aesthetic preferences, and thus an inseparable part of Zhang's life. Also, as a music practitioner, Zhang occasionally undertook the music entertainment himself as recorded in his visit to *Bu xi yuan* 不系園 (Garden of Detachment): performing in a pleasure boat, despite its name, where he harmonized Chen Zhanghe's singing of 'ditty' village songs presented by one of the eight guests on a *qin* – a Chinese zither, an established instrument that was exclusive to the privileged and learned elite class.¹⁹

The late-Ming male elite's passion for music is inseparable from the contemporary socio-cultural and political environment. The rapid urbanization and commercialization during the Wanli era had created a dynamic, vivid and prosperous environment for trade, cultural production and domestic politics.²⁰ Internationally, as an empire, Wanli saw its power in maritime trade, as well as military powers.²¹ These socio-economic and political contexts

¹⁶ Ibid., 'Zhang shi sheng ji 張氏聲伎' (Music Troupe of Zhang Family), chapter 4, *Dream Reminiscence*, 79.

¹⁷ Ibid, examples including 'Jin shan ye xi 金山夜戲 (a night performance at the Golden Hill)', 'Liu Huiji nü xi 劉輝吉女戲 (Liu and his women's troupe)', 'Zhu Yunlai nü xi 朱雲崓女戲 (Zhu teaching his women's troupe)', and portrayals of music banquets at 'Bao Hansuo 包涵所 (Bao's Boat on West Lake)', English translated version of these vignettes in (trans.) Yang Ye, *Vignettes from the Late Ming: A Hsiao-p'in Anthology* (Seattle, 1999), 87; ed. and trans. by Faye Chunfang Fei, *Chinese Theories of Theater and Performance from Confucius to the Present* (Ann Arbor, 2002), 71–72; He, *Home and the World*, 134.

¹⁸ Joseph Lam, 'Music and Male Bonding in Ming China', *Nan Nü: Men, Women, and Gender in China*, 9/1 (2007), 70–110, at 101.

¹⁹ Zhang Dai, 'Buxi yuan 不系園' (Garden of Detachment), in *Dream Reminiscence*, chapter 4, 67. 章侯唱村落小歌，余取琴和之。On *qin* music and the Ming elite, particularly princely music involvement in *qin*, see Joseph Lam, 'Ming Music and Music History', *Ming Studies*, 1 (1997), 21–62, at 31–32; and 'Imperial Agency in Ming Music Culture', 293–294.

²⁰ Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* (Berkeley, 1999).

²¹ On the Wanli reign and international trade, see Rayne Allinson, 'The Virgin Queen and the Son of Heaven: Elizabeth I's Letters to Wanli, Emperor of China', in *Elizabeth I's Foreign Correspondence*, eds. C.M. Bajetta, G. Coatalen and J. Gibson (New York, 2014), 209–228; also see Carlo M. Bajetta, 'Elizabeth's Letters to Wanli, Emperor of China, April–May 1602', in

brought the late-Ming society the increasingly blurred and permeable boundaries of class and gender. Elite recreation, arts, and pleasures became accessible not only by the ruling and governing elite – the scholar-officials and gentry – but also the rising merchant class in an increasing monetized and commercialized society. The pursuing of gentility and publicized self-fashioning became a common motif in late-Ming cultural production and consumption. It was within this social background that an entrepreneurial professional literati editor published books for a living and merchant-scholars eagerly attempted to elevate their own social status.

These socio-economic circumstances also created a liberal environment of thinking. The elite gradually endorsed liberal thinking of pursuing *qing* – love, passion and subjectivity – and some, more radically, even challenged the orthodox neo-Confucian teaching of moral cultivation and the suppression of desire. This ideological shift was rooted in the philosophical teaching of Wang Yangming’s 王陽明 (1472-1529) School of Mind, and the Taizhou School’s radical liberal thinker Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1620).²² Along with the growth in printing and book trading, the late-Ming publishing industry saw a soar in the production of liberal genres such as fiction, drama and miscellaneous collections of popular ballads and drinking games. These informal genres also received increasingly elite readership, authorship and editorship.

The political environment was also another major factor that influenced the ideological shift of the late-Ming philosophical trends. The fierce competition of the civil service examination and the partisan rivalries made pursuing officialdom and the cultivation of oneself in mastering statecraft less appealing to literati. The late-Ming period, and possibly earlier, seems to have fostered discharged scholar-officials finding self-contentment in liberal arts and building local literary-artistic communities and circles around themselves.²³ Such an

Elizabeth I's Italian Letters (New York, 2017), 251–258. On the military power of the Wanli era, see Kenneth M. Swope, ‘Bestowing the Double-edged Sword: Wanli as Supreme Military Commander’, 61–111, and David M. Robinson, ‘The Ming Court’, 45–46, both in *Culture, Courtiers and Competition*, ed. David M. Robinson.

²² Peter K. Bol, ‘Neo-Confucianism and Local Society, Twelfth to Sixteenth Century: A Case Study’, in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, eds. Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), 245–254.

²³ On the mid-Ming northern *qu* community that centred around Kang Hai, Wang Jiusi and Li Kaixiang, see Tian Yuan Tan, *Songs of Contentment and Transgression: Discharged Officials and Literati Communities in Sixteenth Century in North China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2010).

indifferent or apolitical attitude towards officialdom and statecraft often emerged after exclusion from the central political coterie and led to unwanted, unexpected and forced retirement from official posts. Such discontentment of political careers eventually led the literati to retreat to their hometowns and devote themselves to artistic pursuits.

The literati's devotion to the arts rather than statecraft magnified during the late-Ming period, as Rawski observes:

... such "men of culture" eschewed ambitions of wealth and standing as officials in order to devote themselves into literature and art. Some men put their efforts and trust into literature and books, calligraphy and painting, collecting and appreciating, as other men might put theirs into moral philosophy ...²⁴

The extant late-Ming publications by literati and ex-scholar-officials testifies to this. For instance, the late-Ming playwright Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550–1616) finished his *Peony Pavilion*, along with three other drama pieces altogether known as 'four dreams of Linchuan', after forced resignation and retirement to his hometown. Still being performed in *kunqu* opera to this present day, Tang's *Peony Pavilion* is a masterpiece that is grounded in the Neo-Confucian Taizhou school of thinking, while the media of creative writing 'elevated this philosophy ... and put it in "action" through drama'.²⁵

For the late-Ming cultural elite who were not involved in government, or only involved marginally, the arts were more than a practice or time-passing entertainment. The-late Ming period had a great resonance with its European counterpart: an age of 'self-fashioning'.²⁶

Vignettes written by late-Ming literati record their frequent attendance at lavish parties, literary gatherings, salons and private music entertainments. Patronage of celebrated

²⁴ Evelyn Rawski, 'Economic and Social Foundations of Late Imperial Culture', in *Popular Culture in Late Imperial China*, eds. David G. Johnson, Andrew J. Nathan, Evelyn S. Rawski (Berkeley, 1985), 3-33, at 13.

²⁵ Yu-Yin Cheng, 'Tang Xianzu's (1550–1616) *Peony Pavilion* and Taizhou Philosophy: A Perspective from Intellectual History', *Ming Studies*, 67 (2013), 3-29, at 23–24.

²⁶ Berg draws on Stephen Greenblatt in *Women and The Literary World*, 169–171 and 225; on late Ming courtesans, see Monica Merlin, 'The Nanjing Courtesan Ma Shouzhen (1548–1604): Gender, Space and Painting in the Late Ming pleasure quarter', *Gender & History*, 23/3 (2011), 630-652, at 643, 645 and 648; on literati and self-fashioning, see Katherine Carlitz 'Printing as Performance: Literati Playwright-Publishers of the Late Ming', in *Printing and Book Culture in late imperial China*, eds. Cynthia J. Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow (Berkeley, 2005), 267–284; on literati self-invention, for instance, dramatist Xu Wei, see Martin Huang, *Negotiating Masculinities in late Imperial China* (Honolulu, 2006), 53–71.

courtesans was a symbol of social status. Apart from lavishing money on fine objects and parties, printing and publishing became a venue in which elitist values and aesthetics were a publicly-displayed social cachet for the literati. One specific artistic area that the late-Ming elite ventured into was the publishing of music-related imprints.

2.2.2 Music printing as self-fashioning of the literati

The involvement in music by the leisured elite was in fact a microcosm of the late-Ming and early-Qing participation by the elite in all aspects of cultural production. Many scholar-officials were resident in the Jiangnan area, and their consumption of books, and the ability to publish their own works, stimulated the publishing industry in this area. For the literati who lived in Jiangnan, cultural activities such as reading, writing, and editing constituted significant parts of their daily intellectual and artistic lives. They were not only consumers of books but also producers who engaged in writing, editing and publishing in both orthodox and vernacular genres. Books published by literati in privately owned studios (*si ke* 私刻) in this region were well-known for their high quality and aesthetics. These imprints, which were targeted at elite readers and connoisseurs, also acted as a medium through which literati conveyed ‘their public and private ideas and literary and artistic endeavours’.²⁷

The Ming dynasty witnessed a publishing boom in the second half of the sixteenth century, and printing became a key sphere for negotiating power. As powerful agents who managed and directed much of the cultural capital of that society, male literati played a significant role in shaping late-Ming print culture. Not only individual scholars, but also literary communities, forged in Jiangnan during late Ming gained reputations in the socio-cultural spheres of artistic and literary productions.²⁸ The elite privately enjoyed numerous artistic pursuits; when they started to write, edit, anthologize and criticize, their personal literary and aesthetic values became public demonstrations. As one of the most adored artistic

²⁷ Lucille Chia, ‘Of Three Mountains Street: The Commercial Publishers of Ming Nanjing’, in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, 107-151, at 140.

²⁸ Tian Yuan Tan, *Songs of Contentment*, 70 and 247.

endeavours that the late-Ming elite pursued, *qu* became a field where authority and power were negotiated and exercised.

Qu is not a formal genre of writing; literati considered it a ‘mean way’ (*mo dao* 末道) and ‘minor skill’ (*xiao ji* 小技) among orthodox literary and artistic pursuits.²⁹ Composing *qu* was a part of the eccentric identity of the Ming literati, along with actions abandoning officialdom and the civil service examination. The discharged Ming scholar-officials, as discussed above, found self-contentment in liberal arts and building local literary-artistic communities and circles around them. The discontentment in their political career eventually led them to retreat to their hometowns and devote themselves to artistic pursuits. They would befriend peers and professionals such as courtesans, musicians and artists.³⁰ Writing *qu* was thus not only a time-passing amusement; *qu* composed during banquets, drinking parties and festival gatherings was also the culmination of the creative exchanges among various Ming intellectual groups.

This cultural identity and fashion, however, was not a late-Ming invention. During the mid-Ming era (1450s–1570s), discontented officials were already involved in forming *qu* communities and writing northern *qu* as a way of expressing political discontentment and personal integrity.³¹ Literati friends such as Kang Hai 康海 (1475–1541) and Wang Jiusi 王九思 (1468–1551) had employed the heroic image of the faithful singing girl who committed suicide in song-suite and music drama composition as their shared language of self-justification upon their discharge from the court.³² The virtuous deeds of the singing girl Wang Lanqing and her suicide after her master died was adapted for a song-suite by Wang Jiusi. Later, the story was adapted for *chuanqi* drama by Kang Hai who incorporated the

²⁹ Li Yü 李漁, *Xian qing ou ji* 閒情偶記 (*Casual Notes in a Leisurely Mood*), 1671, repr. in Du Shuying 杜書瀛 ed., annotated scholarly edition, (Beijing, 2014), chapter 1, vol. 1, 28-29, “on Lyrics and Songs” 詞曲部. Li remarks 填詞一道,文人之末技也...填詞雖小道,不又賢于博奕乎?

³⁰ Yi Lidu, “‘He Wore Flowers in His Hair’: Understanding a Late Ming Through His mid-Ming Subject’, *Ming Studies*, 64 (2011), 33–45. Yang Shen (1488–1559), husband of Huang E (the first entry author of ‘Ya ji’ - Collection of Elegance) established himself as an eccentric figure who sought company in wine and courtesans after his removal from office and demotion to the southern Ming border areas.

³¹ See Tan, *Songs of Contentment*, on Kang Hai and Wang Jiusi.

³² Ibid., 88–111.

song-suite composed by Wang into the fourth act of his play, the *Biography of the Chaste and Loyal Wang Lanqing*.³³

The composed song suite and song-drama also became a site of negotiating shared coterie identity and homo-social bonding; this bonding was based on shared identities, aesthetic preferences and political affiliations with a utilitarian function. Both Wang Jiusi and Kang Hai were leading members of the *qu* community in northern China during the mid-Ming period, and writing *qu* based on the chaste suicide of a singing girl, especially for Wang Lanqing, in reality, served their close friend Zhang Yupeng – a member of the Wang-Kang circle – but could also be used as a process to establish the same interests in *qu* as a shared identity among the peer writers within the local literati community.

The mid-Ming period also witnessed the move of literary creation from the courtly tradition to the literati tradition.³⁴ The legitimization of *qu* as an elite-exclusive genre, rich in scholarly tradition, also began during this time. Apart from composing *qu*, literati also exercised their editorship of *qu* and developed a critiquing tradition of *qu*. Among northern *qu* communities, writers such as Li Kaixian 李開先 (1502–1568) turned to extant *zaju* (northern song-drama) and northern *sanqu* arias of the Yuan dynasty. Li exercised his editorship and authorship over the texts by revising, critiquing and publishing.³⁵ This tradition was later magnified during the late-Ming period, during which literati actively revised extant song-dramas and made their own critical editions as a means of gaining social and cultural capital.³⁶

By the 1550s when northern *qu* had established its authoritative status in music and literary fields, the rising southern music fashion started to challenge the cultural status of established northern music. Xu Wei's essay *Nan ci xu lu* 南詞敘錄 (*A Record of Southern Drama* 1559) was not only the first essay known to be published on southern *qu*, but the

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Kang-I Sun Chang, 'Literature of the Early Ming to mid-Ming (1375–1572)', in *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, eds. Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, 1-62, at 18.

³⁵ Stephen West, 'Text and Ideology: Ming Editors and Northern Drama', in *The Song-Yuan-Ming Transition in Chinese History*, ed. Paul Jakov Smith and Richard von Glahn (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), 329-373, at 357.

³⁶ Ibid., 487.

arguments within his essay showcases his expertise in the new southern *qu* genre that was later adored by the late-Ming elite. The southern *sanqu* collection that was highly praised by Xu Wei in his 1559 essay consisted of arias composed by Zhu Zhishan 祝枝山 (1461–1527) and was said to ‘strike the heart of the audiences of the time’.³⁷ Although writers such as Zhu were not primarily known to the elite for their *qu* compositions, Zhu’s arias represent a romanticized character of eccentric *qu* writers that was inherited by later southern *qu* writers.

Late-Ming era also saw the increasingly blurred boundaries of class within its society. On the one hand, their unconventional identity of pursuing *qing*, rather than the orthodox Confucianism of self-discipline, shifted their interests for publishing from the classics to informal writings including arias, fiction and drama. On the other hand, their social privileges, derived from their elite background by birth, were being challenged by the rising merchant class, who were beginning to access cultural leisure that had formerly only been accessible to the literati. Literati sought to protect their elite value from these merchant class encroachments through both the physical production of these new editions and through instrumental use of the paratextual materials. The new literati editions were elaborate, finely carved woodblock prints in comparison to cheaper and more mass-produced versions among the merchant classes, and thus used to exhibit status and hierarchy.

Even more overtly, the paratextual critical essays and commentaries explicitly asserted the elite status of the song collections and criticized the productions of their merchant counterparts. For instance, in his editorial guide to his art song and dramatic aria collection, *Nan yin san lai* 南音三賴 (*Three Sounds of Southern Song*), literati-editor Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580–1644) points out the carelessness of commercially printed drama editions. He argues that ‘not only the tune titles and rhythms are wrong, but also the words are added or missing in the sentences. There are too many errors in commercial printed drama editions, which mislead readers seriously’.³⁸ Ling also quotes the comments of Shen Jing that he ‘wanted to cover his ears when he heard the current Suzhou style’, and criticized the singing

³⁷ Xu Wei 徐渭, ‘*Nan ci xu lu* 南詞敘錄’ (A Record of Southern Drama), *LDQHBB*, vol.1 (Anhui, 2009).

³⁸ Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, ‘*Nan yin san lai fan li* 南音三賴凡例’ (Editorial Guide to *Sound of Three Nature in Southern Song*), *LDQHBB*, vol.3, 199. 坊刻承訛襲舛, 誤人多矣

style of some Suzhou teachers of southern *qu* as they did not follow the proper rules of music-text setting.³⁹ This comment may derive from Ling's personal experience of listening to music teachers' singing in Suzhou; it certainly reflects his Confucian ideology of music, as Confucian theory advocates that music should be properly created and performed.⁴⁰ Accordingly, Confucian literati such as Ling could not accept singing that did not follow such performing styles, both musically and ideologically.

For some late-Ming literati who were from an elite background and held degrees, their marginalized social status within the governing class (very often a result from not holding an official post) and their consequently declining financial circumstances drove them to blur class boundaries to become professional writers and editors. Such practice can be seen through Feng Menglong's anthologizing and editing of folk songs and popular music, as discussed in Chapter 1. Although the anthology was set in the context of popular urban, commercial culture,⁴¹ Feng's editing still embodied many distinctive features that a literati edition of songs possessed. Through Feng's commentary, Feng 'surrounded the song-texts in his collection with comments on the graphic sexual content in popular songs, their form, phrasing, and aesthetic values'; other paratextual materials such as matching songs and poetry (composed either by Feng himself or his fellow literati friends) are also presented alongside the lyrics.⁴² These publicly displayed paratextual materials within the folk song anthology not only 'became a shared language' among its elite readership, but were also a 'vehicle for communicating power ratio' for the marginalized elite, like Feng Menglong in late-Ming society.⁴³ Thus, it is difficult to define whether this folk song anthology was a mere commercial product that would target a wide variety of readers despite its non-elite content of the collected folk song.

³⁹ Ibid., 200. 沈伯英所謂“聞今日吳中清唱，即欲掩耳而避之”矣。

⁴⁰ The Confucian practice of music is a way of self-cultivation of righteousness, the perfection of personhood. For a detailed discussion, see Joseph Lam, 'Musical Confucianism: The Case of *Jikong yuewu*', in *On Sacred Grounds: Culture, Society, Politics and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), 134–173; and 'The Presence and Absence', 97–119.

⁴¹ Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 62.

⁴² Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, 'Shan 'ge gua zhi 'er 山歌掛枝兒' (*Hanging Branch and Mountain Songs*), all in vol. 10 of *FMLQJ (The Complete Works of Feng Menglong)* (Shanghai, 1993 repr.).

⁴³ Rawski, 'Economic and Social Foundations', 33.

The discussions above do not and cannot provide a wholesome history of the literati's practice in music and development of *qu* as a genre during late Ming. There are a great number of extant literati's critical essays, edited songbooks, music and song dramas awaiting further research. However, through the briefly mentioned examples of literati aficionado and their practice, especially in writing and publishing *qu*-songs and music drama, demonstrates the hybrid dynamism of the cultural production of *qu* as an effective artistic medium in which the male Ming elite self-fashioned, and publicized their perceived socio-cultural cachet and performative persona. These power negotiations were deeply embedded in concurrent trends at the heart of the unique late-Ming social, cultural and political climate. It is in these socio-cultural conditions and backgrounds of literati's *qu* practice, that Ming women's voices in *qu* entered the public domain through publishing. Therefore, this understanding of literati's practice is a premise to read late-Ming women's songs and their cultural meanings and negotiations.

2.2.3 Women in late-Ming and early-Qing literati music production

Gender as a useful category of historical analysis contributes to the fruition of research on late imperial Chinese literature and society. In contrast to the bulk of research focused on female poets, the contribution of women to music production in this era has been somewhat neglected. This is undoubtedly due to the scarcity of sources and the often thinly distributed and scattered information in biographies, memoirs, poems, illustrations of imprints and miscellaneous writings. In addition, most of these extant materials are predominantly male-mediated.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ The male-mediated approach of publishing female-authored songs and writings on female musicians is also reflected in present-day research on Ming women in music; for instance, Joseph Lam examines the operatic female protagonist in *The Jade Hairpin* by literatus-dramatist Gao Lian (1573–1620) in 'Musical Seductresses, Chauvinistic Men, and Their Erotic Kunqu Discourse', in *Wanton Women in Late-Imperial Chinese Literature: Models, Genres, Subversions and Traditions*, eds. Mark Stevenson and Wu Cuncun (Leiden, 2017), 81–104. See also Joseph Lam, 'Reading Music and Eroticism in Late Ming Texts', *NAN NÜ*, 12/2 (2010), 215–254. Here, Lam draws on a variety of literati-authored materials from Shen Defu 沈德符, Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, Mao Xiang 冒襄 and the novel *Jin ping mei* 金瓶梅 *Golden Plum Vase*. Judith Zeitlin examines courtesans' songs in *Cai bi qing ci* 采筆情辭 (*Love Lyrics of Stylistic Brilliance*) ed. Zhang Xu, in 'The Pleasure of Print: Illustrated Songbooks

The scant contemporary Ming scholarship on women's music, a phenomenon that Lam defines as the 'Confucian strategy of textual banishment and retreat of women's music',⁴⁵ reflects the prejudices of the time that considered the licentious music, especially from female entertainers, as corruptive and thus harmful, in contrast to the proper function of music as a means of self-governance in Confucianism.⁴⁶ The libertine social conditions of late Ming and the literati's pursuits and artistic endeavours of *qing*, as discussed above, not only created new expectations of feminine identity-performance, but this social change also produced, as Chang terms, late-Ming 'feminism', or, as Ko suggests, the 'new womanhood' of beauty-virtue-talent.⁴⁷

The late-Ming society continued to impose restrictions on women, and women across social strata did not achieve complete liberation. Wang Duanshu's motivation of preserving women's writing from loss and obscurity, as discussed in Chapter 1, reflects that the traditionalist view towards women still largely existed. Ming women were still excluded from public service, exam and officialdom, and they were expected to behave properly and fulfill duties based on their social status and gender roles as a daughter, wife, and/or mother. Women's conduct books were reprinted and circulated among both male and female readerships. What distinguishes the late-Ming editions of women's conduct books from earlier published versions lies in the imprint themselves: they are highly elaborative and articulative in their physical and visual presentations. The boundaries between a book delivering moral philosophies of womanly virtue and a book for entertainment and connoisseurship of feminine beauty and talents have been blurred.⁴⁸ The conduct books thus also functioned as commodities.⁴⁹ Such publication produced during late Ming was the prism of a social change in the widening acceptance of women's literacy. This burgeoning literacy created new expectations of gendered social performance in the literary and artistic fields.

from the Late Ming Courtesan World', in *Gender in Chinese Music*, eds. Rachel Harris, Rowan Pease and Shzr Ee Tan (New York, 2013), 41–65.

⁴⁵ Lam, 'The Presence and Absence', 109.

⁴⁶ On music and self-governance in Confucianism, see all works by Joseph Lam cited throughout this thesis.

⁴⁷ Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation*, 68; Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 125–129.

⁴⁸ Katherine Carlitz, 'The Social Uses of Female Virtue in Late Ming: Editions of *Lienü Zhuan*', *Late Imperial China*, 12/2 (1991), 117–148.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 118–121, 134, 140 and 141.

Education was required for elite governing-class women in preparation, primarily, for the advancement of their future material value in match-making.⁵⁰

The late-Ming period marked a turning point for women appearing in public, both physically and textually, and women's music received unprecedented attention from the literati. The blooming of the printing industry also prompted wider circulation of women's songs and other literary works, such as poetry and prose. This increasing interest in the publication of women's work also brought the literati's attention to women's music, especially by the inclusion of women's *qu* in literati collections. This reflects the increasing interactions between men and women in the process of cultural production among late-Ming intellectual communities, and the ideological changes in pursuing *qing* as a 'new tradition advocated for the freedom of human nature and the development of individuality'.⁵¹

Courtesan culture also reached its pinnacle in the late-Ming period. The elite patronage of literati and officials offered courtesans a physical mobility wandering between the private quarters and the public social world of the late-Ming elite. The Tang dynasty literatus-poet Du Mu 杜牧 (803–c.852) criticized singing girls who did not know the regrets of 'the licentious music that once toppled the nation', which refers to the indulgence of music, women and sensual pleasure of Chen Shubao 陳叔寶 (reign 582–589) that led to his empire eventually falling.⁵² In contrast, late-Ming literati approached women's music as an artistic craft that should be recorded, appreciated and commented upon.

Feng Menglong, as one of the most prominent late-Ming professional editors, openly claimed in his preface to *Mountain Song* that he wished to 'borrow authentic emotion shared by both men and women to rid us of the falseness of Confucian ethical teaching'.⁵³ Feng's

⁵⁰ For the educational overlaps in the curriculums of elite daughters and female entertainers to boost gentlewomen's value in the marriage market, see Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 263–266.

⁵¹ Xiang Gao, 'The Rise of a New Tradition: Changes in Values and Life Styles in Late Ming China', trans. Yilin Deng and Shiwu Deng, *Frontiers of History in China*, 5/1 (2010), 1-29, at 2.

⁵² Du Mu 杜牧, 'Po qin huai 泊秦淮' (Moored to Qinhuai), 商女不知亡國恨，隔江猶唱後庭花 'The Singing girls, oblivious to the sorrow of losing one's country,/Still sings across the river, 'Flowers in the Rear Courtyard' Li (trans.), in *Women and National Trauma*, 175. A well-known poem in China is the song Hou Ting Hua 後庭花 composed by 陳叔寶 Chen Shubao (553–604); later this song was linked with the licentious music of women and the indulgence of sensual pleasure.

⁵³ Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, 'Xu shan 'ge', Oki Yasushi (trans.), *Shan 'ge, the 'Mountain Songs': Love Songs in Ming China* (Leiden, 2011), 4–5.

open recognition of women's 'fair share' in the cultural production of popular song was 'part and parcel of a changing definition of womanhood and the new texture of Ming domestic and social life'.⁵⁴ This change in ethics and values, especially the attitude towards women's credibility in cultural production, was culturally and historically grounded. Ming music thus reveals the world, society and lives of its subjects and 'create[ed] sites where gender and social boundaries became more permeable'.⁵⁵

However, the construction of the feminine ideals and images in these sources are male-mediated and gendered. Writings on women by literati are also entrenched with their own agenda of power negotiation. Before 1644, writings on women, especially on occasions of exclusive cultural events, fashioned the literati's social identity as music aficionados and members of intellectual society. When the Ming empire collapsed in 1644, writings on women, especially on courtesans, gradually became a nostalgic ideal with memories of courtesans and salon pleasure events used as allegory for the glorious past of the Ming dynasty.⁵⁶

The late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Chinese society and its changing socio-cultural attitudes towards moral ethics, women's literacy and female public presence in print media created a hybrid dynamic site of bargaining for learned women, where new cultural opportunities met old challenges of gendered social performance expectations. Despite the new social customs offering a measure of cultural 'independence', women still operated under the consideration of their own social positions as subordinates to their fathers, husbands or literati. The extant sources of women's music, therefore, reveal the ways in which women acted as agents in the field of music.

⁵⁴ Eric C. Lai, 'Pipa Artists and Their Music in Late Ming China', *Ming Studies*, 1 (2008), 43-71, at 57.

⁵⁵ Lam, 'Ming Music and Music History', 40.

⁵⁶ For discussion of the allegory between the cultural ideal of late-Ming courtesans and early-Qing nostalgic sentiments, see Wai-Yee Li, 'The Representation of History in the Peach Blossom Fan', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 115/3 (1995), 421-433; Wai-Yee Li, 'The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of a Cultural Ideal', in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, eds. Widmer and Chang, 46-73; also see Wai-Yee Li, 'Women as Emblems of Dynastic Fall from Late-Ming to Late-Qing', in *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late-Ming to the Late-Qing and Beyond*, eds. David Wang and Shang Wei (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), 93-150.

2.3 Inclusive or Exclusive: An Investigation of Wang Duanshu's Song-Selecting Criteria

This section revisits the question of Wang Duanshu's selecting strategy. In chapter one, this thesis described briefly Wang's selection strategies to introduce the curatorial role of the editor, and some of the socio-cultural implications of the choices made. 'Collection of Elegance' is the section of *Notable Women* where Wang engages directly printed music texts. It is this section of her work which will be used for the analysis that underpins the argument of this thesis. An analysis of Wang's selecting criteria illustrates how a gentlewoman-editor responded to a liberal genre, and the fashionable prints and materials that were on the edge of the limitations of her editorial practice. Such an exploration shows how Wang's editorial strategies are justified throughout the *Notable Women* anthology, and how such justifications are embedded in wider late-Ming cultural concerns.

As we have seen, Wang's approach to the positioning of 'Collection of Elegance' is clearly discussed in her editorial principles in *Notable Women*: that is, 'by including them, I have provided readers with a complete view.'⁵⁷ This 'embrace-all' approach Wang has adopted refers to the inclusion of 'two chapters of *ci*, two of *sanqu*, one of miscellaneous writings, and one of the names of the painters'.⁵⁸ In other words, besides the bulk of poems that constituted the main body of *Notable Women*, Wang also displays other genres to her readers such as *sanqu*, which female writers had been practising formerly for some time. From the viewpoint of 'preserving women's talents and work' as the aim of editing-compiling *Notable Women*, Wang's editorial decision also made known the comprehensiveness of women's literary and artistic endeavours.

Many arias presented in Wang's 'Collection of Elegance' were distributed under the socio-cultural contexts discussed in the previous section. The diversity of authors' social

⁵⁷ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Fan li', 3a. *MYSWCB*

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

rankings represented in ‘Collection of Elegance’, in which songs were not just written by courtesans who were famed professional music entertainers juxtaposing songs from gentlewomen writers, contrasts sharply with the exclusiveness found in the all-male Ming literati songwriter-authored collections. The publishing boom during the sixteenth century and the growing demand for women’s writing among literati readers and critics prompted the circulation of female-authored writing, which included writings in the *qu* genre. Courtesans’ repertoire, in particular, which includes elegant art songs, erotic songs and popular ballads, were circulated through printed texts and consumed by people from different social classes, appealing to the diverse tastes and needs of the commercial book market.⁵⁹ Gentlewomen’s cultural practice of composing *qu* during the Ming period, especially in the late Ming, was a result of the educational expansion that formed the burgeoning literacy of women: gentlewomen were new readers and writers.

2.3.1 *A hypothesis of Wang Duanshu’s possible source texts*

Wang Duanshu’s source materials for ‘Collection of Elegance’ also reflects such socio-cultural changes and the trend in music publishing during the late-Ming period. ‘Collection of Elegance’ itself could also be regarded as a miniature case-study contextualizing the collection and public accessibility of women’s *qu* during the late-Ming period. The majority of the songs that are curated within ‘Collection of Elegance’ had appeared in other previously published song collections or drama miscellanies (see Table 2.1).

Although Wang does not identify her source-texts for the specific songs most of the time, she does remark on the sources for the entries by Jiang Qiongqiong and Chu Ji. These two courtesan entries are in the second half of the collection and through cross-referencing with contemporary late-Ming known publications, a hypothesis can be drawn of the probable sources that Wang Duanshu may have based her collection on. There are four types of sources

⁵⁹ Lam, ‘Reading Music and Eroticism’, 232–234.

containing women's *qu* that were probably 'the pool of materials' from which Wang curated the main body of 'Collection of Elegance'. These source texts can be categorized as follows:

1. Songbooks, such as the *Second Collection of Wu Poetry*, *Celestial Air Played Anew* and composition tutor books (music formulary) such as *A New Formulary of Southern Song*. These collections were edited and published by prominent literati in the late Ming;
2. Fashionable prints of courtesans' singing repertoires and other writings, such as *Stylish Verses from Green Bowers* and *Bronze Strings and Golden Threads*;⁶⁰
3. Female authored song-drama, such as the entry by courtesan Ma Xianglan, in which the arias could have been selected from her composed song-drama, *Story of Three Lives*;
4. Gentlewomen's single-author literary collections, such as *Song-lyric and Qu of Madame Yang* by Huang E, *Chants of Wind-Weft* by Xu Yuan, and *Chanting of Mountains and Rivers* by Liang Mengzhao;⁶¹
5. Women's biographies, such as *Book of Talented Female Scholar* (1659), from which Hao Xiang E's suite appears to have been taken;⁶²
6. The source of the entry by Zhang Siyin is transmitted through Wang Duanshu's personal connection, as Zhang is Wang's sister-in-law and boudoir companion.

The only two suites for which it is difficult to identify sources are: Ma Xianglan's 'boudoir thoughts' suite to the tune 'Winding Brocade Road', a song suite that was possibly separated from Ma's song drama *Stories of Three Lives*, which is no longer extant; and the last entry of the collection, a suite of 'Romantic Song on Lantern Festival' by Li Cuiwei. Both the scholarly editions, *Complete Sanqu Works of Ming Dynasty* and *Collection of Writing*

⁶⁰ Ren Zhongmin 任中敏, *Qu xie* 曲譜 (*Matters on Qu*), in *San qu cong kan* 散曲叢刊 (*Collections of Sanqu*) repr. (Nanjing, 2013), 1295. [hereafter: SQCK] On *Hu wenru qu* 呼文如曲 (the *qu* of Hu Wenru), Ren mentions her '*Si shi ci* 四時詞' (Four Seasons Lyrics) to the Tune '*Zao luo pao* 皂羅袍' (Silk Purple Robes), collected in *Tong pi jin lü* 銅琵琶金縷 *Bronze Strings and Golden Threads*.

⁶¹ Xie Boyang 謝伯陽 ed., *Quan Ming sanqu* 全明散曲 (*Complete Sanqu of Ming Dynasty*), (Jinan, 1994), [hereafter: QMSQ] on Huang E, 1746; on Xu Yuan, 3326, her *sanqu* were all originally collected within vol. 10 of *Luo wei yin* 絡緯吟 (*Chants of Wind-Weft*); on Liang Mengzhao and her individual collection, see LFZK, 163–164.

⁶² Xu Zheng 徐震, *Nü cai zi shu* 女才子書 (*Book of Talented Women* 1659), online transcribed edition at <http://www.guoxue123.com/xiaosuo/0001/gxyc/index.htm> (accessed 26, March, 2019). on 郝湘娥 Hao Xiang E, Chapter 8

Women from Imperial Dynasties,⁶³ list Wang Duanshu's 'Collection of Elegance' as the source edition for these two song suites.

These possible source materials of Wang Duanshu show how women's music was scattered and distributed in many types of prints, including biographies and female poetry collections. It also suggests Wang Duanshu's selection was more selective than inclusive. For instance, the collection, *Qing lou yun yu* 青樓韻語 (*Stylish Verses from Green Bowers* 1616), a source collection which was used as the basis for the sub-collection 'Collection of Erotica' (chapters 24–25) in *Notable Women*,⁶⁴ and the last three songs in the first half of 'Collection of Elegance' (chapter 37) also curated independent arias that were composed by the celebrated late-Ming courtesan Xue Susu 薛素素 (before 1575–after 1637).⁶⁵ Despite Xue Susu's fame, her song is not included in 'Collection of Elegance'. The composers of the first three entries of the collection – Huang E, Xu Yuan and Liang Mengzhao – all wrote more songs and suites that can be found in their individual collections, from which Wang only selected a few.

⁶³ Xie Boyang, *QMSQ*: on Ma Xianglan, 3188–3189; on Li Cuiwei, 4265–4266; also in *Zhong guo gudai nü zuojia ji* 中国古代女作家集 (*Collection of Female Writers from Imperial Times*) Wang Yanti 王延荆, ed. (Shandong, 1999): on Ma Xianglan, 479; on Li Cuiwei, 521.

⁶⁴ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Yan ji' (Collection of Erotica), *MYSWCB*, 25.1a

⁶⁵ Zhu Yuanliang 朱元亮 and Zhang Mengzheng 張夢徵, eds., *Qing lou yun yu* 青樓韻語 (*Stylish Verse from Green Bowers*, 1616) (Shanghai, 1914 repr.): Xue Susu 薛素素, 'Zeng Li sheng 贈李生 Present to Scholar Li' to the Tune 'Gui zhi xiang 桂枝香' (Fragrant Osmanthus Branch), 47.

Table 2.1. Possible Source Texts for ‘Collection of Elegance’⁶⁶

<i>Writer</i>	<i>Social status</i>	<i>Source collection</i>	<i>Type of Source</i>
<i>First Chapter – 37</i>			
Huang E (1498–1569)	gentlewoman, wife of Yang Shen	<i>Second Collection of Wu Poetry</i> (1616) <i>Three Sound of Southern Song Song-lyric and Qu of Madame Yang</i>	multi-author art song collection and author’s personal collection
Xu Yuan (ca. 1560–1617)	gentlewoman, wife of Fan Yunlin	<i>Second Collection of Wu Poetry</i> <i>The Celestial Air Played Anew</i> <i>A New Formulary of Southern Song</i> <i>Chants of Wind-Weft</i>	multi-author art song collection music formulary author’s personal collection
Liang Mengzhao (c.1572–1640)	gentlewoman, wife of Mao Nai (Jiu Ren)	<i>Chanting of Mountains and Rivers</i>	personal poetry collection
Shen Huiduan (1613–?)	gentlewoman, wife of Gu Laiping	<i>A New Formulary of Southern Song</i> (c.1659)	music formulary
Hao Xiang E	gentlewoman, concubine of Dou Hong	<i>Book of Talented Female scholar</i> (1659)	prose, virtuous woman’s biography
Zhang Siyin (?–c.1644)	gentlewomen, wife of Ding Shenggong	transmitted through family connection	transmitted through private connection
Gu Changfen	courtesan	<i>Stylish Verses from Green Bowers</i> (1616)	anthology of courtesan’s poetry, song-lyric and arias
Ma Shou	courtesan	<i>Stylish Verses from Green Bowers</i> (1616)	Anthology of courtesan poetry, song-lyric and arias
Dong Ruying	courtesan	<i>Stylish Verses from Green Bowers</i> (1616)	Anthology of courtesan poetry, song-lyric and arias
<i>Second chapter - 38</i>			
Shen Jingzhuan (fl. 1590)	gentlewoman, wife of Wu Chang, daughter of Shen Jing	<i>A New Formulary of Southern Song</i>	music formulary
Hu Wenru (fl.c.1590)	courtesan-cum-concubine of Qiu Qianzhi	<i>Collective Poems of the Successive Reigns - Intercalary sub-collection</i> (1652)	anthology of women’s poetry

⁶⁶ These source collections are hypothesis that based on cross-referencing of different versions of lyrics among other previously published collections, or source references listed in *QMSQ* (*Complete Sanqu from Ming Dynasty*). Specific locations and page numbers within these source collections are referenced in the thesis when the author is under discussion. Wang Duanshu only occasionally annotates source texts.

Jiang Qionggiong (fl. late 16 th century)	courtesan	<i>Second Collection of Wu Poetry</i> ⁶⁷	multi-author art song collection
Chu Ji (fl.c.1610s– 1620s)	courtesan	<i>Most Pleasing Disposition</i> ; ⁶⁸ also in <i>The Celestial Air Played Anew</i> (c.1627)	multi-author art song collection and operatic arias miscellany
Ma Xianglan (1548–1604)	courtesan	<i>A New Formulary of Southern Song</i> <i>Story of Three Lives</i> (not extant)	music formular song-drama in northern music composed by Ma
Jing Pianpian (fl.c.1582–1600)	courtesan	<i>Stylish Verses from Green Bowers</i> <i>Second Collection of Wu Poetry</i> (preface 1614)	anthology of courtesan poetry, song-lyric and singing repertoire multi-author art song collection
Li Cuiwei (fl. 1640s)	late-Ming rebel, daughter of Li Zicheng	unknown	unknown

It is also possible that Wang's original plan for 'Collection of Elegance' was for it to be only one chapter. The entries by Shen Huiduan – the fourth entry of the first chapter, and the first entry of second chapter – and Shen Jingzhuan have songs in *A New Formulary of Southern Song* (c.1655). Chapter 38 also begins with Shen Jingzhuan's aria, the only gentlewoman entry within this chapter. Works of courtesan writers Jing Pianpian and Jiang Qionggiong, and of gentlewomen writers Huang E and Xu Yuan can all be found in the previously published *Wu sao er'ji* 吳騷二集 (*Second Collection of Wu Poetry*).⁶⁹ Yet, in the first chapter of 'Collection of Elegance', Wang only features the two gentlewomen's songs. Jing Pianpian and Jiang Qionggiong's arias are presented within chapter 38 (the second half of 'Collection of Elegance'), which predominantly features courtesans' repertoires.

⁶⁷ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, *MYSWCB*, 38.2b. Wang's biographical account of Jiang includes the remark: 'for detailed information on her songs, see Zhang Qi and Wang Ning from Hangzhou edited and selected *Second Collection of Wu Poetry* 詳見武林張琦王寧所選吳騷二集內.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 38.4a. Wang's biographical account on Chuji includes the remark: her song could be seen in *Most Pleasing Disposition*, 其曲見最娛情.

⁶⁹ Zhang Qi 張琦 and Wang Ning 王寧, *Wusao er'ji* 吳騷二集 (*Second Collection of Wu Poetry* 1616 preface), first and second combined-printed edition, digitised facsimile, Huang E in chapter 1, 2, and 4, Xu Yuan in 2 and 3.

Besides, there were undoubtedly more female-authored songs available during the period of Wang's editing of *Notable Women*, including a concubine (née) Fang's song included in Feng Menglong's edited art song collection, *Tai xia xin zou* 太霞新奏 (*Celestial Air Played Anew* c.1627). Wang's contemporaries, including gentlewomen writers such as Gu Zhenli 顧貞立 (ca. 1637-ca.1714), Ruan Lizhen 阮麗珍 (?-1653), Ye Xiaowan 葉小紈 (1613–1657), Ye Xiaoluan and Jiang Yujie (a Taoist nun), and possibly more courtesans, wrote songs according to historical studies.⁷⁰ Wang Duanshu may have been aware of these materials, or it may have been the potential of collecting more women's writing, as discussed in Chapter 1, that she called for more submissions in order to publish supplement editions of *Notable Women*. This call for the contribution of additional materials so that she may 'go on adding to the list in subsequent editions gradually',⁷¹ reveals that the anthology itself was not only an on-going enterprise, but was also a project to both preserve women's works and perhaps support new poetry by women.

What the materials that Wang Duanshu presented to readers, however, indicates her concern regarding the musical fashions of the late-Ming period. The very first comment that Wang writes at the beginning of 'Collection of Elegance', as discussed earlier in this chapter, indicates the passion for song composing, performing and printing among the elite of her time. 'Collection of Elegance' itself is textual preservation showing female writers were not absent from or voiceless in this fashionable trend. Wang's editorial attention to the elite music fashion is reflected through the number of entries that can be found in the previously published literati editions of songbooks. As the sources of 'Collection of Elegance' have shown, female-authored arias and suites, and in particular the works by gentlewomen Huang E and Xu Yuan and courtesans Jing Pianpian and Jiang Qiongqiong, were circulating in the earlier printed literati collections of *Celestial Air* and *Wu Poetry*. These female songwriters earned entries in these literati editions of songbooks because they showcased the advanced

⁷⁰ Ye Changhai 葉長海, 'Ming Qing xiqu yu nüxing jüese 明清戏曲与女性角色' (Ming Dynasty Opera and Roles of Female Protagonists and Playwrights), *Xiju yishu* 戏剧艺术 *Theatre Arts*, 1994(4), 77-88, at 81.

⁷¹ Wang Duanshu, 'Hui ji 繪集' (Pictorial Collection), 40.1a.

level of *qu* composing among female authors that attracted the attention of literati *qu* editors, as well as the broad recognition of their skills among male peers.

2.3.2 'Collection of Elegance': A microcosm of women's culture in late Ming

Although late-Ming society still maintained its orthodox Confucian patriarchal-hierarchical structure (where not only men and women were separated into outer and inner quarters, but also women were divided into wives and disorderly women), the textual space that these late-Ming music publications constructed, in creating a relatively 'inclusive' space, reflects the unique gender dynamics and trends in print. Imprints, such as *Second Collection of Wu Poetry*, *Celestial Air Played Anew* and *A New Formulary of Southern Song*,⁷² not only included arias by both gentlewomen and courtesans, but women's works were also positioned amongst the works of male literati counterparts. They mirror the fluidity of gender and class boundaries of the late-Ming society, in which not only the cultural sphere of the late Ming witnessed the increasing interaction between the male elite and learned women, but also, the listing of gentlewomen's work alongside that of courtesans displays women's mobility in entering the circles of the elite through artistic self-fashioning.

With only a few exceptions, the majority of authors whose songs are presented in 'Collection of Elegance' are already represented in other sub-collections of *Notable Women* (see Table 2.2). Comparing with the analysis of the categorizing and ordering strategies of *Notable Women* shown in Table 1.1, two clear patterns can be seen in Table 2.2. First, in terms of the social ranking of authors, 'Collection of Elegance' represents a mixture of women from different backgrounds, including many represented previously in 'Main Collection', 'Appendix to Main Collection', 'Collection of Erotica' and 'Collection of

⁷² Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Tai xia xin zou* 太霞新奏 (*Celestial Air Played Anew* c.1627) and Shen Zijin 沈自晉, *Nan ci xin pu* 南詞新譜 *A New Formulary of Southern Song* (c.1659). For facsimile reprints of these anthologies, see Wang Qiugui 王秋貴 ed., *Shanben xiqu congkan* 善本戲曲叢刊 (*Collections of Rare Editions of Opera and Songs*), series 1- 6 (Taipei, 1984–87). [hereafter: SBXQCK]

Rebellions'. If Wang Duanshu has a selective attitude towards songs, 'Collection of Elegance' has created an inclusive space where women from all social strata have gathered. The second pattern to emerge from Table 2.2 is that female writers who practiced *qu* writing also wrote poems and lyrics. Perhaps like their Ming male counterparts, women were not tied to one cultural identity but rather the writing of poetry, lyrics and songs, as discussed in Chapter 1, is inter-related while the less well-regarded genres are more vernacular, informal, and more closely tied to a performance tradition.

Late-Ming cultural society saw the writings and songs of courtesans anthologized and circulated beyond the pleasure quarters and exclusive elite print readership, and appealing to a wide variety of readerships and individualized negotiations with the texts. The cultural ideal from the courtesans' quarter also shaped seventeenth-century gentlewomen's culture. The companionship of courtesans inspired literati in seeking a 'companionate marriage' between intellectually compatible couples. The saying of 'a woman without talent is virtuous' has ever been challenged by its social practice of talented gentlewomen in the late Ming. There was a blurred boundary between a women's virtue and a women's talent. Gentlewomen writers were able to venture into publishing in a society that appreciated women's literary talents and artistic endeavours. Individual collections of both gentlewomen and courtesans were published and circulated. The co-existence of female authors from varied social ranks reflects a unique dynamic of the Ming gendered sphere where the idea of a new womanhood crafted a new socio-cultural space that not only blurred the lines between male and female, but also the distinctions among women themselves were 'temporarily obliterated' in the process of editing.

Table 2.2. Previous entries by authors in other sub-collections of *Notable Women*⁷³

<i>Writer</i>	<i>Social status</i>	<i>Previous entries</i>	<i>Source page numbers</i>	<i>Writing genres of previous entry</i>
<i>Chapter 37 - first half of 'Collection of Elegance'</i>				
Huang E (1498–1569)	gentlewoman, wife of Yang Shen	Chapter 4 Chapter 35	4.3a-4.3b 35.1b	poetry lyric poetry
Xu Yuan (c.1560–1620)	gentlewoman, wife of Fan Yun lin	Chapter 7 Chapter 35	7.7a-7.12b 35.4a	poetry lyric poetry
Liang Mengzhao (c.1572–1640)	gentlewoman, wife of Mao Jiu ren	Chapter 12 Chapter 35	12.1b-12.4b 35.8a	poetry lyric poetry
Shen Huiduan (1613–?)	gentlewoman, wife of Gu Lai ping	Chapter 14	14.5a	poetry
Hao Xiang E	gentlewoman, concubine of Dou Hong	Chapter 18 Chapter 35	18.5a-18.6a 35.11b	poetry lyric poetry
Zhang Siyin	gentlewoman, wife of Ding Sheng gong	Chapter 15	15.17a	poetry
Gu Changfen	Nanjing courtesan	none		none
Ma Shou	Nanjing courtesan	Chapter 25	25.20a	poetry
Dong Ruying	Nanjing courtesan	Chapter 25	25.5a	poetry
<i>Chapter 38 - second half of 'Collection of Elegance'</i>				
Shen Jingzhuan (fl.1590)	gentlewoman, wife of Wu Chang, daughter of Shen Jing	none		none
Hu Wenru (fl.1590)	courtesan-cum-concubine of Qiu Qianzhi	Chapter 19	19.1a-19.2a	poetry
Jiang Qiongqiong	Nanjing courtesan	Chapter 25	25.8b	poetry
Chu Ji	courtesan	none		none
Ma Xianglan (1548–1604)	Nanjing courtesan	Chapter 24	23.3b-24.4a	poetry
Jing Pianpian (fl.c.1600)	courtesan	Chapter 24 Chapter 36	24.8a-24.8a 36.12a	poetry lyric poetry
Li Cuiwei	daughter of Li Zi Cheng (leader of peasant rebellion)	Chapter 34	34.6a	poetry

2.3.3 The object-ness of the book

Wang Duanshu's 'catch-all' editorial strategy of showing a variety of genres as a display of the 'complete view' of women's writing within a poetry anthology has a resonance with the commercial editions of drama miscellanies that were published during the late-Ming period. These commercial editions tend to include materials such as popular tunes, ballads, drinking

⁷³ Wang Duanshu, '*Zheng ji* 正集' (Main Collection), '*Zheng ji fu* 正集附' (Appendix to Main Collection), '*Yan ji* 艷集' (Collection of Erotica), '*Ni ji* 逆集' (Collection of Rebellions), '*Shiyu ji* 詩餘集' (Song-lyric Collection), *MYSWCB*. Specific page numbers as cited in the table.

games and jokes as a part of their selling point.⁷⁴ The late-Ming printed drama miscellanies, as Lowry observes, ‘open up an archive of popular culture and songs about empire’.⁷⁵ This approach also enhances the object-ness of the anthology itself, in which the printed materials are available to use in private, to enhance the experience of viewing the drama, jokes and entertainments. The reading process of the printed materials, which He defines as ‘segmental reading’, ‘encourages a sense of the ownership of the texts’ and ‘a taste for repeated viewing [of] a gesture of connoisseuristic appreciation’.⁷⁶

Wang Duanshu’s ‘embrace’ of ‘Collection of Elegance’ as a sub-collection – that is, the ‘attaching’ of these chapters of various genres of women’s writing and presenting them in a similar format to mainstream genres of poetry – allowed readers to access more materials than could be offered in a sole poetry anthology. This ‘complete view’ perhaps also added the ‘extra value’ onto an imprint commodity. This editorial decision might also be considered a ‘bold’ one. Tian Yuan Tan observes that *qu*, as an alternative genre, ‘rarely appeared in the literary collections of Chinese writers, an absence that implies *qu* was not regarded as part of one’s standard literary corpus’.⁷⁷ It is possible that, apart from the more formal genres of poetry and prose, Wang aims to reveal the Ming popular, entertainment culture as a part of the ‘comprehensive while exquisite’ editing goal of *Notable Women*. The element of presenting song as a form of entertainment is implicated in Wang’s editorial voice on a song’s performability, as Chapter 3 explores. Through Wang’s formatting of the recycled texts, she creates a collection that is itself a performance space, in which songs selected from prints were objects of connoisseurship of the late-Ming male literati, but also formed a unique gentlewoman’s edition of women’s song.

⁷⁴ Music collections, such as *Yao tian yue* 堯天樂 (*Music from the World of the Sage King Yao*), *Ci lin yi zhi* 詞林一枝 (*A Branch from the Forest of Song*), and *Zhai jin qi yin* 摘錦奇音 (*Strange Tones Plucked from a Tapestry*), published during the Wanli reign (1563-1620) all include ballads, drinking games and popular tunes. Facsimile editions of these songbooks are reprinted in *SBXQCK*.

⁷⁵ Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 78.

⁷⁶ He, *Home and the World*, 13.

⁷⁷ Tian Yuan Tan, *Songs of Contentment*, 3.

2.3.3.1 *Printing forms of late-Ming literati music editions and commercial drama miscellanies*

A glance at commercially printed song-drama miscellanies printed in late Ming reveals how the format of texts, often providing an eye-catching visual presentation, brought readers a sense of contemporary entertainment culture. The cover pages of these song drama books were sometimes illustrated with pictures of a group or an individual at a music entertainment scene, enjoying the performance, food and the physical presence of female entertainers – a real fashion that was adored by the late-Ming leisured class, as seen in the title page presentation of Huang Ruqing's *Popular Melodies of Qingyang and Kunshan Tunes* (Figure 2.1).⁷⁸

The visual rhetoric of this title-page also illustrates, advertises and delivers an invitation to its readership: that the private pleasure of musical entertainment portrayed in the illustration could be accessed through the gateway of not only the texts of operatic scenes, but also through drinking games, jokes and popular tunes that would be exchanged during the private performance.⁷⁹ Research on commercially printed drama miscellanies during the late Ming shows that book title-pages employed a visual strategy to intensify the reader experience. For instance, the above illustrated *Popular Melodies of Qingyang and Kunshan Tunes* added the phrase 'enjoyed and heard by all' (*gong ting shang* 共聽賞) on the title-page along with its anthology title.⁸⁰ Furthermore, the upper half of this page is given over to a portrayal of a banquet scene where the guests are surrounded by female entertainers with various instruments (see Figure 2.1). The boundaries between the private pleasure of musical entertainment that is depicted in the illustration, and public spectacle by the mass printing of the illustration has been blurred; in a sense, the music now can be shared and 'heard and enjoyed by all' through the textual space of the printed commercial drama miscellany.

⁷⁸ He, *Home and the World*, 119–131; Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 109–123.

⁷⁹ He, *Home and the World*, 129–131. Also see Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 109–131.

⁸⁰ Huang Ruqing 黃儒卿, *Shi diao Qing Kun* 時調青昆 (*Popular Melodies of Qingyang and Kunshan Tunes*), title-page. facsimile repr. in *SBXQCK*, in series 1, no.9, 1.



Figure 2.1. The title page of Huang Ruqing's *Shi diao Qing Kun* 時調青昆 (*Popular Melodies of Qingyang and Kunshan Tunes*).⁸¹

⁸¹ Huang Ruqing, *Shi diao Qing kun* 時調青昆 (*Popular Melodies of Qingyang and Kunshan Tunes*), published between late Ming and early Qing, facsimile repr. in *SBXQCK*, in series 1, no.9, 1.

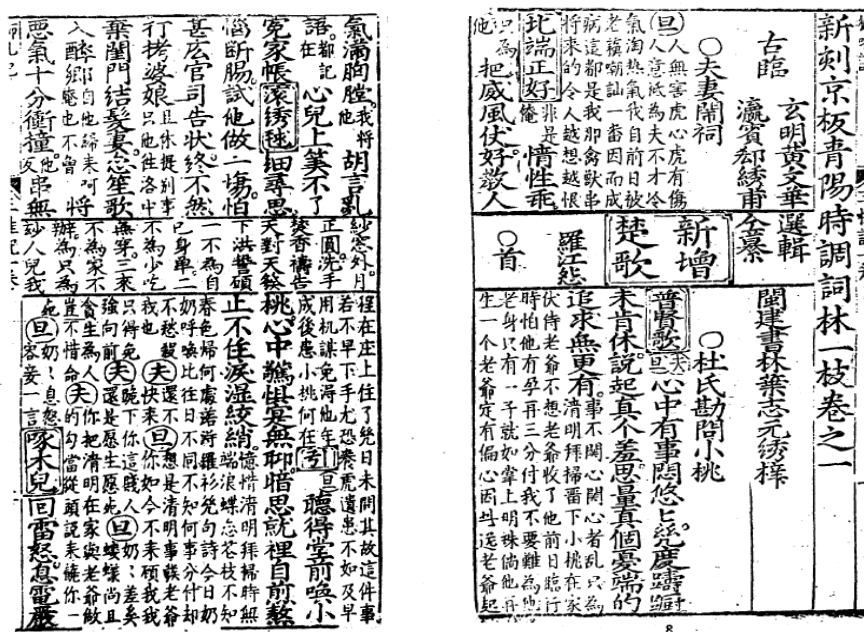


Figure 2.2. The first page of text in *Cilin yizhi* 詞林一枝 (*A Branch from the Forest of Lyrics*).⁸²

The rhetoric of displaying the latest Ming fashion is carried onto the pages by inserting songs, jokes or drinking games among the selected scenes of the drama. The trifold layout of the printed pages maximized the use of space to insert new materials. In Figure 2.2 the upper and lower registers of the page show text from a selected scene of song-drama. The middle register shows songs from the South, possibly are popular contemporary tunes, and accompanied by the statement ‘Newly Added’ (*xin zeng* 新增). The words ‘Newly Printed’ (*xin ke* 新刻), or ‘Newly Edited’ (*xin bian* 新編) were frequently used in late-Ming commercially published drama miscellanies. Editors of commercially printed music books do not appear to have aimed for textual accuracy or scholarly editing, nor the high-end physical presentation of its imprints. By including a wide variety of materials, especially based on the latest cultural fashion, the music books served as a significant medium in delivering elite fashion and making the exclusive elite culture accessible through reading.

The literati editions of songs are often well-known for their high quality, luxurious illustrations and outstanding scholarly editing and selecting. The internal pages were often presented in a plain format – the curated songs in these books are objects of appreciating and

⁸² Huang Wenhua 黃文華 and Xi Xiufu 郗綉甫, *Ci lin yizhi* 詞林一枝 (*A Branch from the Forest of Lyrics*) published in between 1606 and 1607, facsimile repr. in *SBXQCK*, series 1, no.4, 8–9.

the musical texts are fine artefacts that aficionados could exercise their connoisseurship. These printed texts were not only printed accurately but were selected with elitist aesthetics and scholarly sensibilities in mind. Some material within the literati editions of songs might have had a socially exclusive nature, such as the above mentioned *Tong chi* 童癡 (*Child's Folly* see section 2.2.2) folk song anthology, in which works or paratextual materials were written by close literati friends in an exclusive social circle, and such materials could not otherwise be obtained by commercially produced books.

Figure 2.3 shows a page from Ling Mengchu's *Nan yin san lai* (南音三籟), a collection of songs. The page contains two columns of text, each with a title and a body of lyrics. The right column is titled '仙呂' (Xianlü) and the left column is titled '長拍' (Changpao). The text is written in vertical columns, with the right column starting with '仙呂' and the left column starting with '長拍'. The text is surrounded by a double-line border. The legend on the right side of the page indicates the following elements:

- Modal indication (blue arrow)
- Tune Title (red arrow)
- Name of the Author (orange arrow)
- Title of the song (green arrow)

Figure 2.3. A Suite by mid-Ming songwriter Chen Duo (1488–1521) printed in Ling Mengchu's *Nan yin san lai* 南音三籟 (*Three Sounds of Southern Song*).⁸³

⁸³ Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, *Nan yin san lai* 南音三籟 (*Sound of Three Nature in Southern Song*), SBXQCK, series 4, no. 7, 91–92.

In Ling Mengchu's *Three Sounds of Southern Song*, for example, rather than crushing texts together in a trifold layout, a song suite has been printed in a lavish folio page layout (see Figure 2.3). Modal indication, tune title and *dianban* 點板 notations (marks beside the lyrics as 、 。 -) are provided in Figure 2.3.⁸⁴ Ling's comments are provided on the upper part of the page margins. For contemporary musically-literate readers, this song collection provides guidance in *duqu*, namely to realize tunes: a term that encompasses both singing and composing. For those who could not read the provided music directions for setting the lyrics to music, the collection itself could still be read as a desk-top lyric book or as a manual book for learning the way of filling the lyrics, with the help of Ling's detailed annotations in the margin. The literati edition had a central focus on the artistry of the songs, rather than using fashionable marketing techniques to imply that the book was an object from which one could catch up with the current fashion.

2.3.3.2 'Collection of Elegance' as a material space of late-Ming women's songs

Wang Duanshu's material repackaging of female-authored songs by re-curating and reorganizing widely circulated materials from previously published late-Ming imprints transformed the collection into a luxurious edition. This luxuriousness was not exclusively rooted in elaborate display of title pages, and often eschewed illustrations as base commercialisation and for mass-consumption rather than elite enjoyment. Rather, the luxury was cultural and aesthetic. Literati elites sought editions which contained expert commentaries, refined selection strategies, and technical, artistic prefatory materials which allowed the editor to begin an argument about the contents that would continue through and guide the sophisticated reader. Such luxuriousness of *Collection of Elegance* does not depend on a visual marketing strategy itself.

Wang Duanshu makes her collection a luxurious object through a rich assortment of paratextual elements, the biographical accounts and the comments (and also in the case of the

⁸⁴ Judith Zeitlin, 'Between Performance, Manuscript and Print: Imagining the Musical Text in Seventeenth-Century Plays and Songbooks', in *Text, Performance and Gender in Chinese Literature and Music*, eds. Maghiel van Crevel, Tian Yuan Tan and Michel Hockx (Leiden, 2009), 263-292, at 273-276.

entire anthology, the group of prefaces written by leading contemporary literati, dedicated biographies, and editorial principles and introductory note) that accompanies the repacked and recycled materials, thus drawing upon the style of a deluxe edition.⁸⁵ The printing format of ‘Collection of Elegance’ is consistent with previous sub-collections within the entire *Notable Women* anthology, where, published in folio with plain but finely carved texts, the contents are arranged in the sequence of authors’ names and commentaries followed by the song texts.⁸⁶ Biographical accounts and the comments provided by Wang are not merely paratextual materials; they become the interpretative key to transmitting and conceptualizing the meanings of the texts that run through the entire anthology.

Wang’s approach of sequencing her own comments before the lyrics, which always begin with ‘Duanshu says’, indicates an act of foregrounding her position and identity as editor-critic, and intention of elevating, or even canonizing, women’s works and her own voices (chapter 1). This narrative style, which is ‘true to the spirit’ of Confucius,⁸⁷ also establishes her editorial persona in collecting and editing literary pieces, voicing her aspiration to follow the example of Confucius. It is through these surrounding textual packaging that ‘Collection of Elegance’ speaks to its readership, transmits and communicates new meanings of the recycled texts. Meanwhile, this careful arrangements of the paratextual materials of Wang Duanshu points to an editorial concern in line with the private printing of literati editions.

Wang Duanshu’s strategy in editing certainly, also strikes resonance with the late-Ming commercial editorial convention of all-embracing, in which the inclusion of a wide variety of materials gave readers a complete view. ‘Collection of Elegance’ is also a product of fashion. Half of the collection features courtesan writers, who served the elite and aimed their songs at these exclusive clients, and their songs are therefore exclusive products for only a few individuals typically consume. By including these songs in the collection, Wang Duanshu’s selection indicates an up-to-date elite taste of late-Ming and early-Qing music fashion. When

⁸⁵ Guo and Xiao Qiao, ‘Fresh Faces for those Full of Emotions’, 66 and 69.

⁸⁶ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), chapters 37 and 38, *MYSWCB*. See discussion of printing format in Chapter 1 above.

⁸⁷ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 190.

these songs were performed in private entertainment parties of the elite, or as gentlewomen's songs that were chanted in private boudoirs, the materialized song texts from these various performance spaces in the printed book become a public avenue for self-expression and self-articulation of elitist aesthetics and scholarly sensibility; a shared personal identity of the artistic self, embedded within a wider elite society.

2.3.4 'Collection of Elegance' as a scholarly edition of women's songs

Wang's own contribution to the field of *qu*, especially the accomplishments of editing and commenting on female-authored *sanqu*, was highly praised by the later *qu* theorist, Lu Qian 盧前 (1905–1951), one of the founders of the modern study of *qu* in China. He not only reprinted 'Collection of Elegance' in his multi-author anthology, *Songs Printed by the Yinhong Studio*,⁸⁸ but also reprinted it separately, re-entitled *Women's Sanqu from the Ming Dynasty* (1937).⁸⁹ Compared to the contents of the first edition of *Notable Women*, however, Lu's edition does not include the last three courtesan entries of the first half of 'Collection of Elegance' (chapter 37). While Lu's edition does not suggest any deletion of these texts, this lacuna of the contents indicates Wang's anthology and its materials have been recycled and repackaged during circulation and re-distribution.

It might be the unique quality of Wang's *sanqu* edition, both as a *sanqu* collection on its own right and as a commodity, that attracted Lu Qian to reprint and re-entitle it as an individual published book. The 1937 edition is printed in an 'collection of treasures -imitating the Song Dynasty-style typeface' 聚珍仿宋版印, reflects how Lu himself perceived the original editing and printing of the edition, and how his own edition tried to match the quality of the original. In the preface of the 1937 edition, Lu praises the richness of the materials included in 'Collection of Elegance', as well as Wang's knowledge and editorial skills in

⁸⁸ Lu Qian 盧前, 'Ya ji 雅集' (Collection of Elegance), in *Yin hong yi suo ke qu* 飲虹簾所刻曲 *Songs Printed by the Yinhong Studio, Jin ling Lu shi kan ben jing yin* 金陵盧氏刊本景印 (Edition of Lu Printed in Nanjing) (Taipei, 1961).

⁸⁹ Lu Qian 盧前, 'Ming dai furen sanqu ji 明代婦人散曲集' (Women's Sanqu from Ming Dynasty) (Shanghai, 1937), School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) Archives and Special Collections, ref. C.367.m2.81001.

providing biographical accounts and commentaries on each entry,⁹⁰ which ‘no other edition could compare to its scope’.⁹¹

Wang Duanshu’s music selections point to a pattern in which the different female groups of writers, gentlewomen and courtesans, show both commonality and diversity in *qu* writing. Wang’s selections of gentlewomen entries are clearly focused on artistic talents, social and family standings. Courtesan entries are highlighted mainly by their authors’ expertise in music, their different stylistic choice of music settings, their up-to-date creation in the light of late-Ming fashion in *qu* writing, and the music as social artefacts and tokens. Widmer suggests that Wang Duanshu had a slightly iconoclastic editorial approach by including ‘the work of singing girls alongside those of more respectable women’, and this was magnified in ‘Collection of Elegance’.⁹² However, it also mirrors the fact that the late Ming, as Lu identifies, is the only period in Chinese history when well-born ladies of the gentry and courtesans socialized with one another.⁹³ The textual space of ‘Collection of Elegance’, therefore, could also be regarded as a miniature of fluid gender and social class spaces of the late-Ming period.

In addition, to readers of Wang’s day, the arias that are curated within ‘Collection of Elegance’ were cultural mementos of a bygone era by the time of the publication of *Notable Women*. Chinese courtesan culture reached its pinnacle during the late-Ming period and gentlewomen’s writing also grew in prevalence and popularity. The sounds of female-authored songs that are curated within ‘Collection of Elegance’, whether they have been heard by audiences of early Qing or could be imagined through reading tune titles and lyrics, embody the aura of this unique period, and might evoke the sensation of performance that was witnessed before the fall of the Ming dynasty.

Whether read from its position within a larger anthology, or as an individual book reprinted many years after the original publication, ‘Collection of Elegance’ functioned to

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid. Lu describes the scope of other female-authored *qu* collections as 未嘗有此編之富。

⁹² Widmer, ‘Selected Short Works by Wang Duanshu’, 179.

⁹³ Tina Lu, ‘The Literary Culture of the late Ming (1573–1644)’, in *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, eds. Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, 63–151, at 148.

preserve women's talents and addressed the dearth in woman-edited female-authored *qu* in Chinese music and literary history. The materiality of Wang's edition, the diverse music patterns, lyric themes and authors from various social strata not only show the comprehensiveness of women's practice in *qu*, but also a way of answering the claim of women's absence in the field of *qu*. It's multi-faceted ordering and Wang's selecting strategies also provide readers with a multi-layered reading of this collection. In this carefully selected, ordered and edited work, Wang Duanshu's editorial voice, which is foregrounded throughout, is not only a way of conveying meaning of the texts and her perception of the songs, but also a way of engaging its readership in offering a range of reading strategies. It is such para-textual contributions, and the editorial strategies, that makes the edition distinctive, instead of a mere selection of copied-texts from previously printed editions by male-editors.

2.4 The Ordering of the Collection: Authors, Music or Lyrics

An examination of the print format, and the page layout as discussed above, includes questioning how Wang Duanshu's arrangements of the texts and the repackaging of the materialized song texts can be understood and interpreted. The ordering of the texts within 'Collection of Elegance' is part and parcel of how Wang regenerated and reshaped the recycled materials and gave the collection its distinctiveness.⁹⁴ The 'classification of the various sorts of printed materials', or 'the choice of a restricted corpus of materials', as Chartier points out, are modified when 'their title or the order and contents of the collection' are changed.⁹⁵ These modifications then create 'an inventory of variants that introduce new meanings into a work ... influencing the audience and the status of the work that never did have a single fixed meaning expressed in a supposedly stable text'.⁹⁶

This thesis does not aim to examine Wang Duanshu's 'Collection of Elegance' and its possible source collections from a comparative angle; the thesis is focused on how Wang's

⁹⁴ He, *Home and the World*, 82–104, 119–131, 142–150 and 164–170.

⁹⁵ Roger Chartier, 'General Introduction: Print Culture', in *The Culture of Print: Power and the Uses of Print in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Roger Chartier (Princeton, 2014), 4.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

own editorial strategy – her selecting, ordering and commentaries – influenced the reader’s understanding. In certain cases, the possible source materials, however, can offer contextualized knowledge of how a particular author’s work had been previously disseminated and read in its social contexts. This section explores the possible ordering strategy of the collection as a part of the textual modification of the recycled materials. The ordering of the songs is a part of the materiality of the collection, in which the ordering by music and lyrics mirrors the matching of authors’ social status, and reflects the Ming music fashion and lyric writing.

2.4.1 *Ordering by chronology and social status*

In the editorial principle of *Notable Women*, Wang Duanshu is apologetic to her readers that the anthology appears untidy and even ‘chaotic’ due to having ‘gone through hardships in collecting materials and editing’. A close reading of the ways in which the sub-collections are ordered and categorized points to Wang’s careful and multi-faceted editorial concern to make a selection that would be ‘comprehensive and exquisite at once’ (see Chapter 1).⁹⁷ Wang’s editorial decision to list singing girls work alongside that of gentlewomen’s created an ‘inclusive’ space gathering songs from various social backgrounds. Consequently, the collection displays the diversity of female *qu* writers during the Ming period, in which social status ranging from gentlewomen to courtesans, not only contrasts with their courtesan-exclusive Yuan predecessors but also contrasts with the exclusive, noble or elite-born male counterparts. Wang Duanshu does not divide works between gentlewomen and courtesans into two separate chapters within *Collection of Elegance*. Instead, each chapter is a mixture of both gentlewomen and courtesans’ songs, arranged in a ‘gentlewomen-courtesans’ sequence. Chapter 37 is having a more gentlewoman-writer focus, chapter 38 is more courtesan-writer focused. In short, each chapter always start with entries of gentlewomen, then the courtesan entries follows. In chapter 38, only one author is from the elite background – gentlewomen

⁹⁷ Wang Duanshu, ‘Fan li’, 3b, 4a.

Shen Jingzhuan, who is the first author being presented in this chapter. The entry after Shen – Hu wenru, an ex-courtesan who married into the elite family as concubine, is being presented.

2.4.2 *Presenting dynamics of musical emotion as affect*

‘Collection of Elegance’ is not only rich in its paratextual materials with comments and biographies, but also the arias and suites curated within the collection present a diversity in their formats of composing, subject matter and musical style. The following sections explore the possible ways in which Wang Duanshu categorized and ordered the collection, particularly the music dynamics which the book would create by sequencing different style of tunes and the lyrical themes that would form a micro-group of lyrics put together by subject matter.

2.4.2.1 *Formats, tunes and musical style of arias in ‘Collection of Elegance’*

The musical settings within ‘Collection of Elegance’ also show diversity in stylistic choices, although with certain overlaps (see Table 2.4). In general, the tune titles listed within ‘Collection of Elegance’ can be categorized into seven *gongdiao* of tune titles:⁹⁸

Shang diao: 11 songs with 4 different tune titles;
Nan Lü gong: 5 song with 4 different tune titles;
Xian Lü gong: 5 songs with 3 different tune titles;
Xian Lü modulates to Shuang diao: 3 songs with 3 different tune titles;
Zheng Gong: 2 songs with 2 different tune titles;
Yue diao: 1 song; Shuang diao: 1 song; Da Shi diao: 1 song.

⁹⁸ *Gongdiao* is a historical Chinese concept that may be understood as that of a mode in Western music theory. Tune title sets are grouped according to *gongdiao*. Julianne Jones, *Contemporary Kunqu Composition*, unpublished Ph.D thesis, The University of British Columbia, 2014, 123–130; also Francois Pichard and Alan Lau, ‘*Qupai in Kunqu: Text-Music issues*’, in *Qupai in Chinese Music: Melodic Models in Form and Practice*, ed. Alan R. Thrasher (London, 2016), 119–147; and Joseph Lam, ‘A Kunqu Masterpiece and its Interoperations: Tanci (the Ballad) from Hong Sheng’s Changsheng Dian (Palace of Lasting Life)’, *Journal of Chinese Oral and Performing Literature*, 33/2 (2014), 112–115.

Gongdiao 宮調 have been discussed in detail in many Yuan and Ming music theory treatises. Wang Jide's *Qu lü* 曲律 (*Prosody of Qu*), a canonical piece in the Ming field of *qu*, points out that different melodic contours of *gongdiao* align with various emotional identities and affect in lyrical and dramatic contexts.⁹⁹

Different modal systems also follow with different musical styles. The late-Ming *qu* critic, Wang Jide (1540–1623), in his theory monograph *Prosody of Qu* referenced the musical style of modes that Zhou Deqing had summarized in his treatise, *Rhythms and Rhymes of Central Plain* (1324). Feng Menglong's preface to *Prosody of Qu* is dated Spring 1625,¹⁰⁰ indicating that by the time of late Ming the references of music style that were defined by the Yuan theorist were still credible. Wang Jide also agrees that 'even notes in music today' had 'already changed, therefore the music should not follow the ancient (or previous) prosody exactly, however, it matches in general'.¹⁰¹ Under these circumstances, *Rhythms and Rhymes of Central Plain* was still a credible source of musical style referencing in 1625, which is also around the period that most of the female writers in 'Collection of Elegance' had already published or circulated their works. The musical style of the songs curated in 'Collection of Elegance' could therefore be based on the records in *Rhythms and Rhymes of Central Plain*.

⁹⁹ Wang Jide 王驥德, *Qu lü* 曲律 (*Prosody of Qu*), LDQHBB, vol.2, 60. Also see discussion in *Contemporary Kunqu Composition*, 127–130.

¹⁰⁰ Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Qu lü xu* 曲律敘 (Preface to *Prosody of Qu*), ZGXQXH, vol.1, 51–52.

¹⁰¹ Wang Jide, *Qu lü*, LDQHBB, vol.2, 60–61. 今樂聲音出入，不全應古法，但略可配合。

Table 2.3. Music Modes and Musical Styles of Songs within ‘Collection of Elegance’ according to Ming music treatises¹

<i>Writer</i>	<i>Format of qu</i>	<i>Tune title</i>	<i>Tune title in English</i>	<i>Mode of tune titles</i>	<i>Music style of tune titles</i>	<i>Music style in English</i>
<i>Chapter 37 – first half of ‘Collection of Elegance’</i>						
Huang E (1498–1569)	suites	黃鶯兒	Golden Orioles	Shang	悽愴怨慕	plaintive and resentful
		黃鶯兒	Golden Orioles	Shang	悽愴怨慕	
		羅江怨	Lament of the Luo River	Nan Lǔ	感叹伤悲	sorrowful, sighing with sadness
Xu Yuan (c.1560–1620)	suites	綿搭絮	Cotton Wadding	Yue	陶寫冷笑	playful and joyful
		桂枝香	Fragrant Osmanthus Branch	Xian Lǔ	清新綿邈	uplifting and lingering
Liang Mengzhao (c.1572–1640)	suites	新水令	New Water Tune	Shuang	健捷激裊	impassioned and vigorous
		集賢賓	Gathering of Virtuous Guests	Shang	悽愴怨慕	plaintive and resentful
		黃鶯兒	Golden Orioles			
		山坡羊	Sheep on the Hillside			
		黃鶯兒	Golden Orioles			
Shen Huiduan (1613–?)	aria	懶畫眉	Leisurely Eyebrow Painting	Nan Lǔ	感叹伤悲	sorrowful, sighing with sadness
		一江風	Wind Over the River			
		金梧落粧臺	Golden Chinese Parasol falls on the Dressing Table	Shang	悽愴怨慕	plaintive and resentful
		封書寄姐姐	Sending a Letter to my sister	Xian Lǔ modulate to Shuang	清新綿邈 健捷激裊	uplifting and lingering to impassioned and vigorous

¹ Mode of tune titles indicated and listed in *Quan Ming Sanqu* and *Quan Qing Sanqu*, catograisation also based on two Ming music formularies - Shen Jing 沈璟, *Xin ding jiugong cipu* 新定九宮詞譜 (*Formulary of Southern Song*) and Shen Zijin, *Nanci xinpu* 南詞新譜 (*New Formulary of Southern Song*), both in Wang Qiugui 王秋桂 ed. *Shanbenxiqu congkan* 善本戲曲叢刊 (*Collections of Rare Editions of Opera and Songs*), series 3, no. 2 and no. 3; Music style of tune titles based on Wang Jide 王驥德, *Qu lǜ* 曲律 (*Prosody of Qu*), *LDQHHB*, vol.2, 60, Wang states the preserved tunes since the Song Dynasty are listed in Zhou Deqing’s treatise, *Rhythms and Rhymes of Central Plain* (1324)

Hao Xiang E	suite	黃鶯兒	Golden Orioles	Shang	悽愴怨慕	plaintive and resentful
Zhang Siyin	aria	懶畫眉	Leisurely Eyebrow Painting	Nan Lü	感叹伤悲	sorrowful, sighing with sadness
Gu Changfen	aria	黃鶯兒	Golden Orioles	Shang	悽愴怨慕	plaintive and resentful
Ma Shou	aria	醉扶歸	Drunken Return	Xian Lü (northern)	清新綿邈	uplifting and lingering
Dong Ruying	aria	步步嬌	Walking with Charm	Xian Lü modulate to Shuang	清新綿邈 健捷激裊	uplifting and lingering to impassioned and vigorous

Chapter 38 – second half of ‘Collection of Elegance’

Shen Jingzhuan (fl.1590)	aria	懶鶯兒	Lazy Oriel	Nan Lü	感叹伤悲	sorrowful, sighing with sadness
Hu Wenru (fl.1590)	suite	皂羅袍	Purple Silk Robes	Xian Lü	清新綿邈	uplifting and lingering
Jiang Qiongqiong	suite	桂枝香	Fragrant Osmanthus Branch	Xian Lü	清新綿邈	uplifting and lingering
Chu Ji	aria	黃鶯兒	Golden Orioles	Shang	悽愴怨慕	plaintive and resentful
Ma Xianglan (1548–1604)	suite and aria	錦纏道 少年遊	Winding Brocade Road Young Man on a Journey	Zheng Gong Da Shi	惆悵雄壯 風流醞藉	melancholy and majestic amorous yet restrained
Jing Pianpian (fl.c.1600)	arias	二犯江兒水	The Waters of the River (two variants)	Xian Lü modulate to Shuang	清新綿邈 健捷激裊	uplifting and lingering to impassioned and vigorous
Li Cuiwei	suite	金絡索 山魚燈犯	A Coil of Golden Rope Fishing Lanterns in the Mountains (variation)	Shang Zheng Gong	悽愴怨慕 惆悵雄壯	plaintive and resentful melancholy and majestic

The names of the nine <i>gong</i> tunes in Yuan music	Corresponding modern name
Zheng Gong	D、C、 ^b B
Zhonglü Gong	D、C、F
Nanlü Gong	^b E、D、C
Xianlü Gong	D、C、G
Huangzhong Gong	F、 ^b E、G
Dashi diao	D、C
Shuang diao	A、G
Shang diao	F、 ^b E、D、C
Yue diao	F、 ^b E

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‘Music from the Ming dynasty adopted the Yuan music system and *gongdiao* notion; however, the scales of Ming music, especially in the southern music system, exclude all the notes that produce half tones, which obtains a pentatonic scale.’

J.A. Van Aalst, *Chinse Music* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), ‘Chinese System of Notation’, 14–16.

Ming dramatist Xu Wei criticized the Yuan music, that the system emerged under the Mongol rule, especially northern *zaju* song drama, and the instrumental use such as brass cannot be regarded as authentic Chinese music.

Xu Wei, *A Record of Southern Drama*, in 歷代曲話彙編, *Comments on Qu from Imperial Dynasties*, vol.1 (Anhui: Huangshan Shushe, 2009), 485. Xu remarks 至於喇叭、噴呐之流，并其器皆金、元遺物矣。樂之不講至是哉！

²⁰² Paul White, (trans.), ‘The Emergence of New Musical Genres and the Overall Development of Vocal and Instrumental Music (980–1911)’, in *Chinese Music*, ed. Qiao Jianzhong (Beijing, 1999), 46.

The music settings in ‘Collection of Elegance’, according to Zhou Deqing’s 周德清 definition in his *Zhong yuan yin yun* 中原音韻 (*Rhythms and Rhymes of Central Plain*), ranges from resentful, sorrowful and melancholic melodies, to refreshing, playful and amorous tunes. An overview of the music component of ‘Collection of Elegance’ highlights the fact that women were not only writing *qu* in the most common formats, but that they were also renovating existing tunes so as to create new music. Apart from arias and suites, which are the most common format of *sanqu* writing, there are also *qu* that are written in the format of *jiqu* 集曲, namely ‘composite song’ or ‘assembled aria’, and suites that are set to both northern and southern tune titles. New tune titles are created through *jiqu* practice: setting lyrics in song-drama were created through piecing music materials together of two or more previous existing tune patterns into a collage.¹ Writing a composite song was a new music practice that was first started by the late sixteenth-century literati song-drama writers. Huang E’s suite set to ‘Lament of Luo River’ and the arias written by Shen Huiduan, Shen Jingzhuang and Hu Wenru can all be categorized as composite songs.

Moreover, aria ‘Present to Scholar Zhang’ set to the tune ‘Drunken Return’, as indicated in *Complete sanqu works of Ming Dynasty*,² is composed to the northern music system. This song would musically stand out among other entries within the collection for contemporary readers, as ‘Collection of Elegance’ predominantly features southern music: a cultural phenomenon of the late Ming was that southern style performance, especially Kunshan music, was the fashion among the elite. The late-Ming music connoisseur Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578-1642) remarked in his published anecdotal writing collection, *Wanli ye huo bian* 萬曆野獲編 (*Collected Anecdotes from the Wanli Reign* prefaced 1606), that ‘northern plays have almost died out, only in Nanjing there are still such performance ...’³ Wang Duanshu remarks that

¹ Peng Xu, ‘The Music Teacher: The Professionalization of Singing and the Development of Erotic Vocal Style of Late Ming China’, *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 75/2 (2015), 259-297, at 283–284.

² Xie Boyang 謝伯陽 ed., *Quan Ming Sanqu* 全明散曲 (*Complete Sanqu of Ming Dynasty*), (Jinan, 1994), 4222. [hereafter: QMSQ]

³ Shen Defu, *Wanli yehuo bian* 萬曆野獲編 (*Collected Anecdotes from the Wanli Reign*), in *Yuan Ming shiliao biji congkan* 元明史料筆記叢刊 (*Collections of Historical Records from Yuan and Ming Dynasties*) (Beijing, 1959), ‘Teaching and pass on of Northern Lyrics’, chapter 25, 464. 自吳人重南曲，皆祖昆山魏良輔。而北調幾廢。今惟金陵存此調。(trans.) Zhao Mi, ‘Ma Xianglan and Wang Zhideng Onstage and Offstage: Rethinking the Romance of a Courtesan Theatre in Ming-Qing China’, vol. 34, no.1, 2017, 122–151, at 135.

Ma Shou 馬綬 (date unknown) was a ‘famous courtesan of the Old Compound of Jinling’ and was affiliated as one of the courtesans of ‘Ma sisters’.⁴ Based on the publishing date of *Stylish Verses from Green Bowers* (1616) – the source in which Wang might have been selected Ma shou’s song from, a decade later when Shen Defu’s *ye huo bian* was prefaced (1606), indicates northern music was still being performed at Nanjing pleasure quarters during late Ming. Wang’s referring to Ma’s professional affiliation to the most prestigious house of the Nanjing pleasure quarters where brothels exclusively served the powerful and rich, and thus situating Ma as a professional entertainer at the heart of the late-Ming elite world of entertainment and fashion.

Despite the fact that late-Ming gentlewomen were not involved in music as a profession, their songs show attention to the most up-to-date trend in song writing. Shen Huiduan and Shen Jingzhuan’s songs, which had previously been published in *A New Formulary of Southern Aria* (c.1659) comprised music formerly edited by the *qu* aficionado and literatus Shen Zijin 沈自晉 (1583-1665). In Shen’s edition, in particular, the tune titles that Shen Huiduan and Shen Jingzhuan’s songs are set to, are marked as ‘new in’.⁵ No other lyrics are set to these tune titles, which suggests that both these gentlewomen writers from the Shen family were the creators of these new composite songs. Xu Yuan’s suite *Writing Grief* set to ‘New Water Tune’ combines both northern and southern music. Such an entry further demonstrates the broad interests in experimenting with formats and musical styles in *qu* writing among female writers.

Wang represents the dynamics of ordering within ‘Collection of Elegance’ by arranging arias with different melodic contours to form a circle of dynamic musical style within the collection. The majority of the tunes in ‘Collection of Elegance’, such as ‘Yellow Orioles’ and ‘Gathering of Virtuous Guests’ are ‘plaintive and resentful’, which indicates the songs musically express sorrow and melancholy. ‘Yellow Orioles’ is the most popular tune, with the lyrics of six arias and suites set to it. Yet, such style of music only appears twice in the second

⁴ Wang Duanshu, ‘Yan ji’ Collection of Erotica, 25.20a. 金陵舊院名姬; wang also provided a list of Ma shi ming ji 馬氏名姬 (celebrated courtesans of Ma sisters) in her biographical account, *ibid*.

⁵ Shen Zijin 沈自晉, *Nan ci xin pu* 南詞新譜, (*A New Formulary of Southern Aria*, c. 1659), series 3, no. 3, *SBXQCK*; on Shen Jingzhuan, 464; on Shen Huiduan see 670 and 813.

chapter of ‘Collection of Elegance’, which contrasts with the nine entries that are curated in the first chapter.

Courtesans’ compositions show relatively balanced yet diverse musical style choices. This is possible due to the fact that courtesans’ songs were primarily written for entertaining, so these songs were written in more diverse musical styles in order to adjust to the specific function of the occasion. In particular, courtesans’ songs show a certain favour for the *xianlü* mode and are more likely to set their lyrics to the tunes that are defined as ‘uplifting and lingering’. The tune titles of the *xianlü* mode appear five times in total among the works of courtesans in Collection of Elegance, compared with only two by gentlewomen writers who chose this music style. Further, tune title that is defined as ‘amorous while restrained” (Da Shi) only appear in the second chapter. This tendency of stylistic choice is perhaps primarily due to the entertainment nature of courtesans’ songs, as music played a significant role in courtesans’ daily and professional lives. Singing and composing arias were not only a way of showcasing their artistic skills, but also bears the function of entertaining clients. Under these circumstances, a favour for the *xianlü* mode in courtesans’ writing may be due to its ‘uplifting and lingering’ music style, which may have been appealing to their audience.

Wang Duanshu departed from orthodox organisational practice when arranging the songs in the Collection of Elegance. Usually, they are arranged by tune and modal system. However, Wang placed different tune-styles next to each other. By ordering arias of different music styles in a dynamic sequence, the different *gongdiao* and associated emotional identities enhance each other with different musical styles throughout the ‘Collection of Elegance’. Thus, the collection itself is also a musical exploration of ‘affect’ that consists of a lineal unfolding of moods within the sequence. This created an unusual reading experience which mixed melancholic songs with uplifting gift songs.

This unorthodox ordering was deliberate and increased enjoyment of reading. For contemporary audiences and readers, similar to the Southern Song era (1127-1279) music printing tradition as Lam argues, ‘writers did not need to spell out all the musical details; they only needed to allude to the right titles or to reference the key features of the music ... readers would readily decode the song’s tune patterns, poetic references, the genres and styles of

period music, performance contexts, and their cultural-social meanings'.⁶ Through reading the lyrics and tune titles that are given in the collection, readers of 'Collection of Elegance' could realize the music, and the written aria texts could, as Zeitlin suggests, 'invoke in the reader the contemporary *sensation* of witnessing a performance'.⁷ As Wang remarked at the beginning of the collection, the 'newly composed music from scholar-officials' households ... amorous and vigorous sounds mixed and enhanced one another'.⁸ It seems that whether 'amorous and vigorous' in new compositions of literati households or the musicality in Ming female writers' *qu* compositions, the dynamics of the different musical styles were a foregrounded point in Wang's own understanding and thoughts on the genre of *qu* as a performance genre and a sounding artefact. This arrangement decision also reveals female writers' expressive skills of composing; female-authored arias are not only comprehensive in their formats and subject matters, but also in utilizing musical styles.

2.4.3 Subject matters of arias in 'Collection of Elegance'

There are commonalities of subject matters in lyrics across gentlewomen writers and courtesans, and these subject matters can be adopted in male-authored songs. Subject matters like seasons and festivals, for instance, are both written by gentlewomen and courtesans. The suites written by Hu Wenru and Jiang Qiongqiong both adopt each season as the topic of each song within the suites; gentlewomen writers, such as Huang E and Xu Yuan, composed suites on Spring and Winter. Chinese traditional festivals, such as the Mid-Autumn Festival (*zhong*

⁶ Lam, 'Eavesdropping on Zhang Xiaoxiang's Musical World in Early Southern Song in China', 27; also see Lam, 'Ci Song from the Song Dynasty: A Ménage à Trois of Lyrics, Music, and Performance', *New Literary History*, 46/4 (2015), 623-646. On *cipai* and its linguistic, literary and musical performance features, see 625-626. Like *qupai* tune titles of songs, lyrics set to *cipai* can also be sung in Tang and Song periods. By the time of Ming, lyrics set to *cipai*, which is different from *qupai*, is a pure literary form, and not performance-related due to the loss of music during the transmission.

⁷ Judith Zeitlin, "Notes of Flesh" and the Courtesan's Song in Seventeenth-Century China', in *The Courtesan's Arts Cross-Cultural Perspectives*, eds. Martha Feldman and Bonnie Gordon (Oxford, 2006), 75-99, at 86.

⁸ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance), 37.1a.

qiu 中秋),⁹ 七夕 Qixi,¹⁰ and the Lantern Festival (*yuan xiao* 元宵),¹¹ were another common subject of ode lyrics, including Liang Mengzhao's suites on the Mid-Autumn and Qixi festivals, and Li Cuiwei's suite on the Lantern Festival.

These subjects were chosen due to their specific cultural symbolism, for instance, festivals are symbols of reunion in Chinese culture, and a family meal is held. This analogy between festival and 'reunion' itself prepares the ground for portraying images of loneliness, or to express longing for love and the returning of a husband or lover. Liang Mengzhao's suite, *Hazy Moonlight of Mid-Autumn*, portrays the lonely image of the mythical moon goddess Chang'E 'watching over her palace alone'.¹² Chang'E, the Chinese mythical moon goddess, in Chinese folk lore was sentenced to be confined to Moon Palace alone for eternity. The story is a metaphorical image for Liang herself to represent a self-reflection, waiting alone in the boudoir on a traditional festival day and a day of reunion. The image of the moon is another pun within the lyrics to express the unfulfilled wish of reunion: instead of being a full moon, it is a gibbous moon in Liang's composition.¹³ Her suite, which is set to the tune 'Golden Orioles' with a Shang mode tune title and 'plaintive and resentful' musical style, enhances the atmosphere that Liang's lyrics creates.

2.4.3.1 *Writing daily inspirations from life surroundings: Themes in gentlewomen's songs*

The subject matters of gentlewomen's songs are most frequently inspired by and adopted from domestic living surroundings and daily life experiences. Elaborate scenic descriptions of nature and of beautiful objects are consequently a feature in gentlewomen's lyrics. Wang

⁹ A traditional Chinese festival celebrated on the fifteenth of the eighth month of the Luna calendar, in the middle of Autumn at full moon. The family comes together at this time to eat moon cake and worship Chang'E 嫦娥, the goddess of the moon.

¹⁰ A traditional Chinese festival celebrated on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month of the lunar calendar.

¹¹ A traditional Chinese festival celebrated on the fifteenth of the first month of the Luna calendar.

¹² Liang Mengzhao 梁孟昭, '*Zhong qiu yuese yinxian, meng long yuzhong ganhuai* 中秋月色隱現朦朧寓中感懷 (Reflection under the Hazy Moonlight of Mid-Autumn Written in Boudoir)', 'Ya ji', 37.10b.

¹³ Ibid. Liang describes the moon as 盈虛圓缺.

Duanshu shows her sympathy for such a writing style, perhaps out of her commonality of experience that is very relatable to many of gentlewomen, both historically and during her own time. In her preface to *Notable Women*, Wang Duanshu describes this type of text as an result of ‘only after the intricate labours of our sex’ that ‘we women are able to ... confide their thoughts to the scrolls of paper’.¹⁴ ‘So it is that in their writing ... [they] take their subject matter from’ their daily surroundings, such as ‘weaving girls, silk cocoons and undyed silks’.¹⁵

Although these lyrics were written and inspired by everyday life, for gentlewomen such as Ling Mengzhao, who was excluded from the public sphere for pursuing a degree and professional post, writing was a prominent medium of self-expression. The lyric themes of ‘Collection of Elegance’ centre on expressing feelings, as characters of thoughts (*si* 思), reflecting (*huai* 懷), or recalling (*yi* 憶) appear repeatedly. Huang E’s ‘Bitter Rain’ suite,¹⁶ which are full of portrayals of sceneries and landscape, employs extensive established metaphors in Chinese classical writing to express loneliness, as the first aria in this suite follows:

The ceaseless rain brews up a light chill. Look how the abundant blossoms, Whither on each and every tree. Nothing but muddy roads – I’m tired of climbing high and gazing afar! River flows – how many bends? Cloudy hills – how many turns? I strain my eyes towards the horizon, but it only breaks my heart. Impossible to send a letter: Those heartless migrating geese, Will not fly as far as Yunnan!¹⁷

The aria indicates that Huang might have composed the song longing for her husband Yan Shen, also a mid-Ming literati *qu* writer. Yang was banished to Yunnan for the rest of his life as a result of a court turmoil, while Huang stayed at their native home to manage the estate. The migrating geese were believed to fly south to Hunan province, let alone Yunnan,¹⁸ a province that was only incorporated into the Chinese territory during the Ming period.¹⁹ What

¹⁴ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, ‘Zi xu’, 3b, 4a.

¹⁵ Ibid, 4b. Saussy (trans.), ‘Preface’, 692.

¹⁶ Huang E 黃峨, ‘*Ku yu* 苦雨 Bitter Rain’, ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), 37.1b.

¹⁷ Wilt L. Idema and Beata Grant (trans.), *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 290.

¹⁸ Yunnan is 671 miles further south away from Hunan.

¹⁹ Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush*, 290.

breaks Huang's heart is the inaccessibility of her husband, just like her own message which cannot reach as far as the migrating geese fly.

The above-mentioned example of lyrics from two gentlewomen – Xu Yuan and Liang Mengzhao both articulate “innermost feelings” (*you qing* 幽情) – a theme that is welcomed among the late Ming reading public. According to Lowry's researches on late-Ming publication of love letters, the early modern Chinese readers value ‘the capacity of vernacular writings to convey sentiments of passion, longing, and melancholy’,²⁰ and ‘provide the ground for discussion the emotions and their appropriate social expressions.’²¹ Both Huang and Liang's songs express feelings of longing in the absence of husband, could ‘bring out a different facet as didactic literature, models of writing, and entertainment’,²² while catch a glimpse of lives of “the secluded women” of the inner quarters – certainly a theme that fascinates the liberal-minded late Ming literati. Despite gentlewomen song-writers not achieving as wide attention that gentlewomen poets received, these lyrics were previously printed in gentlewomen's personal collections or even literati edited songbooks, suggests a certain degree of publicity or popularity of some gentlewomen's songs.

2.4.3.2 Songs as gifts and/or love tokens: Socio-cultural functions of the late-Ming courtesans' repertoire

The subject matters of the lyrics do not appear to be sequenced in a thematic pattern, but Wang Duanshu's aria selection points to certain micro-groups of themes based on the social background of the author. Compared to gentlewomen's writing that predominately centres on domestic life and longing for their husbands' return, in ‘Collection of Elegance’ courtesans tend to write songs for exchange. Most of the courtesans' arias in ‘Collection of Elegance’ could be regarded as gifts. For example, the last three arias of the first chapter are all gifting songs, with two of the arias appearing to have specific dedicatees.²³ More songs on the same

²⁰ Kathryn Lowry, ‘Duplicating the Strength of Feeling: Circulation of Love Letters in the Late Ming,’ in *Writing and Materiality in China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), 237-272, at 242.

²¹ Kathryn Lowry, ‘Three Ways to Read a Love letter in Late Ming’, *Ming Studies*, 2000, Vol.44, 48-77, at 56

²² Ibid.

²³ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, ‘Ya ji’ Collection of Elegance, 37.17a, 37.17b.

theme of gifting appear in the second chapter of ‘Collection of Elegance’, which predominantly features courtesans’ repertoires. Courtesans’ arias, if not written specifically as a token or gift for exchange, as Chapter 4 will argue, functioned as a vehicle for constructing a scene of seduction and self-performance.

Gifting songs were a particularly significant element of courtesans’ social and professional lives. The song itself became a commodity in exchange for patronage or favour, or, in this latter case, bears the function of a love token, especially when the lyrics were distributed publicly either in written form or in performance. Courtesans’ songs bear more social needs than mere self-expression. Unlike their gentlewomen counterparts, music was a significant part of the courtesans’ trade. Writing *qu*, thus, is also a method of entertaining, self-expressing, and favour-exchanging.

Thus, by reading, chanting or even singing these songs, readers of ‘Collection of Elegance’ experienced the private thoughts and messages of late-Ming female writers delivered through their lyrics and music. Despite the fact that ‘Collection of Elegance’ is only a part of a larger anthology, the collection itself, which can be seen as a carefully selected, ordered and edited re-curation from an existing ‘pool of materials’, it speaks for itself as it fills the gap of woman-compiled, edited and critiqued anthology among the *qu* collections (either in the form of drama miscellanies or *sanqu* songbooks) published from the late Ming onwards.

When gentlewomen and courtesans’ songs about their innermost feelings were both presented in a same collection, such as in ‘Collection of Elegance’, contributed to the popularity of feminine writing and helped improve the coverage of dissemination. Such dissemination changes what literary historian Wei Hua has argued towards a dichotomous division of the social function of the aria as written by Ming women: that is ‘gentlewomen – self-amusement; courtesans – entertaining others’.²⁴ Under the consideration of the socio-cultural and economic contexts that these arias were composed and circulated in, a nuanced

²⁴ Wei Hua, ‘Xingbie shenfen yu qing de shuxie 性别、身份、与情的书写’ (Gender, Identity, and the Writing of Qing), *Qu xue 曲学 Qu Studies*, 2014, 109-132, at 131-132.

reading of these songs within these historical contexts offers a credible comprehensiveness of these Ming cultural objects for aesthetic appreciation.

2.5 Chapter Conclusion

Wang Duanshu's selection shows diversity not only in music and lyric themes, but also the fluid gender and class dynamics reflected in the collection. 'Collection of Elegance' is a material space juxtaposing gentlewomen and courtesan writers. This practices very different from the practice of contemporary literati counterparts, whose song collections show certain social exclusiveness in terms of authors and writings. Widmer considers this specific editorial approach by Wang Duanshu as 'slightly iconoclastic'. Yet, the segregation of gender and class, which does not appear explicitly in this collection, is also the fluid gender and class dynamics of its contemporary society, and a phenomenon in which, as Tina Lu observes, 'the late Ming seems to have been the only period in Chinese history when well-born ladies of the gentry and courtesans socialised with and befriend[ed] one another'.

In this period, gentlewomen and courtesans shared intimacy through poetic dedications, as shown by gentlewoman-writer Xu Yuan 徐媛 (1560–1620) and her gentlewoman friend Lu Qingzi 陸卿子 (fl.1590) who both wrote poems to praise courtesans' physical beauty and outstanding artistic skills.²⁵ Gentlewomen writing songs could have been an act of self-expression, no matter how the theme fit the traditional boudoir lament; these songs express loneliness, discontentment and *qing* – the hallmark of late-Ming culture. As seen in Huang E's case, her song also functions as a medium of communication, as Chapter 5 will further illustrate: Huang's songs addressed to her husband are valuable sources of a poetic dialogue between couples in a 'companionate marriage' in Chinese history.

Wang Duanshu's treatment of the genre, and the seriousness of her selection, is illustrated through her curation of texts concerning source materials. These recycled texts, as

²⁵ gentlewomen friends Xu Yuan 徐媛(1560–1620) and Lu Qingzi 陸卿子(fl.1590) both composed verses for courtesans. See Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 111–112; Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 271.

analysed in this chapter, reveal her editorial sensibility of the late-Ming fashion in music printing. Certain entries previously included in various literati edition songbooks, suggest female-authored songs received popularity among the contemporary cultural elite, and may also indicate the demand for women's writing in the book market. Meanwhile, Wang provided rich biographical accounts and commentaries to repackaging the pre-existing recycled materials: a stylistic feature that draws on high-end styles of literati print editions. As Chapter 5 argues, such a reality of women's agencies in late-Ming 'musiking' is contradictory to the contemporary literati impression of women's 'illusory absence' in music.²⁶

Source materials that focus on late-Ming courtesan culture showcase the songs' cultural status as objects and artefacts for connoisseurship, in which the courtesans' glamorous lifestyle is materialized, including their songs, writings and pleasure quarter fashions, on printed pages as printed performance texts inseparable from the entertainment culture of the period. Through a close reading of the materiality of the collection, it shows courtesans' performances of themselves through music, entertainment and song-writing as gifts for favours, gaining capital in power bargaining.

Wang Duanshu's editorial attention to the music printing trends is grounded and embedded in wider historical-cultural concerns, dialogues and interests. Her opening comments to the collection depict a visual and sonic scene of the private entertainment. This enclosed space, shown in the illustration of the title-page of the contemporary commercially printed drama edition, as Yuming He notes, 'fosters a social milieu with its norms of behaviour and modes of expression, offering an alluring alternative vocabulary of self-fashioning'.²⁷ Wang Duanshu's contextualizing of 'Collection of Elegance', in this supposed enclosed performance space, reflects the ways in which social and music entertainment and theatrical performance 'merged in a new concept of the "performance self", whose central thrust was the ideal of being "at home" and "in the world" simultaneously'.²⁸ Through the

²⁶ Lam, 'The Presence and Absence', 98 and 116.

²⁷ He, *Home and the World*, 133.

²⁸ *Ibid*, 13.

medium of print, such an idea is further translated into, as Chapter 4 will argue, a juxtaposition of private thoughts and public performance in song.

As these first two chapters of this thesis demonstrate, Wang Duanshu as an agent was first active as a professional woman in the web of seventeenth-century elite social connections. Her editorial practice in engaging with a pool of late-Ming textual repertoires also posits her concern with the nexus of late-Ming ideas. These are the premises for the understanding of the next chapters, which offer a close reading of Wang's multi-faceted editorial voices, and how the format of texts, the surrounding paratextual materials – her biographical accounts and commentaries – were used as guidance in reading her selection, in shaping the meanings of the texts and the emergence of a dialogue with the male elite discourse.

Chapter 3

Reading Wang Duanshu's Music Aesthetics in the Contexts of late-Ming

Discourse of *qu*

3.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter¹ looks beyond the previous discussions of Wang Duanshu's editorial strategies to explore her critical editorial voice commentating on women's song. This chapter aims to understand how Wang Danshu's compiling and editing of the song form *qu* contributes to a widened understanding of the genre in the late Ming and early Qing. By taking on the role of a critic in this traditionally male-exclusive position in the field of *qu*, Wang's very act of editing performance texts, as this chapter argues, also became a social performance through the printed pages. Wang's position as a compiler-editor-critic of *qu* with editorial authority over the curated texts, as discussed in Chapter 2, functioned as an allegory for exercising a power negotiation. This position, however, was traditionally for the exclusive intellectual literati male elite.²

Many multi-author song collections were published by literati anthologists and editors during the late-Ming period. This cultural practice also coincided with 'a golden age of late Ming publishing industry'.³ Historically, male literati songwriters outnumbered female

¹ All primary source cited in this chapter, either in direct quotation or paraphrased, all translations are my own, except where otherwise indicated.

² Wu Cuncun, 'Late Ming Urban Life and Wanton Women in Huang Fangyin's *Short Plays*', in *Wanton Women in Late-Imperial Chinese Literature*, eds. Stevenson and Cuncun, 105-126, at 110. 'It is highly unusual, even in the libertine late Ming, that a literatus should invite courtesan to compose a preface for Huang's drama anthology'; on paratextual contribution to *qu* anthology or collection and as literary power negotiation in Yuan and Ming times, see Seibler, *Theatres of Desire*; also 'Nobody's Genre, Everybody's Song: *Sanqu* Songs and the Expansion of the Literary Sphere in Yuan China', *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, 1/ 1-2 (2014), 29-64; and 'Is there a playwright in this text? The 1610s and the consolidation of dramatic authorship in late Ming print culture', in *1616: Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu's China*, eds. Tian Yuan Tan, Paul Edmondson and Shih-pe Wang (London, 2016), 150-162.

³ Carlitz, 'Printing as Performance', 273.

counterparts and were the dominant composing and networking *qu* groups.⁴ The *qu* works of these men have been extensively discussed in previous studies.⁵ The genre of *qu*, especially the songs and drama that are performed in elegant Kunshan operatic style, eventually became the ‘literati’s operatic music *par excellence*’ in the late Ming and a significant component of the literati’s music culture.⁶

Wang Duanshu’s cultural identity is frequently linked with poets, painters, teachers and Ming loyalists in previous scholarship.⁷ Only a few studies, however, have mentioned her contribution to the genre of *qu* and in particular her identity as a *qu* commentator.⁸ Wang Duanshu contributed paratextual writing to literati’s song-drama (*juqu* 劇曲).⁹ Before *Notable Women* was published,¹⁰ as mentioned in Chapter 1, she prefaced Li Yu’s *Soul Mates* in 1661,¹¹ and later, she contributed a short commentary on Zhu Suchen’s *Qin lou yue* 秦樓月 (*Moon at Qin Pavilion*), the drama of which was published after 1668.¹² Meanwhile, Wang Duanshu also wrote *sanqu* herself. There are six songs that are set to the tune title ‘Yellow

⁴ See scholarly editions such as *Complete sanqu works of Ming Dynasty* 全明散曲, *Compiled Collections of Colophons and Prefaces to Chinese Classic Drama* 中國古典戲曲序跋彙編, and in *Notes on qu From Imperial Dynasties* 歷代曲話彙編; female-authored works are in limited numbers.

⁵ Zeitlin, ‘Between Performance, Manuscript and Print’, 263–292.

⁶ Lam, ‘Imperial Agency in Ming Music Culture’, 301.

⁷ On Wang Duanshu’s writing and loyalism, see the first half of Widmer, ‘Ming Loyalism and the Women’s Voice in Fiction’. For a recent discussion of Wang Duanshu and Ming loyalism in her poetry writing, see Wai-Yee, *Women and National Trauma*, 100–197; Grace Fong, *Herself as an Author*, 138–142. For Wang Duanshu as a professional editor, see Berg, *Women and The Literary World* 186–190. On Wang Duanshu as an honorary man in the literary field, see Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 130–134.

⁸ Wei Hua 華瑋 mentions Wang Duanshu’s comments as sources in her case study of Liang Mengzhao and Ma Xianglan, see ‘*Ma xianglan yu ming dai houqi de qutan* 馬湘蘭與明代後期的曲壇’ Ma Xianglan and Qu Circles in Late Ming, 43–44, 52 and ‘*Xingbie shenfen yu qing de shuxie- lun ma xianglan yu liang mengzhao qu* 性別、身份、與情的書寫-論馬湘嵐與梁孟昭的曲’ (Gender, Identity, and the Writing of Qing: A Discussion on Qu Writings of Ma Xianglan and Liang Mengzhao), 67–69, 78–79, 85–86, and 90, both in Wei Hua ‘*Ming Qing xiqu zhong de nüxing shengyin he lishi jiyi*’ 明清戲曲中的女性聲音和歷史記憶 (Female Voices and Historical Memories in Ming-Qing Dramas) (Taipei, 2013); also Judith Zeitlin mentions Wang’s ‘Ya ji’ as one of the best sources for historical records of late-Ming courtesans’ songs, in “Notes of Flesh”, 85.

⁹ Wang Duanshu, ‘*Qin lou yue zong pin* 秦樓月總評’ General Comments on *Moon at Qin Pavilion*, , vol.12, General comments on *Moon at Qin Pavilion*, and ‘*Bi muyü chuanqi xu* 比目魚傳奇敘’ Preface to *Soul Mates*, all in *ZGXQXH*, vol. 12, 1476; vol. 12, 1506.

¹⁰ Wang Duanshu, ‘*Qin lou yue zong pin*’, 1476.

¹¹ Wang Duanshu, ‘*Bi muyü chuanqi xu*’, 1506.

¹² Widmer, *Under the Confucian Eyes*, 182.

Orioles' collected in the final chapter of her personal collection, *Red Chantings*.¹³ We can see that Wang Duanshu as a gentlewoman editor and writer was also actively involved in the cultural production of the genre. The textual preservation of her authored and commented writing in this genre, thus, offers an opportunity in which a female musical voice can be heard.

This chapter specifically focuses on the reading of Wang Duanshu's music aesthetics. Here the interpretation is a combination of a direct reading of Wang's commentaries in 'Collection of Elegance' conjoined with reading of the indirect sources of selected pre-existing materials. It argues that Wang's critical standards were grounded in the established measurement criteria of the *qu* genre. Specifically, this chapter is a multi-faceted perspective that blends the concerns of a song's performability (including musicality, instrumentation and performance style) and lyricism. Chapter 2 has shown that Wang's selection reveals her editorial agenda in showing late-Ming music fashion. Yet, the music aesthetics of these recycled materials, which are 'erased when a work's history is drained from it', underpins Wang's taste, preference and sensibility in music. In other words, before 'Collection of Elegance' emerged as a textual space, these music texts were already circulating in the late-Ming contexts with specific musical styles and their artistic, cultural and social meanings.¹⁴ For contemporary audiences and readers, as Lam argues, 'one only needed to reference the key features of the music'; they would readily decode the song's tune patterns, poetic references and social-cultural and political expressions and messages being communicated.¹⁵

This chapter reads Wang Duanshu's critical voice from the musicological notion of 'musiking'. The conceptual framework of 'musiking' draws upon Small's approach to music as the activity and social performance of identities.¹⁶ This analytical tool is used by music

¹³ Wang Duanshu, *Red Chantings*, chapter 30, 110–111. The last song to the tune 'Jinyi gongzi 金衣公子 Gentleman in Golden Robes' has only the title; the text is missing.

¹⁴ Wall, *Imprints of Gender*, 5; Lam, 'Eavesdropping on Zhang Xiaoxiang's Musical World in Early Southern Song in China', 28–30.

¹⁵ Christopher Small, *Musicking: The Meaning of Performing and Listening* (Middletown, 1998), 6, 7, 13.

¹⁶ Adrian Tien, *The Semantics of Chinese Music: Analysing Selected Chinese Music Concepts* (Amsterdam, 2015), 9; Lam also found Small's analytical approach, which interprets music as social performance, which is useful when examining music from imperial China when notation and the actual music are lost, see 'Reading Music and Eroticism', 222, n20.

historians, such as Lam in reading Chinese classical music from the imperial times, especially under the circumstances when the extant musical sources are left without music notation. Yet, contemporary literary writings constitute fundamental sources on the late-Ming music and music culture. Chinese music is a cultural product that is not detached from the society and culture, as Tien argues, but rather is ‘culturally relevant and noteworthy, especially since it has had, at least traditionally speaking, centred around the kinds of social and cultural function that it has needed to fulfil’.¹⁷ This chapter shows Wang’s ‘musicking’ process by not only drawing on the pre-existing music materials, but also the music concept and critique on *qu* in established literati music discourses. This textually interactive ‘musicking’ process also inscribes a ‘new voice’ of the gentlewoman editor-critic in this elite music discourse.

3.2 Wang Duanshu on Courtesans’ Gift Songs: *qu*, Virtue and Social Rank

Wang Duanshu’s source texts constituted a microcosm of the wider circulation of courtesans’ arias, such as the *Stylish Verse from Green Bower* (1616), as well as literati editions of art song collections such as *Poetry of Wu* (1616) and *Celestial Air played Anew* (c.1627), as some songs were previously collected in books where literati discuss the connoisseurship of courtesans. Along with Feng Menglong’s *Child’s Folly* anthology, these sources are paradigms among the more abundant number of courtesan’s erotic song publications around the turn of the seventeenth century.

Music played a significant role in courtesans’ daily professional lives as entertainers. Singing and the ability to write songs constituted a significant and fundamental part of the courtesans’ professional careers and social lives. Meanwhile, the late-Ming period and its libertine cultural environment among the elite meant that befriending courtesans or seeking companionship outside of wedlock was regarded as a fashion. Literati editors were indeed one of the most significant mediums for circulating and publicizing courtesans’ songs. *Stylish*

¹⁷ Tien, *The Semantics of Chinese Music*, 9

Verses from Green Bowers, one of Wang's source-texts for both the 'Collection of Elegance' and 'Collection of Erotica', was published with the dependence on literati editors' interests in order to make courtesans' works public.

3.2.1 *Courtesans' gift songs as a professional trade*

The cultural production of gift songs that were exchanged between courtesans and literati clients indeed mirrors the association among literati and professional female entertainers within a gift-exchange economy. Despite courtesans' outstanding artistic achievements, the patronage of the male elite still played a significant part of the courtesans' establishment of cultural power in Ming society. Scholar-officials not only sought relief from their public duties, but also relied on knowing celebrated courtesans to showcase their wealth and social influences. The courtesan-client relations, thus, were established upon mutual gains. It often involved gift-exchange between courtesan and client; the 'gift' itself could be material, such as a painting, or non-material, such as a dedicated poem praising the courtesan's charm and talents, or a new lyric for setting to music.¹⁸ In turn, courtesans' writing of a matching poem, adding calligraphy to painting, or singing the newly composed lyrics could act as a favour in return.

Presentation of these songs were made to a 'scholar' or 'friend', suggesting that these writers were courtesans' lovers or clients. The last three arias of the first half of 'Collection of Elegance' all 'openly' address a lover-client by the courtesan writer with explicit identification as a 'gifting song' indicated in the titles: 'Present to Scholar Chen' to the tune 'Golden Orioles' by Gu Changfen; 'Present to Scholar Zhang' to the tune 'Drunken Return'

¹⁸ On late-Ming courtesan-client gift-exchange economy, see Merlin, 'The Nanjing Courtesan Ma Shouzhen', 643–645 and 648; for a case-study of Ma Xianglan and her client gift exchange, see Mi Zhao, 'Ma Xianglan and Wang Zhideng Onstage and Offstage: Rethinking the Romance of a Courtesan Theatre in Ming-Qing China', vol. 34, no.1, 2017, 126–140; for a specific discussion on music as gift, see Judith Zeitlin, 'The Gift of Song: Courtesans and Patrons in Late Ming and Early Qing Cultural Production', in *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry*, ed. Grace Fong (Montreal, 2008), 1–45.

by Ma Shou; ‘Present to a friend’ to the tune ‘Walking with Charm’ by Dong Ruying.¹⁹ These songs could become a commodity in the exchange for patronage or favour, or as a love token, especially when the lyrics were distributed not only in written form but also through a courtesan’s performance. The gift song was one of the artistic gifts that were exchanged for various social purposes; they also served multiple expressive musical, economic and cultural needs.

These songs that circulated either in performance or in texts could embody more than the mere gift-exchange function; to literati clients, courtesans’ dedications of songs publicly declare literati’s ownership, not only of the cultural artefacts – the song itself – but also his patronage of the courtesan who supplied the song in honouring him. In turn, these cultural exchanges are illustrative artefacts of courtesans’ artistic accomplishments; the circulation of the gift song would potentially help courtesans to build their reputations and attract more admirers. Meanwhile, courtesans’ musical allure helped them gain ‘special access to the elite circle’,²⁰ and fashioned themselves among elite audiences through an artistically constructed public persona, as examples in this chapter will demonstrate. Courtesans, with their musical gifts – the dedicated gift songs – ‘opened up a music dialogue’ and ‘made a cultural contribution to the male literati community’.²¹ Courtesans’ songs that represent the forefront late-Ming vogue of exclusive elite entertainment, introduced ‘fashionable style into elite culture’.²² Through their music, and other artistic accomplishments as painters, writers or instrumentalists, courtesans ‘received recognition’, even ‘to be treated on [an] equal footing’ by their elite male patrons in late Ming.²³ Gift songs, therefore, functioned not only as an object, token and material gift for exchange and appreciating, but more importantly, they were a significant medium of bargaining power in the exchange economy; such works from

¹⁹ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), 37.17a. to 38.18a.

²⁰ Lai, ‘Pipa Artists and Their Music in Late Ming China’, 59.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ I found courtesans’ modes of production of *sanqu* art songs has resonance with the late-Ming female instrumentalists’ performance, in terms of their social functions of music performance as discussed by Lai. Ibid.

courtesans, as Zeitlin argues, ‘contributed to the fantasy of parity’ between courtesans and their literati clients.²⁴

Courtesan’s gift songs could also be a public demonstration for advertising outstanding musical skills or self-fashioning their lyrical persona. Courtesan Gu Zhangfen’s song, for instance, vowing her constant love in the lyrics:

Since we took our oath, I have stayed true to you. I wish Heaven would pity me and grant us eternal love.

一自结盟言。感卿卿最专。西陵松柏时相念。祝苍天见怜。愿和谐百年。

My undivided loyalty to you makes me willing to chase the storm. Let us consummate this match made in heaven, may the days be like today for the rest of our life, may we be like a pair of inseparable lovebirds.

守坚贞肯逐风花转。结良缘。今生永好。比翼效鹣鹣。²⁵

Commenting on Gu Changfen’s aria, Wang Duanshu quoted directly from Zhu Yuanliang, the editor of the *Stylish Verse from Green Bower*, as Zhu says, ‘you courtesans only do it for a living, how can anyone believe it seriously?’²⁶ Although Wang’s comments could simply be regarded as a quotation, such a contemptuous attitude towards the courtesans’ song shows indicates Wang’s moral stance as a gentlewoman disagreeing with the craftiness of courtesans’ compositions. Yet, this criticism also reveals the motivation in the courtesans’ songs to their clients; such dedication is described as *jing ying ji*. The word can be interpreted as ‘skilfully conceived’, or a ‘tasteful and artistic conception’. All the possible interpretations point out that the song, while the lyrics declare the courtesan’s ‘constant love’ to the

²⁴ On issues of late-Ming courtesans addressed in ‘equal terms’ among elite male literati, see the discussion in Zeitlin, “Notes of Flesh”, 77.

²⁵ Gu Changfen 顧長芬, ‘Zeng Chen sheng 贈陳生’ (Present to Scholar Chen) to the tune ‘Huang ying’er 黃鶯兒’ (Golden Oriole), ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), 37.17a. (trans.) author

²⁶ Wang Duanshu, ‘Collection of Elegance’, 31.16b; ed. Zhu Yuanliang 朱元亮 and Zhang Mengzheng 張夢徵, eds., *Qing lou yun yu 青樓韻語* (*Stylish Verse from Green Bowers*, 1616), on Gu Changfen, 5–6, 1914 reprint edition. 若輩為經營計也，豈可認真信乎！

dedicatee,²⁷ is more of a skilfully or artistically created musical and lyrical expression than a genuine ‘oath’ or expression of feeling.

This intentionally contrived gift song by Gu also reflects the role of musical dedication in a courtesan’s professional trade. In ‘Collection of Elegance’, courtesan writers can be divided into two major groups geographically, and this maps onto their modes of music production. Composers of the final three entries of the first volume – Gu Changfen, Ma Shou and Dong Ruying – and entries by Jiang Qiongqiong and Ma Xianglan from the second half of the collection were written by courtesans all based in the Nanjing pleasure quarters. The areas where they resided – namely the ‘Old Compound’ (*jiu yuan* 舊院) – gathered the most high-ranking courtesans of Ming. The Old Compound dated back to the wine houses that the first Ming emperor established to entertain his court officials with music and drinking parties.²⁸ Gradually, these wine houses became the centre of cultural exchanges of music and literature. By the time of the Wanli era, these pleasure quarters had been commercialized; yet, like their original function of entertaining officials, these pleasure quarters still served exclusive clients of the day. Even Wang Duanshu described the Nanjing pleasure quarters as ‘the blessed land with golden powders, the gathering place of celebrities from all over’.²⁹

Perhaps for the reason for courtesans’ professional expertise in music-making in the late-Ming scene, that, despite her ‘disapproval’, Wang Duanshu placed Gu Changfen as the first courtesan entry in ‘Collection of Elegance’. The Entertainment House of Gu (*Gu shi guan* 顧氏館), where Gu Changfen was affiliated as one of the resident courtesans, specialized in music entertaining.³⁰ Late-Ming prolific music critic and *qu* aficionado, Pan Zhiheng 潘之恆 (1556–1622), was once mastering at the House of Gu (during 1585 to 1586) when he

²⁷ Gu Changfen 顧長芬, ‘Zeng Chen sheng 贈陳生’, ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), 37.17a. Gu’s lyrics are composed of literary metaphors and classical allusions that symbolises ‘constant love’, for instance, ‘constant in love’ 心最專, ‘be faithful’ 守堅貞, and ‘harmonious for this life’ 和諧百年.

²⁸ Lam, ‘Music and Male Bonding in Ming China’, 109–110; and ‘Imperial Agency in Ming Music Culture’, 282–283.

²⁹ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ Collection of Erotica, 24.3a, 24.3b. 東西兩院為四方遊冶名人輻輳.

³⁰ Pan Zhiheng 潘之恆, *Pan Zhi heng quhua* 潘之恆曲話 (*Essays on Qu by Pan Zhiheng*), ed. Wang Xiaoyi 汪效倚 (Beijing, 1988), 32. Pan’s remarks that, ‘I was mastering House of Gu, there were hundreds of concerts where groups of courtesans and musicians with instruments were hosted’.

‘frequent[ed] the Old Compound during his sojourn in Nanjing’ during his 30s.³¹ He dedicated a biography to another courtesan of the House of Gu – Gu Junqing – who was also listed in ‘the famous courtesans from the Gu house’ in Wang’s biographical information on Gu Changfen,³² praising Gu Junqing’s music sight-reading skills of ancient and current tunes.³³ According to Pan, there were ‘hundreds’ of concerts – either in instrumental or vocal/operatic performance – held at the Gu house; the house was also well-known for its beauties, so that ‘one could never tired of these performances’.³⁴

In the courtesan economy of compliment gift-giving and exchanging, composing songs was a part and parcel of creating a ‘fantasy of romantic exchange and mutuality’ and a cross-cultural phenomenon in the pre-capitalist society.³⁵ In the case of Gu Changfen, it is hard not to say that a romantic association with a celebrated courtesan from this house would not have elevated the dedicatee’s public social image as a fashionable and artistic connoisseur; despite the fame of the house itself, courtesans clearly still relied on contemporary elite patronage. Both Zhu and Wang’s comments hint at an unhappy ending for the courtesan-client relationship; that a song declares a courtesan’s faithful love is discredited as business. However, such a cultural artefact, no matter however ‘deceitful’, still became an object of appreciating the contemporary courtesan culture and was previously included in the fashionable print, *Stylish Verse from Green Bowers*. Thus, ‘the presentation and exchange of gifts (including music)’ as this example shows complex social bonds based on mutual honour, mutual elevation and obligation, ‘whereas the results of a gift is impossible to guarantee’.³⁶

³¹ Ibid., 354; Peng Xu, ‘Courtesan vs. Literatus: Gendered Soundscapes and Aesthetics in late-Ming Singing Culture’, *T’oung Pao*, Vol 100, issue 4-5 (2015), 404-459, at 435.

³² For a list of celebrated courtesans of the House of Gu, see Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ Collection of Elegance, 37.17a. 顧氏名姬: 顧喜, 顧元, 顧筠卿.

³³ Pan Zhiheng, ‘Gu Junqing’ 顧筠卿, in *Essays on Qu* by Pan Zhiheng, 120. Pan remarks that ‘all the old and new tunes, once she had a look, she can perform them straightway’.

³⁴ Ibid., 32–33. 余結束于秦淮者三度, 其在乙酉、丙戌, 流連光景所際最甚。余主顧氏館, 凡群士女而奏伎者百餘場... 顧氏節以姪女聞, 數來觀不厭也

³⁵ Heather Hadlock, ‘Review: The Courtesan’s Arts: Cross-Cultural Perspectives and Music of the Sirens’, *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 61/3, 638–639.

³⁶ Ibid.

3.2.2 Courtesans' erotic songs to gain fame

Courtesans' professional careers, as Gu's arias have reflected, relied upon their excellence and mastery of music and other literary-artistic talents. Wang was astonished how Chu ji (a prostitute from Chu) rose to fame by cultivating a seductive persona with one song, attracting frequent literati patronage.³⁷ Like many other peers in the trade, Chu ji was multi-talented not only in music but also calligraphy and paintings. It is not clear if it is the song that is presented in 'Collection of Elegance' that made Chuji famous; the song in the collection is entitled 'Presenting to a friend' but does not name a specific dedicatee. The song, thus, intentionally targets a broader audience rather than a specific recipient. Written in the most fashionable style of 'individual song of local taste' (*feng qing xiaolin* 風情小令), Chuji's song was also a cultural product of the latest fashion: music that situated in-between 'elegant/refined' and 'bawdy/vulgar'. The late-Ming regional folksongs and their popularity in print, as represented by Feng's *Child's Folly* anthology, display the complexity of concurrent musical, literary and philosophical trends, and the material, commercial and elite culture. Many commercially printed drama miscellanies, as discussed in Chapter 2, presented the latest popular tunes (often regional songs) as extra materials (in the middle register), showing the market craze for this type of song (as they could be understood by a broader audience compared to the high-brow art songs).

Chu ji's song, which was also collected in Feng's *Celestial Air played Anew*, has the different title of 'Romantic Shoulder Pole' (*feng yue dan* 風月擔).³⁸ The word of *feng yue* – literally meaning 'breeze and moon' – is a euphemism for romanticism and sensuality. Among the late-Ming printed titles of 'brothel treatises', this word appears in books that are particularly associated with the guidance of 'prostituting'.³⁹ This reference is perhaps deliberately conceived by the courtesan-author, that 'breeze and moon' in her song may cleverly refer to her profession. The song involves a series of lewd erotic and sexual double

³⁷ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji', 38.4b. 此妓一曲遂擅名三楚, 動士大夫之鑑賞, 奇矣

³⁸ Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Tai xia xin zou* 太霞新奏 (*Celestial Air Played Anew*), in *FMLQJ*, vol. 10, 794. The name of the author is also different, Feng's collection listed 楚妓 Chuji as 荊州妓 Jingzhouji, namely 'a prostitute from Jingzhou'.

³⁹ For instance, the title '*feng yue jiguang qing lou ju fou* 風月機關青樓置罟' (Traps of breeze and moonlight, nets of the green loft), a section set for frequenters of brothels (green loft is a euphemism of brothel) with annotations, see He, *Home and the World*, 91–92.

entendres about the mode of lifting heavy loads with the shoulder pole and lovemaking.⁴⁰

Written in this fashionable manner, Chuji's clients – those literati who were her friends or patrons – could easily link the song to the erotic musical styles that permeated in anthologies like *Child's Folly* (in which this song was published a few years earlier): these songs socially 'cultivated a sense of intimacy and a special bond ... between fantasy and reality'.⁴¹

While male critics like Feng Menglong found amusement and artistry in these current tunes, Wang Duanshu was clearly not at ease with the sexual puns embedded in this song. Through critiquing such eroticism and craftiness in courtesans' songs, Wang Duanshu's attempted to clarify one of the facets running through the majority of the 'Collection of Elegance'; that is, writers should compose songs based on the implemented Confucian social hierarchy. This viewpoint was particularly highlighted when Wang Duanshu spoke from her Confucian moral stance as gentlewoman-editor on the presentation of womanly virtue in female-authored songs. Consequently, Wang directs her satire at courtesan-composers like Chu ji. As Wang's critique on Chuji continues: 'there are surplus petty tricks in her song, in terms of morale and conducts, however, her song is an offence against decency'.⁴²

On this entry, Wang seems to have adapted a traditionalist's or even moralist's tone in her criticism of the courtesan's erotic song in 'offence against decency', while showing a hint of understanding of the author's 'plight', as she further comments, 'but she is among those who registered with Music Bureau (*Jiao fang si* 教坊司), if she does not play petty tricks in song, she could not arouse sensual and erotic feelings of her clients'.⁴³ Wang's explicit address to the courtesan's social status – that Chu ji was a member of the Music Bureau – highlights her identity as a music servant, a 'hereditary servile status group' that was

⁴⁰ For the translated version of this song, see Zeitlin 'The Gift of Song', 15.

⁴¹ He, *Home and the World*, 184.

⁴² Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, 38.4b. Wang remarks 總之, 小聰明則有餘, 于風化則大有礙也.

⁴³ Ibid. Wang remarks 然教坊中人, 非此又不能動人艷思也 Music Bureau was an official agency operated by the Ministry of Rites 禮部 that was established by the Ming court to take charge of registrations and regulations of professional entertainers, including courtesans, musicians and actresses. Music Bureau also supervised the taxation of the pleasure quarters and entertainers. This official agency, however, was not a Ming dynasty convention and already existed in previous dynasties. The Han dynasty government office set up the Music Bureau to collect folk songs and music for ceremonial occasions at court.

categorized as ‘social pariahs’ in the Confucian social hierarchy.⁴⁴ The erotica within Chuji’s aria thus almost becomes forgivable under the consideration of the means by which she made her livelihood.

While Wang Duanshu’s comments on Chu ji’s’ erotic song shows her social moral standing as a gentlewoman, at another level her view echoes the established literati consensus of ‘musiking’; that is, writers should compose songs based on and endorsing the extant Confucian social hierarchy.⁴⁵ In other words, the performance of one’s song should also match one’s expected social performance. This endorsement should be a clear and unequivocal theme in both the author’s music and lyrics. Late-Ming literati Zhang Qi (date unknown) summarizes the implementation of Confucian social hierarchy in ‘musiking’, in a critical essay, *Heng qu chen tan* 衡曲塵譚 (*Worldly Remarks on Song*), which was enclosed as one of the preliminary materials of the *Complete Collection of Poetry from Wu* (1637):

Chantings from the royal and noble houses should be majestic, solemn yet tranquil. Lyrics from the fragrant boudoir should be reserved while meandering and full of beauty, as for those leaning on the doorway and selling smiles, ensure the music is delicate and appealing, and present them with physical charm. There should be no vulgarity in poems and songs written by men of letters, and they are expected to be upright and passionate.⁴⁶

This comment, which describes the expected styles of music composed by the royals and noblemen, gentlewomen, female entertainers and literati, respectively, also reveals the perceptions by the Ming elite on courtesans’ music in the words of both Wang Duanshu and Zhang: the courtesans’ musical seduction was inspirable from and intertwined with eroticism and physical charm – a tactful expression that refers to the dual function of a *ji* 妓/伎 – as sex workers and entertainers. Zhang Qi argued that courtesans had to ‘present delicate music with physical charm’, in which the character *zi* 姿 (looks) often linked with *zise* 姿色 (the measurement of a woman’s physical beauty), pointing out the very essence of the physical

⁴⁴ Volpp, *Worldly Stage*, 5-6.

⁴⁵ Lam, ‘Reading Music and Eroticism’, 225.

⁴⁶ Zhang Qi 張琦, ‘*Heng qu chen tan* 衡曲塵譚’ (Worldly Remarks on Song), ‘*Tianci xun* 填詞訓’ (Explanations on filling in the lyrics), in *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng* 古典戲曲論著集成 (Collected Theoretical Writings on Chinese Classical Drama), 1980, vol.4, 263 [hereafter: ZGXLJ]. 長門之詠宜于官樣而帶岑寂。香閨之語宜于閨藏而饒旖麗。倚門嚙笑之聲務求纖媚而顧盼生姿。學士騷人之賦須期慷慨而嘯歌不俗。

presence of the courtesan and her body as an object of desire in creating scenes of seduction to arouse sensual feelings. Wang Duanshu's biographical account on Chuji also remarks on her beauty and physical charm, in which Chuji's *se* is described as 'voluptuous and sensual, incomparable and exquisite' (*se yan jue lun* 色豔絕倫).⁴⁷

Wang's sympathetic tone towards Chuji and her inclusion of this song in 'Collection of Elegance' echoes her embrace-all strategy of editing *Notable Women*, excluding nothing for the preservation of women's writing. Meanwhile, this regional-flavoured aria was a fashionable musical piece that was positioned at the heart of late-Ming entertainment. Furthermore, Wang Duanshu justified, as Chapter 1 discussed, her inclusion of poems written in the sensual poetic style as a similar editorial model that can be found 'Airs of the State' (*Guo feng* 國風) in *Book of Odes*, a canonical anthology and a classic. Wang's criticism, on the other hand, also delivers an educational meaning to the readers: women's song, unless composed by those professionals who had to arouse sensual feelings in order to make a living, should be written according to the morals and womanly conducts that would not offend against decency. Such a moral stance by Wang also affirms not only her status as a gentlewoman, but also her shared view with her contemporary critics among the classically educated Confucian scholars.

3.2.3 *The notion of shengse*

Music and eroticism 'also constituted a prominent marker of gender and social role'.⁴⁸ The late-Ming period, as Lam observes, 'saw music and eroticism, or music and body, as dynamically connected and integrated in creative negotiation of *qing* and desire'.⁴⁹ The Ming concept of courtesans' music, where music entertainment was intertwined with sensual pleasure, is attested to in Wang and Zhang's commentaries. Such a concept is derived from the historical notion of *shengse* 聲色, which literarily means 'sounds and sights',⁵⁰ but is also

⁴⁷ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, 38.4b.

⁴⁸ Lam, 'Reading Music and Eroticism', 224, 226 and 229.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Zeitlin, "'Notes of Flesh'", 78–81; 'The Gift of Song', 3–9.

used as a euphemism for musical and sexual entertainment, often embodying negative meanings of the luxurious, loose and idle life that indulges in *sheng* and *se* and ultimately topples the nation. Wang Duanshu's attitude towards Chu ji and her song shows a multi-faceted reading of this courtesan's erotic song from a late-Ming elite angle. Wang legitimizes female-authored erotic song and its textual presentation in a scholarly collection. Meanwhile, she warns of the danger of lyrical erotica in women's writing. Through this critical nuance, Wang is using editorial commentary firmly within the deeply rooted perspectives on women's social roles. This perspective is grounded in the Confucian social and moral hierarchy and established literary discourse. That is, the socio-culturally inseparable elements of a courtesan's music and her visual/physical charm posits the selected song in 'Collection of Elegance' as an object of fashion worthy of elite critical attention.

The late-Ming blossoming of print, especially private and commercial publishing, prompted the production, consumption and wider circulation of Ming erotic song, especially those written and sung by courtesans. Courtesans' 'musiking', especially their gift/erotic songs, were not only fashionable consumable commercial productions in performance or on the page, but were also cultural artefacts that delivered feminine voices, whether artistically conceived or genuine. These songs are a complex blend of late-Ming commerce, consumption and fashion. Courtesans of the late-Ming period were not only cultural consumers and producers themselves; courtesans and their arts were also objectified and consumed as cultural products. These fashionable products, however, did not come cheaply. Zhang Dai's *Dream Reminiscence* memoir recalls the asking price to get a seat on the courtesan Wang Yuesheng's 王月生 (who had a flair for folk songs of the Wu region) table for half an evening as ten taels of silver or at least five taels – a luxury that only a few could afford.⁵¹

The motivation for publishing erotic songs and verses from the pleasure quarters was at least in part driven by commercial interests. The last few decades of Ming witnessed an increase in the printing of commercial drama miscellanies that included erotic popular songs alongside texts from operatic scenes. Only the wealthiest men could still afford to visit the

⁵¹ Zhang Dai 張岱, *Dream Reminiscence*, chapter 8 'Wang Yuesheng 王月升' (Biography of Courtesan Wang Yuesheng) 亦解吳歌, 140; tael (*liang* 兩) is a former Chinese monetary unit based on the value of a tael of standard silver, fixed in China at 50 grams (1³/₄ oz.).

pleasure quarters, and gentlewomen could not visit there because of the socially and morally imposed Confucian codes of womanly conduct. For readers that were restricted by either economic or moral reasons, reading the songs on printed pages was a vicarious experience that would allow them to access the pleasure quarters and its entertainment through evoked sensation and imagination.

Talented courtesans and their works, including songs, poems and paintings, counted as classic objects of connoisseurship.⁵² When the late-Ming bawdy and seductive songs were skilfully composed and sung by courtesans, the music became, as Lam argues, ‘creative and intelligible language of late Ming erotica, and a sociocultural catalyst for indulgence’.⁵³ These songs, whether in performance or on the page, functioned ‘as social integration, and a gateway of elite/Confucian values, fashions, pastimes and etiquette’, and ‘offers novelty and a glimpse of elite lifestyles, musical presentation of the self, one that is pleasure that actually for selling and buying’.⁵⁴ Courtesans’ physical charm as objects is also reflected in the lavish illustrations of late-Ming fashionable imprints of courtesan registers, beauty ranking books and erotic songbooks.⁵⁵ These fashions, which derived from the world of the male elite and their exclusive access to the entertainment, were socio-culturally grounded in the libertine late-Ming ideology of the cult of *qing*, and consequently the pursuit of romanticism and individualism.

Yet, the printed texts of courtesans’ writings were not a mere commodity. The printed books are a materialized preservation of the courtesans’ charms, talents and musical creativity. They became a site through which readers’ individual desires could be negotiated. The marketing strategy of these imprints included what Lowry terms as ‘contemporary provenance’: ‘it is the names of the most renowned scholars and writers of the day that are attached to the materials [that] sell books aimed towards the evolving interests of the reading public’.⁵⁶ Two courtesan books that ranked courtesans according to their beauty and talent

⁵² Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 6.

⁵³ Lam, ‘Reading Music and Eroticism’, 144.

⁵⁴ Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 143

⁵⁵ Zeitlin, ‘The Pleasure of Print’, 52–59; Li-ling Hsiao, *The Eternal Present of the Past: Illustrations, Theatre and Reading in the Wanli Period, 1537–1619* (Leiden, 2007), 227–228.

⁵⁶ Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 150, 153 and 160.

were printed and presented in beautifully engraved pictorial illustrations of courtesans: *Jinling bai mei* 金陵百媚 (*Seductive Courtesans of Nanjing* 1618) and *Wuji bai mei* 吳姬百媚 (*Seductive Courtesans of Suzhou* 1617). The latter was published by Zhou Zhibiao 周之標, a late-Ming music anthologist whose *Wu yin cui ya* 吳飲萃雅 (*An Elegant Medley of Southern Arias* 1616 preface) and its sequel *Shanshan ji* 珊珊集 (*Collection of Corals*) achieved great success.⁵⁷ *Seductive Courtesans of Nanjing*, was prefaced by Feng Menglong. Courtesan ranking books that were edited and prefaced by leading literati of the time reflect how a connoisseur culture centred on the courtesan and their arts as connoisseuristic objects was growing among the elite.⁵⁸ Courtesans were also objectified and appreciated through the analogy of other connoisseuristic things. For instance, members of the late-Ming social elite, such as Hu Yinglin 胡應麟 (1551–1620), found great resonance between the connoisseurship of flowers and courtesans. Hu’s claim was not a mere declaration of enthusiasm for objects, but ‘a public positioning of himself as a true connoisseur and a cultural member of the elite’.⁵⁹

3.3 Performability and Lyricism: Reading Wang Duanshu’s Aesthetic Evaluation of *qu*

Wang Duanshu’s editorial commentaries on the two courtesans’ arias discussed above show a degree of insightfulness; her editorial voice, which is placed alongside the textual presentation of female-authored arias, leaves the readers ‘a record of guidance on how to read her work’.⁶⁰ These critical evaluations (which appear throughout the entire *Notable Women* anthology) not only, as Widmer claims, ‘reveals her personal, aesthetic and scholarly sensibility and standards’, but also, more specifically in the case of ‘Collection of Elegance’, as Zetlin argues, reveals or ‘reinforces’ Wang Duanshu’s attitudes and thoughts towards a specific genre; that is, ‘the truism of *qu* (independent aria and song-drama) was principally considered

⁵⁷ Zhou Zhibiao 周之標, ‘*Shanshan ji* 珊珊集’ (*Collection of Corals*), in SBXQCK, vol.2, no.3, 4. 余序吳飲萃雅, 海內輒為嗜痂, 此刻老矣。珊珊集繼起, 仍屬余手自增訂。

⁵⁸ Lu, ‘The Literary Culture of the late Ming (1573–1644)’, 149.

⁵⁹ Alison Hardie, ‘Hu Yinglin’s “Connoisseurs of Flowers”: Translation and Commentary’, *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes*, vol. 19 (1999), 272–275, at 274.

⁶⁰ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 197.

a performance genre'.⁶¹ Wang's critical highlights of *qu* lyrics as sung or performance verse are expressed throughout the collection, direct or indirect. Her editorial interpretation of the arias, as this half of the chapter will show, is not only embedded within the late-Ming elite music entertaining tradition, but also displays Wang's 'seriousness' of evaluating *qu* through established critical notions and measurement criteria.

3.3.1 Wang Duanshu on courtesans' song and musicality

Wang's critiques of Ma Shou 馬綬 and Dong Ruying, in which she evaluates the musical and lyrical aesthetics of the arias regardless of the authors' profession as courtesans, indicate her opinion that music and lyrics are equally prominent in *qu* writing. Wang's editorial commentaries may reveal her true appreciation of courtesans' arias in terms of the artistry (musicality and performability) of the works, despite her disagreement of their craftiness and eroticism. Wang's comments may also reflect her general impression of courtesan writers as a group per se, as the second half of 'Collection of Elegance' prominently features courtesans' arias.

Wang Duanshu described Ma Shou's 'Present to Scholar Zhang' to the tune 'Drunken Return' as a 'work that music lingers in the air'.⁶² The articulation of 'roll up around the rafters' (*rao liang* 繞樑) – is derived from an historical representation of the performance of the legendary ancient singer, Hang E: the expressiveness of her voice enchanted audiences to the extent that they did not wish to leave even three days after the end of the performance.⁶³ Such a classic allusion in comparing Ma Shou's aria to Hang E's singing voice demonstrates Wang's explicit praise of the superior musicality of Ma's song. Moreover, Wang only uses four words – 'fine pens to filling the lyrics'⁶⁴ – in evaluating Dong Ruying's song: the very

⁶¹ Zeitlin, 'The Gift of Song', 16.

⁶² Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, 37.17b. Wang remarks 繞樑幽韻之作也.

⁶³ Jing Zhong ed., *Liezi, tangwen pian* 列子·湯問篇 (Beijing, 2007), 133. 昔韓娥東之齊，匱糧過雍門，鬻歌假食，既去而餘音繞樑，三日不絕。

⁶⁴ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji', 37.17b. 填詞雋筆。

medium through which Dong's fine musical composition was delivered – her pen – symbolizes her mastery of song composition.

Wang Duanshu's commentary on Hao's aria 'Moon Night' to the tune 'Yellow Oriels' shows her insight into the creation of this aria for the purpose of elite entertainment and music performance. Wang's evaluation may have been based on the account of the biographical novella on Hao Xiang'e, written by Xu Zhen and curated in his *Nü caizi shu* 女才子書 (*Book of Talented Ladies* 1659). Wang suggests that Hao's arias – a set of three independent songs all set to the tune 'Yellow Orioles' – that 'the newly composed fine lyrics should be set to "White Snow" song and accompanied by clappers'.⁶⁵ The very indication of Hao's composition to be set to music and accompanied with the percussion instrument clapper reinforces Wang's view that she regarded *qu* lyrics were principally composed for performance.⁶⁶ This view is foregrounded throughout Wang Duanshu's commentary voice within the 'Collection of Elegance', in which Wang suggests instrumental accompaniment of many of the arias.

Xu's account demonstrates that the aria was created as an improvised banqueting song. Hao was asked to compose spontaneously at a mid-autumn banquet hosted by her husband Dou Hong.⁶⁷ Hao ingeniously depicts the banqueting scene in lyrics, as the aria goes:

There is competition to raise goblets, a hum of conversation, and peals of flirtatious laughter.

霞觴竞转。阳春共聊。盈盈笑语皆生艳。

While tuning the strings do not lean drunkenly against a gentleman's shoulders.

且调弦。莫教沉醉。争倚玉郎肩。

The guests come together under a full moon, laughing and singing noisily. No need to envy Shi Chong's palatial mansion.

人圆月圆。歌喧笑喧。石家金谷何须羨。

the guests are unable to tear themselves away, crafty people try to linger, sharing equally, the songs of parting.

慢留连。平分秋色。狡兔离弦。

⁶⁵ Ibid, 37.15b. 依人紅牙新藻應付雪兒

⁶⁶ Zeitlin, "Notes of Flesh", 85–86.

⁶⁷ Xu Zhen 徐震, *Nü cai zi shu* 女才子書 (*Book of Talented Ladies*), online transcribed source. 鴻乃欣然笑謂, 湘娥微微含笑, 即席度曲三闕, 以述其歡噱之意云。

Cold instruments, heavy mists, the thick haze of incense; the golden wine cups move the handsome lover.

冷冷管弦。霏霏篆烟。金杯尽把檀郎动。

What is more pitiful is that I do not know whom to get close to in my dreams tonight. 更堪怜。今宵清梦。知道阿谁边。⁶⁸

Composing occasional songs this way was a popular entertainment during literati occasional gatherings and during drinking games. It required a broad knowledge of pre-existing tunes so that newly composed lyrics for the occasion could be set to music at once. Such biographical accounts, thus, also display Hao's advanced composing abilities. In Xu's novella, after the lyrics had been composed, Dou Hong once ordered two concubines to accompany his singing of the first aria with clappers and a bamboo flute.⁶⁹ Wang's reference to the 'red ivory clapper [used for keeping or regulating rhythms in Chinese classical music and especially in opera) and new lyrics' could be regarded as a summarization of Xu's account. Furthermore, the sonic quality of Hao's aria depicted in Xu's novella as 'pure *yin* lingering in the air',⁷⁰ with the use of the word *yin*, meaning music or sound, could refer to the sound timbre of the bamboo flute and clappers of the instrumental accompaniment as well as to Hao's clear and melodious song.

3.3.2 Wang Duanshu on *qu* performance tradition

Wang Duanshu's comment suggests that the aria 'should be set to the song of 'White Snow''⁷¹: the 'White Snow' does not refer to a specific piece of music or pre-existing melody. The articulation of 'White Snow' derives from the idiom of 'Sunny Spring, White Snow', which refers to an ancient melody from the state of Chu that 'only a dozen people in the whole state could harmonize and sing'.⁷² The idiom later became a euphemism for highbrow art, literature and music, that 'only a few people can enjoy or understand'.⁷³ Wang's comment,

⁶⁸ Wang Dunashu 王端淑, 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, 37.15b. (trans.) author

⁶⁹ Xu Zhen 徐震, *Nü cai zi shu*, 鴻朗誦一遍, 又令郢雪按板, 玉香吹笛, 鴻乃自唱前曲。

⁷⁰ Ibid., 清音繞樑。

⁷¹ Wang Dunashu, 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, 37.15b. 應付雪兒

⁷² 宋玉·對楚王問 其為陽春白雪, 國中屬而和者不過數十人

⁷³ Ibid. 其曲彌高, 其和彌寡

therefore, indicates the superiority of Hao's composition, in particular, the 'White Snow' allusion that Wang employed suggests the exclusiveness of Hao's aria, intended for the private entertainment of the elite. Both Xu's biographical account and Wang's comment on the instrumentation of Hao's aria also affirm the fact that the music performance setting was designed for private elite entertainment.

The indications of 'red ivory clappers' mentioned both in Xu and Wang's narratives, and Xu's account of the accompaniment of a bamboo flute, reflect that the arias were performed in the form of *qingchang* 清唱 – 'pure singing' – a literati art suited to performance at informal occasional gatherings of friends, and a performing practice that courtesans specialized in.⁷⁴ 'Pure singing' requires very little instrumental accompaniment; clappers (to beat and keep rhythm) and bamboo flute (to harmonize the melodic line) were the two most frequently used instruments. The simplicity of the 'pure singing' setting contrasts markedly with the performance of 'songs of the stage' – the music drama, a multi-media representation of *qu*, where spoken dialogue, theatrical make-up, costumes and props are applied.

The performance tradition of 'pure singing' displays the virtuosity not only of the singer-performer, but also of the aria composer.⁷⁵ It allows music to be performed in private or domestic settings and brings the artistry of the aria to the central focus of the performance. In *Ban qiao zaji* 板橋雜記 (*Miscellaneous Records of the Plank Bridge* 1693), an early-Qing memoir of the late-Ming pleasure quarters' events, author Yu Huai states that 'celebrated courtesans all feel ashamed to go on stage as actresses'.⁷⁶ This further suggests that theatrical performance was not the preferred performance style for showcasing the mastery of courtesans' music skills. Wang Duanshu's interpretation of Hao's music and the implications of the 'pure singing' performances could have derived from tradition, which was especially fashionable among the cultural elite. Hao's entry is also an example of women regardless of

⁷⁴ Volpp, *Worldly Stage*, 62–63; also, Zeitlin, "Notes of Flesh", 82–84.

⁷⁵ Volpp observes that when professional music troupes are invited to perform without costume, the actors would sit around the table in a circle with their instruments. Similar to *qingchang*, these performance traditions, as Volpp argues, are a 'specialised niche ... the music standard of the performance would be especially high' when 'invite[d] to homes of literati ... it was closely associated with salon-style performance'. Volpp, *World Stage*, 63.

⁷⁶ Yu Huai 余懷, *Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記 (*Miscellaneous Records of the Plank Bridge*), repr. (Shanghai, 2000), 11. 然名妓仙娃，深以登場演劇為恥。

obscure origins as concubine-courtesans who were masters in *qu* composition in a contemporary music fashion. Wang highlights Hao's entry to demonstrate the value of women's authorship and expertise alongside the established male songwriters. Wang does not seek to create discord by disagreeing with existing interpretations of male author's work, or the values by which they are judged. Rather, Wang operates within these existing tropes to legitimize women's song writing.

3.3.3 Performability of *qu* in late-Ming literati's discourse

Performability is among the foremost significant traits of the *qu* genre. The late-Ming and early-Wing elite composed and appreciated music for various reasons. Firstly, to allow performers to display their virtuosity and elite composers' craftsmanship. Secondly, to validate the audiences' self-conceptualization as an exclusive cultural group and community through the mutual appreciation of elite leisure. In Chapter 2, this thesis argued how printed music texts and critiques became a means of self-fashioning for the literati to become a member of the cultural elite. However, the actual performance is vital in the music connoisseurship of *qu*. This section uses the example of the critical reaction to the sixteenth-century masterpiece, *Peony Pavilion* to show that despite the ingenious lyricism of the song-drama, the piece was criticized for lacking performability.

Contemporary late-Ming literati music critics produced many discourses surrounding this specific aspect of *qu*. Perhaps the most famous is the late-Ming 'Tang - Shen dispute', which catches a glimpse of the late-Ming cultural elite's division of opinion between the 吳江 Wujiang School – led by music theorist Shen Jing 沈璟 (1553–1610) – and the 臨川 Linchuan school – led by dramatist Tang Xianzu. Shen Jing advocated that *qu* composition should strictly follow prosodic and musical rules of music-lyric fitting, while Tang's work foregrounds the expressiveness of language. Yet, Tang himself proudly acclaims: 'I regard myself as one who knows the meaning of music. Sometimes I was just too lazy to check tunes and adjust rhymes, I'd rather distort everyone's throats to fit my words'.⁷⁷ Shen's followers,

⁷⁷ Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖, 'Da Sun Siju 答孫侯居' (Replying to Sun Siju), in *LDQHHB*, vol.1, 611. 弟在此自謂知曲意者, 筆懶韻落, 時時有之, 正不妨拗折天下人嗓子. Shih-Pe Wang (trans.),

among which was the most prominent figure Feng Menglong who revised and published Tang Xianzu's entire drama scripts of *Peony Pavilion* for the sake of its performability.⁷⁸ Tang Xianzu was aware of his contemporary literati-dramatist and music theorist who revised his work for the purpose to 'better adapt it to performance requirements'.⁷⁹ Tang himself was clearly amused by the idea of revision, not only did he write a poem titled *Laughing at others who temper to revise Peony*,⁸⁰ but also in a letter to Ling Mengchu he claimed his work had been 'severely distorted' (*dashou gaicuan* 大受改竄) in revised edition.⁸¹

Neutral views towards these two different schools of *qu* exist: Ling Mengchu, for example, expressed his appreciations and criticisms of Shen and Tang's work. In his *Tan qu za zha* 譚曲雜劄 (*A Random Bundle of Notes on Qu*), Ling gave recognition to the Wujiang school's contribution to the discourse on music prosody, but also points out Shen's defects as he was 'short of talents' (*duan yu cai* 短于才) in writing lyrics, as Shen's lyrics shows certain vulgarity.⁸² Ling praised Tang's genius for expressing the idea of *qing* in his music drama scripts, yet affirms many contemporary theorists' view on Tang's work of the messy rhymes and poorly fitted tunes and lyrics, arguing that Tang's drama is more of a 'desk-top play' (*an'tou ju* 案頭劇).⁸³ In other words, a play created for reading rather than written for actual stage performance.

'Revising Peony Pavilion: Audience Reception in Presenting Tang Xianzu's Text', in *1616: Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu's China*, eds. Tian, Edmondson and Shih-pe, 180-193, at 182.

⁷⁸ Feng's revised 1623 edition, which is entitled *Feng liu meng* 風流夢 (*Story of the Romantic Love*), is based on Shen Jing's revised edition. Feng's 'Introductory Note' and 'General Comment' in *LDQHBB*, vol.3, 37-38. The reason why Feng made this revision is clearly stated in the 'Introductory Note'; that despite Tang's exceptional talents in writing the scripts, the original *Peony*, as Feng calls it, was 'a play for the desk not a score for performance' and 'if anyone would like to sing the original one in a perfunctory manner, you will still have to make a few adjustments'. 識者以為此“案頭之書，非當場之譜”欲付當場敷衍，即欲不稍加竄改而不可得也。

⁷⁹ Regina Llamas (trans.), 'Xu Wei's A Record of Southern Drama: The Idea of the Theatre at the Turn of the Seventeenth Century', in *1616: Shakespeare and Tang Xianzu's China*, 236-248, at 237.

⁸⁰ Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖, 'Jian gaicuan mudan ci zhe shixiao 見改竄牡丹詞者失笑' (Cannot stop laughing at someone distorted *Peony Pavilion*), in *LDQHBB*, vol.1, 617

⁸¹ Tang Xianzu 'Da Ling Chucheng 答凌初成' (Replying to Ling Chucheng), in *LDQHBB*, vol.1, 612.

⁸² Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, *Tanqu za zha* 譚曲雜劄 (*A Random Bundle of Notes on Qu*), in *LDQHBB*, vol.3, 189. On Shen Jing: 'Shen is a music expert, but his lyrics are short of talents' 沈伯英審于律而短于才.

⁸³ Ibid. On Tang Xianzu: 'his song dramas have the flavour of the Yuan pieces ... it is a pity that the rhymes and melodies of his work are randomly pieced together to go as he wishes, which do not

On the one hand, the Wujiang school was focused on compositional rules and prosody; on the other hand, the Linchuan school centered on the expressiveness of lyrical languages and the emotions expressed through music and drama. Whether the literati favoured the Wujiang or Linchuan school, or held a relatively neutral view like Ling's, performability remained central to *qu* writing and late-Ming literati theorists' discussions. This dispute itself could also represent one's personal aesthetic preferences. Many late-Ming music critics on contemporary performance, singing technique, composing guidance and music-lyric settings show late-Ming literati-critics' seriousness of *qu* as a performance genre. Wang Jide's canonical *Prosody of Qu* also highlighted the perspective that 'even brilliant works of language are ultimately second-rate when divorced from' the performance and/or stage.⁸⁴ These literati discourses not only acted as guidance for contemporaries' practice in song-writing, singing and music drama staging, but also prepared the ground for later *qu* theoretical development in Qing.⁸⁵

3.3.3.1 *Literati's discourse on musicality and the late-Ming literati's editing of songbooks*

Many late-Ming literati-edited and anthologized song collections reflect many views and theories that developed in the field. This type of late-Ming music imprint, which the Chinese present day scholar Wei-min Yu has defined as *xuanben xing qupu* 选本型曲谱,⁸⁶ namely 'collections of selective tunes of arias', primarily functioned to provide repertoires ready for 'pure singing'. As discussed above, 'pure singing' was a tradition that courtesans specialized in, by which they entertained their literati clients in a more private setting. The selections of music within these collections mainly feature literati's own work, which include both *sanqu* –

appeal to the refined taste'. 近世作家如湯義仍，頗能模仿元人...使其使才自造，句腳、韻腳...便隨心湖湊，尚乖大雅。

⁸⁴ Hsiao, *The Eternal Present of the Past*, 49.

⁸⁵ For instance, early-Qing professional song-drama writer Li Yü transformed late-Ming critical theory on *nüyue* 女樂 (female music), such as those by Zhang Dai, into practical guidance for actress/singer training and selecting. Lu Eting 陸萼庭, *Kunju Yanchu Shigao* 昆劇演出史稿 (Historical Records of the Performance of Kun Opera) (Shanghai, 1980), 163–167.

⁸⁶ Wei-min Yu 余為民, 'Ming dai xuanben xing qupu kaoshu 明代選本型曲譜考述' (A Research on the Selective Type Formularies of Arias of the Ming Dynasty), *Xiqu xuebao* 戲曲學報 *Journal of Traditional Chinese Theatre*, 6 (2009), 36–62.

the independent aria and operatic aria chosen from scenes of music drama. These songs, due to their selection criteria based largely on prosody, musical styles and tune patterns, would have been aesthetically appealing to literati. They provided guidance for readers who were learning to compose. Ling's songbook, *Three Sound of Southern Song*, as Chapter 2 mentioned, provides notation for readers ready to sing. The practical usage of these annotated literati editions of songbooks, as Zeitlin argues, 'sometimes can also be a major selling point of the book'.⁸⁷

3.3.4 *Between performability and lyricism*

Many songs that Wang Duanshu presented and selected in her 'Collection of Elegance' were previously circulated and printed in many of these literati edited songbooks. These female-authored songs fit the literati standard of *qu* writing. The primary function of these literati songbooks also suggests that these female-authored songs were highly performable, and thus, indicates the high standards of women's composition. Wang's re-curation, regrouping and re-ordering of these previously circulated songs, accompanied by her editorial comments, leaves the reader a record of the implied editor's voice and offers an interpretation of the edited texts. The commentaries, 'a literary critical tradition that expanded to performance related texts in Ming', as Hua Wei writes, were 'a practice to persuade the readers how to understand correctly and appreciate fully a certain text'.⁸⁸ Wang Duanshu's opening editorial commentary in 'Collection of Elegance' includes a summary of the cultural phenomenon of the literati's passion in the latest music fashion and attests to the literati aesthetics in evaluating the performability of *qu*, while offering another dimension of understanding *qu* composition in its lyricism.

The opening commentary also outlines the dual function of the collection's texts through clever wordplay, as Wang states:

⁸⁷ Zeitlin, 'Between Performance, Manuscript, and Print', 274.

⁸⁸ Wei Hua, 'How Dangerous Can the "Peony" Be? Textual Space, "Caizi Mudan ting", and Neutralizing the Erotic', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 65/4 (2006), 741-762, at 755.

when deep contemplations transform into delicate and beautiful words, with the accompaniment of strings, the fragrant words then become “pearls pouring down on jade plates”. 幽思綺語，濺人齒牙，弦索之下，蕙芬珠瀉⁸⁹

Wang’s use of the word ‘pearls’ is a euphemism that allows for multi-faceted readings depending on its position within the idiom. The idiom ‘pearls pouring down on jade plates’ 大珠小珠落玉盤 was originally a verse written by the celebrated Tang dynasty poet, Bai Juyi 白居易 (772–846) in his *Pipa xing* 琵琶行 (*Ballad of the Pipa* 816).⁹⁰ The placement of the word in this verse praises the virtuoso performance of an aging courtesan on a four-stringed Chinese lute *pipa*. Wang Duanshu uses the word *xiansuo* 弦索, meaning ‘the strings’, which refers to a variety of traditional Chinese musical instruments including fiddles, *pipa* and zithers. Such interpretation fits the context of Wang’s commentary in terms of the performability of *qu* as a form of sung literature, while the allusion to the ‘pearls’ may remind readers of the *pipa* sound described in the masterpiece of Bai’s music bureau poem.

Although by the time of late Ming, ‘*pipa* emerges as a solo or ensemble instrument played in genres of vocal, operatic, and instrumental music,’⁹¹ it is less likely that Wang Duanshu indicates that the songs presented in ‘Collection of Elegance’ should all be performed specifically with *pipa*; only ‘the accompaniment of strings’ indicates the performability of the songs. It is perhaps the cultural allegory and the poetic allusion to the sound of *pipa* described in Bai’s poem that reminds the readers of its historical, cultural meanings: *pipa* as an instrument, although typically played by both men and women, is a courtesan’s instrument in Bai’s poem where the performance by the courtesan exhibits virtuosic skill. Thus, this allusion would be embedded with a feminine meaning. This feminine tradition of *pipa* is reflected in paintings, poems and music repertoire historically. In Bai’s poem, the aging courtesan plays her instrument and the melancholic emotion that is delivered from the *pipa* music laments her fate, which evokes the poet’s miserable reflection of his demotion as an official. The music of the *pipa* lament created a site of ‘social and

⁸⁹ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ Collection of Elegance, 37.1a.

⁹⁰ Joseph Lam, ‘*pipa* Stories as Cultural History of Chinese Music’, in *Reading Chinese Music and Beyond*, eds. Joys Cheung and King Chung Wong (Hong Kong, 2010), 28-53, at 42–43.

⁹¹ Lam, ‘*pipa* Stories’, 42.

emotional encounters’, while the shared emotions were ‘communicative yet intangible’.⁹² Through the sound of music, feelings were expressed and subjectivity negotiated.

Compared to *pipa* communicating meaning through sound and music, *qu* as a genre, no matter whether in the form of the independent song or a song drama, the artistry and virtuosity, and the author/performer’s subjectivity or *qing* was communicated through the lyrics. Therefore, another possible way to understand the meaning of ‘pearl’ within the idiom *zhuyuan yurun* 珠圓玉潤 - ‘round as pearls and smooth as jade’ is as a double entendre referring to both excellent singing and polished writing, and points to the dual function of *qu* as a genre that created meanings.

Wang Duanshu’s brief mention of the word ‘pearl’ leaves space for the reader’s individualized interpretation, or indicates a dual reading of the songs curated in ‘Collection of Elegance’; as analyzed above, both ways of contextualizing the interpretation of the word point to the musicality of the lyrics, yet the metaphor of ‘pearls pour down’ is allegorically linked to the Bai’s ballad poem, a masterpiece which transformed a courtesan’s virtuosic performance and the sonic quality of *pipa* into poetic verse. In other words, the curated aria texts within *Notable Women*, although a women’s poetry anthology, were not only for realizing the lyrics into music and performance, but also intended for reading. Lyricism is highlighted, as Chapter 5 argues, in late-Ming gentlewomen’s song writing. It shows how gentlewomen incorporated the latest fashions in song writing into their own practices.

3.4 Wang Duanshu’s Critical Voice as an Elaboration of Contemporary Literati’s Aesthetics

Like Feng Menglong’s editorial criteria for his *Celestial Air played Anew*, the late-Ming literati edited song selection anthologies often reflect the artistic vision of the literati editor. These published music imprints usually mirror its editor’s aesthetic preferences whether

⁹² Ibid., 43.

based on harmonious music composition or the lyrical language style. The prefatory and paratextual commentaries that these literati editors provided often act as a public venue in which they make their artistic preferences publicly known. The source materials that Wang Duanshu used to select texts for her ‘Collection of Elegance’, as Chapter 2 illustrated, were mainly from previously published late-Ming literati edited songbooks. A few of these previously published song collections reappear multiple times and suggests that Wang might have favoured certain types of music collections; such preferences were reflected in her selection strategies and could also indicate her own music aesthetics. As a gentlewomen editor, Wang Duanshu’s selection from mainly literati edited work could be a result of easy access to material. It is also possible that her selections indicate her music aesthetic preferences, linked close to late-Ming literati’s taste.

3.4.1 *Wang Duanshu on music and bense*

Wang Duanshu’s editorial comments within her *Notable Women* anthology reflects her aesthetics; her criteria for a good composition incorporated literati discourse, in which she adapts certain critical and technical musical terms frequently discussed by late-Ming male literati music critics. The first notion is *bense* 本色. On the courtesan Ma Shou’s poetry presented within the ‘Collection of Erotica’ (chapter 25), Wang Duanshu comments, ‘it is a poem of *bense*’.⁹³ The term *bense* is primarily a critical term in music employed frequently by *qu* theorists as a technical criterion for examining the artifice of *qu* during the period of the Ming dynasty. The term itself, however, derived from poetic criticism of the Song dynasty (907–1279).⁹⁴ The term itself literally means ‘natural colour’ but could be further interpreted as ‘naturalness’. In the contexts of *qu* criticism, and based on personal aesthetics of the term, it can not only measure the linguistic register of the lyrics but also measures the music for which the lyrics are set to.

⁹³ Wang Duanshu, ‘Yan ji’ (Collection of Erotica), 25.20a. 是本色詩。

⁹⁴ Llamas, ‘Xu Wei’s A Record of Southern Drama’, 239.

Wang Duanshu employs this term to comment on Ma's poem, thus, focusing on the aesthetics of Ma's poetic language. It is also possible that Wang sensed the same music aesthetics of 'naturalness' in Ma Shou's aria, a gift song that is included in 'Collection of Elegance', which Wang praises as 'music that lingers in the air'. Although Wang did not use the term directly in 'Collection of Elegance', her consistent views on the same writer, apart from indicating Ma Shou's accomplishments in poetry and aria composition, may also suggest that Wang herself favoured this particular style of writing and composition.

Wang Duanshu's possible source materials also indicate that *bense* could have been a selecting criterion for Wang Duanshu. Based on the source materials discussed in Chapter 2, Wang could have selected from *Second Collection of Wu Songs* (1616 preface), *Celestial Air Played Anew* (c.1627), and *New Formulary of Southern Song* (c.1655). Both the editors and the contents of these collections show certain connections that could be identified as a shared outlook in terms of musical-lyrical aesthetic preference.

Ling Mengchu's *A Random Bundle of Notes on Qu*, a critical essay included within his edited *Nan yin san lai* 南音三籟 (*Sound of Three Nature in Southern Song*), set forth the reason why fashionable airs could reach mass popularity at every level of the late-Ming society: the foremost significant feature that the songs possess is the language of *bense*. Ling praises tunes such as 'Grass-Beating Stick' as he declares,

I would craze for even one beautiful sentence from repertoires such as "Sheep on the Hill Slope", "An Earthy Raking Wind", "Grass-Beating Stick", and "Song of Wu" that could be fit into the currently fashionable song.⁹⁵

The very reason that Ling wished to incorporate words from repertoires of popular tunes is because, as he continues, 'what the current songs do is try to incorporate those flowery languages and ornate phrases from Music Bureau ballads, such as the long regulated verses, or often something similar to this kind'.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Ling Mengchu, *Tan qu za zha* 譚曲雜札 (*A Random Bundle of Notes on Qu*), in *ZGXLJ*, vol.4, 255. 今之時行曲，求一語如唱本山坡羊、刮地風、打棗干、吳歌等中一妙句，所必無也

⁹⁶ Ibid. 故以藻績為曲，譬如以排律諸聯入... 樂府諸題下，多見其不類

Ling Mengchu's argument of incorporating 'flowery languages and ornate phrases' in *qu*, and his derogatory attitude towards such practice hinted in his argument, reflects an already established and prevalent view among mid-late Ming *qu* critics and aficionados: that is, *qu* lyrics should be written in natural, comprehensible and accessible language. In his editorial principle to *Nanci xinpu* 南詞新譜 (*New Formulary of Southern Song*), Shen Zijin criticizes the many newly written *chuanqi* (southern song-drama) that he disliked: no matter how creative the plots, these works were not to his taste due to too much 'carving and engraving' (*diao lou* 雕鏤) of the lyrics.⁹⁷ As Shen continues, '*chuanqi* drama should be as long as the lyrics make a wholesome plot, they should be written in a smooth and clear style, in which there is no need to make it fancy'.⁹⁸ Feng Menglong is another critic who endorsed the naturalness of the language in *qu* writing. Feng's viewpoint on *bense* is brief but focuses on the accessibility of the lyrical language: '*bense* comprises common sayings and colloquial language, but does not include vulgar words'.⁹⁹

Many critics before Ling, Shen and Feng theoretically examined *bense* in *qu* writing, including Xu Wei in his *A Record of Southern Drama* (1559 preface) and Yuan Hongdao (1568–1610), a late-Ming critic whose literary criticism was under the influence of Xu Wei. Xu points out that, although many southern song-dramas written during his time were written in a vulgar language, each verse in these dramas was in the language of *bense*, which 'are not like the songs written in the imperial examination essay style by literati nowadays'.¹⁰⁰ In Xu's critiques, he particularly disliked works such as *The Perfume Satchel*, which utilized very obscure language from two books (*Book of Odes* and Du's poems), and made extensive use of classical allusion.¹⁰¹ Xu further connected works like *Perfume Satchel* to the extremely elegant dance of Lei Zhongqing at the Tang court, stating 'after all, it lacks *bense*'.¹⁰² Xu's

⁹⁷ Shen Zijin 沈自晉, 'Chong ding nanci quanpu fanli houji 重定南詞全譜範例續紀' (Supplementary Comments of Editorial Principles to *New Formulary of Southern Song*), in *ZGXQXH*, vol. 1, 43.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 傳奇曲, 只明白條暢, 說卻事情出便殼, 何必雕鏤如是?

⁹⁹ Feng Menglong, *Tai xia xin zou (Celestial Air Played Anew)*, chapter 12, editorial comment on a song-suite by Shen Zishao 沈子勺, in *LDQHBB*, vol. 3, 24. 本色者, 常談口語而不涉於粗俗。

¹⁰⁰ Xu Wei 徐渭, 'Nanci xulu 南詞敘錄' (A Record of Southern Drama), in *LDQHBB*, vol.1, 486 然有一高處, 句句是本色語, 無今人時文氣

¹⁰¹ Llamas (trans.), 'Xu Wei's A Record of Southern Drama', 240. Xu remarks 習詩經, 專學杜詩, 遂以二書語句入曲中, 賓白亦是文語, 又好用故事作對子, 最為害事。

¹⁰² Ibid., 香囊如教坊雷大使舞, 終非本色。

argument clearly demonstrates his strong disagreement in employing extensive and ‘exclusive’ classical allusions in *qu* writing. His advocacy for comprehensible language in writing lyrics perhaps also addresses the practical perspective of song-drama as mass media and entertainment. This is further supported by Xu’s explanation of his targeted audiences of southern *qu*, which ‘only when servants, children, women, and young girls can understand that *qu* finds its proper form’.¹⁰³

In summary, the language of *bense* refers to the linguistic register that is lucid yet comprehensible, simple yet free of vulgarity, genuine in moving people’s hearts and connecting to all human emotions. Such advocacy promoted by mid- and late-Ming literati seems also to have had an influence on Wang Duanshu’s criticism. Ma Shou’s poem and aria were both dedicated to the same person, simply named the ‘young scholar Zhang’. These writings are the lament of a courtesan waiting for her lover-client’s return, and perhaps the courtesan’s hopelessness in longing for marriage. Interestingly, Ma’s quatrain poem was in fact written by employing allusion to the Tang dynasty *chuanqi* (means legend or folklore) story, with the poem cleverly incorporating phrases of ‘angelic young man’, ‘the jade pestle’, Pei Hang – the male protagonist – and ‘waterloo bridge’, where Pei encountered his future wife. The phrases used in Ma’s poem not only summarize the whole story of Pei Hang, who ‘pound the herbs with a jade pestle, in order to make the elixir of life for the elderly lady, who promised Pei to betroth her granddaughter to him, and Pei’s action even moved the rabbits of the Goddess of the Moon to help him’.¹⁰⁴ They also underline the determination of the courtesan in waiting for her lover through the allusion of Pei’s determination in marrying Yun Ying. Wang Duanshu regarded such writing as *bense* and was possibly speaking from her own perspective as someone who was erudite and read broadly.

¹⁰³ Xu Wei, ‘Nanci xulu’ 歌之使奴童婦女皆喻，乃為得體。Llamas (trans.), ‘Xu Wei’, 241.

¹⁰⁴ This literary material is from the Tang tale ‘*Chuanqi* Pei Hang 傳奇裴航’ (The Legend of Pei Hang). It also inspired Song dynasty storytelling, Yuan variety drama and Ming *chuanqi* song drama.

Ma Shou's aria, on the contrary, was written in a lucid yet natural language, with phrases and depictions of sceneries such as 'secluded window' (*you* 幽), 'amorous' (*feng liu* 風流), 'embrace' (*huai bao* 懷抱), and 'boredom' (*wu liao* 無聊),¹⁰⁵ as Ma's song goes:

Facing the secluded window, I recall your dazzling beauty, / Among distinguished and refined men, no one is counted more delicate and amorous than *liulang*.
向幽窗坐憶河陽貌, 算風流不數六郎嬌。

At first we see each other, then you reject me, but day and night I cannot forget your embrace.
乍時相見便相拋, 好教人鎮日縈懷抱。

In boredom, I laugh at myself for being a lovesick fool, and I fear that your gentleman's heart, would not love an idle flower like me.
笑情痴空自悶無聊, 怕君心不戀我閒花草。¹⁰⁶

By the standards of Ming critics who advocated *bense* in aria writing, Ma's lyrics not only possess the quality of 'naturalness' but also the lyrics portray a melancholic yet amorous scene of a courtesan longing for her lover while 'worrying' (*pa* 怕) about his disfavour. The phrase, 'the idle flowers and plants' (*xian hua cao* 閒花草), within Ma's last line of lyrics is also a euphemism for 'women with easy virtue' that linked to the courtesan class. Such an euphemism of self-mocking expressed in an aria dedicated to the courtesan's lover-client as a gift (the lyrics of 'I am scared that a gentleman's heart like yours, would not be in love with an idle flower like me')¹⁰⁷ also displays the romantic lure and wit of the courtesan. Ma laughs at herself as a 'love maniac' in her sheer imagination, while feeling terribly bored in solitude. The song dedicated to the courtesan's lover-client, whether in text or in performance, functioned as a 'medium through which desire is expressed and seduction is transacted'.¹⁰⁸ It is also a declaration of the courtesan's *qing* – love, passion, subjectivity and sentiments; a cultural trademark during the late Ming.

¹⁰⁵ Ma Shou 馬綬, 'Zeng Zhang sheng 贈張生' (Present to Scholar Zhang), *Ya ji* (Collection of Elegance), 37.17b. (trans.) author

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.* 怕君心不戀我閒花草

¹⁰⁸ Zeitlin, 'The Pleasure of Print', 46.

Many arias curated within the ‘Collection of Elegance’ also show certain characteristics of ‘boudoir laments’ by portraying objects that could be linked to the inner chamber or women’s sphere. This is not to say that all these lyrics were exceptionally feminine: Wang Duanshu, as a poet and a poetry critic, was indeed against the feminine style of writing and advocated that female writers should discard the ‘power and rouge’ (*qian fen* 鉛粉) in their verses.¹⁰⁹ Although the entries of gentlewomen writers within the ‘Collection of Elegance’ tend to portray solitude self-images and longing for reunion (with husbands), the various themes and outlets of articulations and the diverse ways of expression in gentlewomen’s writing has created diverse lyrical atmospheres. This also displays the writers’ well-rounded skills in employing themes and portraying images, rather than what was denounced as an ‘artificially elaborated feminine’ by both Ming and Qing male literati.¹¹⁰ Wang Duanshu’s poetic critique, in fact, also echoes the mid-Ming literati critic He Liangjun’s argument on the notion of *bense*. He points out that the boudoir theme in nature is ‘garish’; ‘if the writer uses even more garish language in the lyrics, as He argues, the song would be like an over-powdered and rouged lady, and how can she compare to a lady who adorns herself with natural makeup and simple garment’.¹¹¹

Another reason why Ma’s poem and aria that can be regarded as writings of *bense* is that the song and poem express her inner feelings. Both her song and poem are dedicated to the scholar Zhang, and her poem ‘Took an Oath with Scholar Zhang’ collected in *Stylish Verses from Green Bowers*, shows a certain degree of sincerity for the courtesan-lover-client relationship.¹¹² In other words, while Gu Changfen’s gift song was created for ‘business’, Ma’s aria could indeed be a love token that was dedicated to her lover and thus expresses her

¹⁰⁹ Wang Duanshu, ‘Zi ji, Huang ji, Wai ji, and Huan ji 緇集、黃集、外集、幻集’ (Collection of Buddhists, Taoists, Foreigners and Ghosts), *MYSWCB*; on entry Guo Zhenshun 郭真順, see 28.3b, 28.4a. 端淑曰：骨勁氣雄，一掃人間鉛粉，此簪珥中英雄也，亟收之，以作詩家金湯之術。

¹¹⁰ For instance, the Qing literatus Zhou Lianggong 周亮工(1612–1672) remarked in his editorial principles to the Chidu xinchao 尺度新鈔 (*Newly Copied Letters* 1662 first edition) that women’s epistolary writings ‘if not express boudoir laments, they report nuptial dates; if the letters are not about love affairs of making an oath, it is the sorts about fixing arrangement for fine tea tasting...’ 非抒閨怨，則報幽期，非申花月之盟，則訂香茗之約。

¹¹¹ He Liangjun 何良俊, chapter 37 ‘Ci qū 詞曲’ (Remarks on songs and Lyrics), in *LDQHHB*, vol.1, 466. 若女子施朱傅粉，刻畫太過，豈如靚妝素服，天然妙麗者之為勝耶！

¹¹² Zhu Yuanliang 朱元亮 and Zhang Mengzheng 張夢徵, eds., *Qing lou yun yu* 青樓韻語, 1616 (*Stylish Verse from Green Bowers*) repr. 1914, 137–138.

true feelings. Among literati-critics, *qu* was regarded as a channel to express *qing*. Such an argument can be found in Xu's claim that despite the musical roots of southern *qu* as simply 'music that was made up of ditty tunes from the villages ... songs were merely gathered from what farmers working in the field, or the girls could sing in the market',¹¹³ *qu* compositions 'at root are from the heart and are supposed to move the heart'.¹¹⁴ Xu's follower, Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道(1568-1610), expressed a similar view of songs sung by common folk as superior in artifice, stating:

I say the prose and poetry at present day are not excellent. Eventually if there are some literary works that are circulated widely, they are the songs that are sung by women and children in Suzhou city, such as the sort of "Split Break Jade" and "Grass-Beating Stick", they do not have a literary reputation nor do the songs articulate erudition. They are created by genuine people, thus full of the sound of "authenticity". These songs do not imitate Han and Wei, nor do they mimic High Tang. The songs are free of precocity; people sing them by following their own inclinations. However, these songs can connect all human emotions, indulgences and desires, which are truly appreciable things.¹¹⁵

Yuan and Xu both held the attitude of anti-orthodox they were not only against the literary advocacy of the 'Han model for prose writing and High Tang model for poetry composing' held by traditionalists, but also human 'hearts and emotions' which later developed the concept of *qing*. These arguments demonstrate the significance of *qing* (passion, sentiments, subjectivity) as a critical term and as the anchor of literary expression in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Xu's anti-orthodox thoughts also had a great influence on the playwright Tang Xianzu, whose drama *Peony Pavilion* exemplifies the *qing* par excellence.¹¹⁶ Yuan's argument that songs sung by women and children in the city, especially songs 'free of precocity' but connects human emotions, resonant with Xu's narrative that songs should be 'from the heart and supposed to move the heart'.

¹¹³ Xu Wei 徐渭, 'Nanci xulu', 486. 則又即村坊小曲而為之, 本無宮調, 亦罕節奏, 徒取其畸農市女順口而歌矣; Llamas (trans.), 'Xu Wei', 243.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. 夫曲本取於感發人心

¹¹⁵ Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道, *Yuan Hongdao ji qianzhuzhu* 袁宏道集淺注 (Light Annotated Collective Works of Yuan Hongdao), annot. Qian Bocheng 錢伯成 (Shanghai, 1981) 吾謂今之詩文不佳矣。其萬一傳者, 或今闔閭婦人孺子所唱霹破玉、打棗干之類, 猶是無聞無識, 真人所作故多真聲。不效顰于漢魏, 不學步于盛唐, 任性而發, 尚能通於人喜怒哀樂, 嗜好情慾, 是可喜也。

¹¹⁶ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 72.

The ideal of *zhen*, ‘genuineness’ or ‘authenticity’, mentioned in Yuan Hongdao’s critique was later central to Feng Menglong’s editing and anthologizing of *qu* and folk tunes published in *A Child’s Folly*. On commenting on his own songs of ‘Gathering of Virtuous Guests’ (*ji xianbin* 集賢賓) and ‘Golden Orioles’ (*huang ying’er* 黃鶯兒) collected within *Celestial Air played Anew*, Feng claimed that ‘my songs are absolutely without talents; yet only one facet that excels other works, that is, what I call “genuineness”’.¹¹⁷ In Feng’s folksong anthology, he asserts ‘what is popular now are songs of secret feelings’.¹¹⁸ He viewed the language of popular song as ‘debased’; however, as Lowry argues, folk songs could offer ‘a viable and genuine social coin’, in which this debased language ‘being more valuable than the orthodox literary forms and institutions mired their own values’.¹¹⁹ Feng boldly claimed in his attributed preface, as discussed in Chapter 2, that he wished to ‘borrow the true feelings of men and women to rid us of the falsehood of Confucian ethical teachings, the effect will be the same as that of *Hanging Branches*’.¹²⁰

3.4.2 Wang Duanshu on music and *qing* (emotion) and *zhen* (genuineness)

The genuine feeling, emotion and natural phrasing expressed in Ming commoners’ song received scholarly attention from many contemporary Ming intellectuals. To literati editors and critics, literary involvement in vernacular genres provided a justification for their struggling in the pursual of a public career. As Huang defines, the ‘cult of *qing* ... is a deliberate attempt at appropriation on the part of some disenfranchised literati struggling to (re)assert their elite status by reinventing themselves as the custodians of the genuine *ru* 儒 or Confucian cultural heritage’.¹²¹ Wang Duanshu, as a gentlewomen editor, included a folksong of ‘secret feelings’ in the ‘Collection of Random Writings’, a sub-collection with ‘songs from

¹¹⁷ Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Tai xia xin zou Celestial Air Played Anew*, chapter 10, *LDQHBB*, vol. 3, 22. Feng commenting on his own song 子猶諸曲，絕無文彩，然有一字過人，曰“真”。

¹¹⁸ Feng Menglong, ‘Xu shan’ge 敘山歌’, in *FMLQJ* vol. 10, *Mountain Song*, 1. 今所盛行者皆私情譜耳

¹¹⁹ Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 42.

¹²⁰ Feng Menglong, ‘Xu shan’ge’, in *FMLQJ* vol. 10, *Mountain Song*, 1. 借男女之真情，發名教之偽藥，其功于掛枝兒等。

¹²¹ Martin Huang, ‘Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of Qing in Ming-Qing Literature’, *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 20 (1998), 153-184, at 153.

streets and alleys and random writings with poetic flavours'.¹²² This sub-collection is placed after the 'Collection of Elegance', reflecting her editorial attention to this particular trend in contemporary literary society. The song entitled 'Grass-Beating Stick', a popular tune adored by late-Ming critics, was composed by the courtesan Feng Xi and was originally collected in Feng's *Hanging Branches*.¹²³ This song was originally a farewell dedication from the courtesan to Feng the night before her wedding. Wang Duanshu praises the song as 'incomparably ingenious' (*qiao hui jue lun* 巧慧絕倫), perhaps referring to both the artistry of the music as well as the articulation of *qing*.¹²⁴

Wang Duanshu's personal preference for the articulation of *qing* and *zhen* intertwined in *qu* writing is also displayed in Wang's prefatory attribution in the early-Qing dramatist Li Yü's *Soul Mates* (1661). Wang praises Li's song-drama, connecting it to the prominent mid-Ming literatus Xu Wei (1521–1593) and his collection of four plays that are jointly titled *Si sheng yuan* 四聲猿 (*Four Cries of a Gibbon*).¹²⁵ Wang defines Xu's song-dramas as 'the masterpieces throughout the ages', while Li's *Soul Mates* are an echo of Xu's *Four Cries of a Gibbon*.¹²⁶ The connection that Wang Duanshu made between *Soul Mates* and *Four Cries of a Gibbon* in her short prefatory commentary to Li's song-drama was possibly based on the ideal of *qing* that both literati playwrights excellently articulated through *qu*. Wang speaks highly of Li's drama, and posits this drama among the classics, that it 'praises the Confucian ethical code' and that this is something that 'we should just regard and read the play as a passage of classic'.¹²⁷

Wang regard of Li's drama as a classic was probably not just a rhetoric ploy in order to elevate the reputation of the drama. The ethical code that the drama praises reflects one of the essential functions of theatre as a public venue for delivering moral educational messages.

¹²² Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Fan li' (Editorial Principle), 3a.

¹²³ Feng Menglong, *Gua zhi'er* 掛枝兒 *Hanging Branches*, *Bie bu* 別部 (Section on Parting), chapter 4, in *FMLQJ*, vol. 10, 41–42.

¹²⁴ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Za ji 雜集' (Collection of Scattered Notes), 39.5b. MYSWCB

¹²⁵ Wang Duanshu, '*Bi muyü chuanqi xu* 比目魚傳奇敘' (Preface to *Soul Mates*), all in *ZGXQXH*, vol. 12, 1476; vol. 12, 1506.

¹²⁶ Ibid. Jing Shen (trans.), 'Ethic and Theatre: The Staging of Jingchai Jiin Bimuyu', *Ming Studies*, 1 (2008), 62–101, at 64.

¹²⁷ Wang Duanshu, *Bi muyü chuanqi xu*, 1506. Jing Shen (trans.), 'Ethic and Theatre', 64.

The very means in which Li praises the Confucian values within the drama, from Wang's viewpoint, is that 'Li uniquely utilizes the way of sound and music to channel for passion and nature'.¹²⁸ 'The sincere passion is the revelation of nature', as Wang claims.¹²⁹ The ideal of *qing* exemplified in Li's drama was not 'a mere story of passion between man and woman' (*nan nü si qing* 男女私情). The drama itself reflects, as Wang states, 'the ideal of the loyal ministers and true friends' of the 'state affairs' in the 'hope of faithful husband and chaste wife in the class of actors and actresses' in the 'secret feeling' between Liu Maogu and Tan Chuyu.¹³⁰

The analogy between the 'secret feeling' or 'love affair' and 'state affair', particularly the political allegory of 'chaste wife' as a self-expression of 'loyal ministers', was a particular theme that pervaded early-Qing *qu* writing. Li and Wang both experienced the dynastic transition, thus, the analogy formed a shared and mutually understood message between Li, Wang and the early-Qing audience and readership. Moreover, Wang's focus on the function of drama as 'praise of Confucian ethics' and as 'models and abomination of serving the rulers and trusting the friends' reflects her Confucian or even elitist stance in literary criticism. Wang's criticism of courtesans' erotic songs, as seen, for example, in the entry for the Courtesan of Chu within the 'Collection of Elegance', is also consistent with the view she expresses in the short preface to *Soul Mates*. Wang's view also reflects one of the primary functions of theatre, as Llamas argues: to deliver morale educational meanings.¹³¹

Comparing Wang's prefatory commentary to Li's song-drama and Feng's narrative in his attributed preface to *Hanging Branches*, it can be seen that the ideal of 'secret feeling' (or interpreted as 'love affair') is both central to Wang and Feng's critical evaluation. Wang praises the 'secret feeling' articulated in Li's song-drama as part and parcel of praising Confucian ethics. Feng wishes to utilize 'secret feelings' expressed in folksongs to tackle 'the falseness of Confucian ethics'.¹³² These two cases perhaps showcase how the ideal of *qing* could be utilized to suit different ends with completely opposite effects. Such contrasts

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Jing Shen (trans.), 'Ethic and Theatre', 64.

¹³¹ Llamas, 'Xu Wei's A Record of Southern Drama', 238.

¹³² Feng Menglong, 'Xu shan'ge' (Preface to *Mountain Song*), 1. 借男女之真情，發名教之偽藥

perhaps also lie between how Confucian ethics deeply influenced an individual's stance. Wang Duanshu, as a gentlewoman, was confined to Confucian ethics. Feng, on the contrary, as a literatus could take initiatives in critiquing canons as outlets of self-expression and self-justification. In both cases, the editors' praise of *qing* articulated in *qu* further indicates that the notion itself was an anchor in seventeenth-century Chinese elite discourse.

Wang Duanshu's comments within 'Collection of Elegance' also shows her view on *qing* in *sanqu* writing. On commenting on Jiang Qiongqiong's arias (which will be analysed in Chapter 4), Wang states that writing *qu* needs 'thoughts of *qing*'.¹³³ The ideal of *qing* and *zhen* is also closely related to courtesan culture of the late-Ming period. This chapter has demonstrated that the celebration of *qing* and *zhen* in Li's song-drama and Feng Menglong's folksong is centered on the courtesan and actress class as its embodiments. Wang Duanshu's editorial voice underlines such cultural ideation, that it was a unique cultural trademark of the late-Ming period and signified cultural nostalgia after the fall of Ming, a core theme that will be discussed in Chapter 4.

3.4.3 Wang Duanshu on *danghang*

If the notion of *bense* and the articulation of *zhen* and *qing* are both centred on the linguistic register of the lyrics, *danghang* is the notion that centres on the lyric-music relations. Late-Ming literati's discourse shows various interpretations of *danghang*. This term could be interpreted as 'professional', or 'excel in one's own field', and is one of the principal measuring criteria of *qu* composition. One late-Ming literati understanding was that a *qu* of *bense* is also a *qu* of *danghang* 當行. In other words, a *qu* that is composed with natural comprehensiveness is a professionally composed work that excels in the field. Such an argument was recorded in He Liangjuan's essay, in which he criticized two Yuan dynasty song-dramas that his contemporaries regarded highly as '*The West Wing* is full of powder and rouge, while *The Lute* only shows off the erudition, they all lack of language of *bense*. To fill

¹³³ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, *MYSWCB*, on Jiang Qiongqiong 蔣瓊瓊, 38.3a. 須有一段出入一段情絲

the lyrics, thus, they should use language of *bense*, and this is what a professional should do'.¹³⁴ Ling Mengchu expressed a similar view by claiming that 'those songs that show simplicity in nature are *bense* of a professional work, I regard these works as divine sound'.¹³⁵

To those literati who were Shen Jing's followers of the Wujiang school of composition, *danghang* referred to *qu* composition that harmoniously fit between lyrics and existing tune titles, with correctly rhyming syllables and correctly marked *ban yan* (metric signs of accented and unaccented beats).¹³⁶ Not only in composition but also in music practice, the Wujiang school referred to the prosody of music rather than the expressiveness of the language. The leader of the Wujiang school, Shen Jing, held such a view highly; he regarded He Liangjun's view of 'I would rather have an unrefined lyric that harmonizes with the music than a refined lyric then clashes with the music' as the 'treasure of the system of the lyrics'.¹³⁷ In another sense, Wujiang school music critics focused on the performability of *qu* as the ultimate result in creating a song.

Performability was also a key criterion when late-Ming literati editors revised and republished drama that they perceived as 'desk-top plays'. As mentioned above, Feng Menglong revised the entire drama of *Peony Pavilion* to make it suitable for performance. Feng himself was a firm supporter, advocator and member of the Wujiang school, whose *Celestial Air played Anew* collection promoted Wujiang school aesthetics. Zang Maoxun, a late-Ming literatus anthologist of Yuan plays, also revised Tang's *Peony Pavilion* and regarded non-performable southern *chuanqi* drama as 'not *qu* for the banquet'.¹³⁸ From an

¹³⁴ He Liangjun, 'Ci qū 詞曲' (Remarks on songs and Lyrics), in *LDQHHB*, vol.1, 464. 蓋西廂全帶脂粉，琵琶專弄學問，其本色語少。蓋填詞需用本色語，方是作家

¹³⁵ Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, *Nan yin san lai xu* 南音三籟敘, Preface to *Three Sound of Southern Song*, *LDQHHB*, vol. 3, 197. 夫籟者，自然之音節也。

¹³⁶ Feng Menglong, 'Tai xia xinzou xu 太霞新奏序' Editorial Principles to *Celestial Air Played Anew*, *LDQHHB*, vol. 3, 10. Literati editors' scholarly attention to the prosody and correctly-marked music information can be seen in Feng's critiques on the printing errors of contemporary commercially published songbooks. The purpose for a songbook that correctly marks its beat, as Feng argues, would benefit the singers to set lyrics to music easily and writers to find models for composing. 坊刻時曲，腔板訛傳，妍媸不辨。茲刻按譜定板，復細加批閱，使歌者可以審腔，作者有所取法。

¹³⁷ He Liangjun, 'Ci qū 詞曲' (Remarks on songs and Lyrics), 470. 夫既謂之辭，寧聲叶而辭不工，無寧辭工而聲不叶。Hsiao (trans.), *The Eternal Present of the Past*, 61.

¹³⁸ Zang Maoxun 臧懋循, 'Yuming tang chuanqi yin 玉茗堂傳奇引' (Introduction to the Revised Four Plays from White Camellia Hall), in *LDQHHB*, vol.1, 622. 夫既謂之曲矣，而不可奏於筵上，則又安取彼哉？

editor's point of view, Zang regarded a *qu* that cannot be performed at banquet pointless.¹³⁹ While both have driven by music and performance oriented concerns, Feng Menglong interprets *danghang* from a musicological perspective, Zang attempts to "beatify" the language of the theatre, especially by following the example of the Yuan drama, viewed it from his background in dramaturgy.¹⁴⁰ Nevertheless, there is some important overlap in their understandings of this term.

Shen Zijin, in particular, was a music theorist from Shen Jing's family in Wu Jiang, and his own 1655 music formulary was based on his uncle Shen Jing's formulary, deleting, expanding and updating the contents of Shen Jing's original selection. Shen Zijin's collection includes songs but is more importantly a composition manual book (where arias are categorized and ordered based on the music modes so as to guide readers in their own compositional practice). In his editorial principle to *Formulary of Southern Song*, 南詞新譜, Shen reaffirmed the Wujiang school's view of *danghang* as music that is composed and performed by strictly following the music temperament, as he writes:

... when a song being pieced together with various tunes, there is bitterness and happiness in its emotion, theme and variations in its melodies, lento and presto in its tempos, passionate and lyrical in its singing; they have to be passed and modulated without a trace, this is the true skill of a professional (*danghang*). If anyone attempts to forcing and interrupting, or the emotive expression of the lyrics do not fit the music style, even tunes are coincidentally harmonizing and not discordant, it cannot conclude randomly.

然一曲，每從各曲相湊而成。其間，情有苦樂，調有正變，拍有緩急，聲有疾徐，必於關筭合縫之無跡，過腔接脈之有倫，乃稱當行手筆。若夫勉強湊插，聲請乖互，即或牌名巧合，無取濫收。¹⁴¹

Wang Duanshu's commentary on *danghang* shows her agreement with the Wujiang school theorists and shows many overlaps with Shen Zijin's argument, as she comments on two song suites by Jing Pianpian:

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Xie Yufeng 解玉峰, 'Ming dai qulun zhong de danghang lun 明代曲论中的当行论', *The Theory of danghang in Ming Dynasty Critiques of qu*, 学术月刊 *Monthly Journal of Academic Studies*, 9 (1999), 72-76, at 75.

¹⁴¹ Shen Zijin 沈自晉, 'Chong ding nanci quanpu 南詞全譜範例' (Editorial Principle to the Revised *Formulary of Southern Song*), *ZGXQXH*, vol. 1, 40.

Experts at “realising the tune” always lower their voice to make it more bewitching. True mastery (*danghang*) lies not in forcing and interrupting but in passing smoothly from tune pattern to tune pattern in accordance with the rhythm.¹⁴²

度曲家每低聲以媚之，不在勉強湊插，而在過腔合節，乃在當行。¹⁴³

Wang’s critique shows commonality with Shen’s comment against the impression of ‘forcing and interrupting’ and posits the smooth modulation between tunes as the key of *danghang*. This comment further, alongside her occasional indications of instrumentation throughout the collection, enhances Wang’s aesthetic and scholarly sensibility towards *qu* as a performance genre. Despite Wang Duanshu’s ‘Collection of Elegance’ not containing music information in literati songbooks such as *dianban* notation, the abundant paratextual information Wang provided displays her critical thoughts on *qu* as a performance genre and its natural, genuine language in expressing *qing*. Her selections of *qu*, through this particular way of repacking texts, speaks to her contemporary audience of its musical styles, performance contexts and their socio-cultural meanings.

3.5 Chapter Conclusion

Wang Duanshu’s music selection within ‘Collection of Elegance’ was indeed not done uncritically. Her selecting and editorial voice show her aesthetic preference of *qu* that incorporated late-Ming male elite’s aesthetics, criteria and discourse. Wang Duanshu’s selection and commentary criteria also show her scholarly attention to the late-Ming music trends among the literati, in prints and in practice. Socio-culturally, it reflects the rise of learned gentlewomen as cultural producers in the elite world. Like her contemporary gentlewoman lyricist, Gu Zhenli, who often elaborated on the pleasures of self-indulgence in literati culture such as in music and books, Wang’s elaboration on the literati discourse and musical aesthetic trends textually displays her cultural agency at the heart of the late-Ming

¹⁴² Zeitlin (trans.), “Notes of Flesh”, 86.

¹⁴³ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ Collection of Elegance; on Jing Pianpian 景翩翩, see 38.6a. Zeitlin (trans.), ‘The Gift of Song’, 16.

and early-Qing elite life. Though drawing on literati authored and edited materials, Wang inscribes a new voice into literati discourse during the process of critiquing.

The discussion in this thesis so far shows Wang's agreement with literati discourse on *qu* in the following aspects:

1. the critical evaluation of the relation among genres of *shi*, *ci*, *qu* and random writings;
2. writers should compose songs based on implemented Confucian social hierarchy;
3. the significance of the performability of *qu*, as well as literati preferred performance contexts of *qingchang*;
4. the critical measuring criteria of *qu* on *bense*, *qing* and *danghang*.

These 'agreements' in *qu* critiquing, however, were not expressed explicitly, but underline Wang Duanshu's personalized agenda in 'musiking' as an editorial activity, and also a textual, social performance of her identity. Through these comments, her contemporary readership would understand her socio-cultural negotiation accompanied in these comments. The very act of adopting elite discourse in the editorial process also affirms Wang's social position and status, not only as a gentlewoman, but also among the fore of the classically educated male elite.

The following chapters will build on the above-mentioned findings, and further explore how Wang Duanshu's criticism 'was influenced by the male literati tradition'.¹⁴⁴ Wang's agencies in gaining literary authority, inscribed with particular social or political agendas, will also be explored through case studies of her commentaries on social groups of courtesans and gentlewomen. Wang Duanshu's on-going engagements with her contemporary male literati's modes of textual production shows that elite women were beginning to enter and intellectually assimilate into, and even edge towards the centre of elite culture in the seventeenth century.

¹⁴⁴ Kang-I Sun Chang, 'Ming-Qing Women Poets and Cultural Androgyny', 21.

Chapter 4

Wang Duanshu's on late-Ming Courtesans' Song as Cultural Nostalgia

4.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter explores Wang Duanshu's political agenda in editing 'Collection of Elegance' as an outlet for her loyalist sentiments and cultural nostalgia. The chapter's core research question is thus: to what extent do Wang Duanshu's editorial and curatorial practices in 'Collection of Elegance' represent a coherent political programme grounded in cultural nostalgia? This chapter proposes the courtesan writers as a socio-cultural group in a reconstructive context, reading between the lines to try to understand the retrospective cultural nostalgia in printing courtesans' song during a historical decline in courtesan culture. This group, which Wang strategically features in the second half of the collection, represents not only the late-Ming music fashions but also the bygone era when the courtesans were actively engaged as cultural producers.

Wang Duanshu is among the early-Qing female writers whose loyalist work – her *Red Chantings* collection – has received scholarly attention.¹ Although she did not take political action during the transition period, Wang expressed grief over the fall of Ming and wrote of her personal suffering and trauma in her poetry and prose writings, and contributed to the collective memory of Ming remnants who lived through the dynastic transition. Despite Widmer stating that 'nowhere is the connection to Ming loyalism mentioned in *Notable Women*',² more recently Wai-Yee Li, focusing on women's voice and national trauma in literature, has demonstrated the presence of Wang's loyalist commentary voice on women's poetry in *Notable Women*.³

¹ Chang, 'Ming and Qing Anthologies of Women's Poetry and Their Selection Strategies', 157–159. *Red Chantings* was translated as *Collected Writings about the Fall*, *Yinhong ji*, index 542.

² Widmer, 'Ming Loyalism and the Women's Voice in Fiction', 368–374.

³ Li, 'Women Writers and Gender Boundaries during the Ming-Qing Transition', 179–213; and Li, *Women and National Trauma*, 112–118, 166–170, 196–191 and 434–438.

Wang Duanshu's material selections for *Notable Women*, and particularly 'Collection of Elegance', however, show her clear intention of maintaining Ming and late-Ming traditions. This aspect is also echoed in the editorial principle for the entire anthology, as Wang Duanshu restricts her editorial choices to 'more recent authors'; in other words, her contemporaries, so that 'she could speak with certainty'.⁴ 'Collection of Elegance', as discussed in previous chapters, shows Wang's editorial intention in the late-Ming *qu* legacy. Not only did her possible source texts reflect the fashion and trends of late-Ming music-related publishing, but her critical, aesthetical measurement of women's song writing was embedded in Ming literati discourse. The revisiting of late Ming in print during early Qing was done 'under the burden of trying to understand and define the late Ming moment', and was part and parcel of the defining of the late Ming period and its cultural legacy.⁵

This interpretation is situated in many aspects of socio-cultural trends in the early Qing (1644–1679) society. Firstly, the idealization of courtesans as symbols of Ming dynasty and culture pervaded in early Qing writings by literati such Zhang Dai, Yu Huai 余懷 (1616–1709), Mao Xiang 冒襄 (1611–1693) and Wu Weiye 吳偉業 (1609–1671).⁶ Secondly, writing encounters with musicians, performers and artists as 'purveyors of memory' 'became a persistent theme in early Qing literature as a whole'.⁷ In these writings, music becomes reflective, sometimes redemptive, legitimizing sensual indulgences of pleasure.⁸ Thirdly, *qu* as a genre in early Qing was often composed with an 'autobiographical impulse' and emerged

⁴ Wang Duanshu, Preface to *Notable Women*, 2.a.

⁵ Li, 'Early Qing to 1723', in *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature*, 152–153.

⁶ The writings of these literati memoir writings on late-Ming courtesans and re-invention of their images have received scholarly attention; on Zhang's *Dream Memoirs of Tan'an*, see Li, 'Early Qing to 1723', 187–189; and Wai-Yee Li, 'The Collector, the Connoisseur, and Late-Ming Sensibility', *T'oung Pao*, 81/4 (1995), 296–299; Wai-Yee Li, 事變與玩物—論清初文人的審美風尚 'Radical Changes and Connoisseurship – A Discussion of Early Qing Aesthetic Style', 中國文哲研究集刊, *Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy*, 3 (2008), 35–76, at 69; Shuchen Xiang, 'The Irretrievability of the Past: Nostalgia in Chinese Literature from Tang-Song Poetry to Ming-Qing *san-wen*', *International Communication of Chinese Culture*, 2/3 (2015), 211–222; on Yu Huai and Mao Xiang's writings, see Oki Yasushi, 'Mao Xiang and Yu Huai: Early Qing Romantic Yimin' in *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*, eds. Idema, Li and Widmer, 231–248; on Wu Weiye and his writings on courtesans, see Li, 'Women as Emblems of Dynastic Fall', 98–122, and Wai-Yee Li, 'Heroic Transformations: Women and National Trauma in Early Qing Literature', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 59/2 (1999), 363–443.

⁷ Li, 'Early Qing to 1723', 199.

⁸ Wai-Yee Li, 'Introduction', in *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*, eds. Idema, Li and Widmer, 1–70, at 61–62.

a forum for public criticism and as ‘an avenue for memory, nostalgia and historical retrospection’.⁹

This chapter thus explores how ‘Collection of Elegance’ has tweaked these socio-cultural ideas and *topoi* in its editorial narratives, through the notion of ‘gaze’. Here the concept of gaze is adopted from the formulated approach by Berg in analysing the discourse around women and the literary world in the seventeenth-century Chinese context.¹⁰ The ‘gaze’, as Berg argues, not only signifies ‘the act of perceiving’, but also ‘the women’s perceptions of being seen, observed, and described’.¹¹ By tracing the paratextual constructions of courtesans in the gaze of Wang Duanshu, the analysis provides insights into the perceptions of the relationship between editor and subject, viewer and viewed. A principle way of examining the ‘gaze’ is to explore Wang’s commentaries revealing the paradox hidden in the lyrics between the courtesans’ public personas and their private thoughts. This sheds light on the connection between text and power, and Wang Duanshu’s agency in shaping the representation of others – the courtesan writers – and in fashioning self as a female editor whose edited work was in conversation with wider, shared cultural-political concerns.

4.2 Ming-Qing Dynastic Transition: A Historical Background

The Ming dynasty fell when the last ruler, Emperor Chong Zhen 崇禎 (r.1628–1644) hanged himself on *mei shan* 煤山 (Coal Hill) in the suburbs of the capital Beijing in 1644. This sudden political shift was almost catastrophic, especially for the Ming loyalists among the ruling elite: their lives changed dramatically, and surviving literature including memoirs and poetry record eye-witness accounts of the ensuing transition period. Seclusion, monkhood and

⁹ Idema, ‘Drama After Conquest’, 379.

¹⁰ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 4–6; see also Berg, ‘Courtesan Editor: Sexual Politics in Early Modern China’, *Toung Pao*, 99/1–3 (2013), 173–208.

¹¹ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 5.

martyrdom became the paths for scholar-officials to declare their loyalty to the sovereign and the country.¹²

The acceptance of the succeeding Qing regime by Ming subjects was a chaotic process intertwined with loyalist movements, resistance activities and almost forced Qing rule through state censorship of anti-Manchu thoughts, execution of Ming loyalists and a mandate for Manchu hairstyle and clothes during the second half of the seventeenth century. To the Ming subjects, especially to the elite, the regime change and the new current dynasty resulted in a big culture shock. The bloody massacre of Ming subjects who resisted the imposed Manchu hairstyle and clothing,¹³ unveiling the real essence of such antagonism, created an unbridgeable gap and conflict between Chinese and Manchu cultural traditions, ethnic identities and the very Confucian values that distinguished Chinese-ness and foreignness. Under the newly established foreign regime and cultural conflicts, as Zhang's *Dream Memoirs of Tan'an* concludes, many Ming-Qing transition survivors were frustrated with the new dynasty and experienced the sensation of displacement.¹⁴ Such displacement or dislocation is more cultural, psychological and mental than physical, which made the 'reliving', defining and even romanticizing of the late Ming period through art and literature extremely desirable.

Memorial literature produced during the Ming-Qing transition (1644–1662) and the early Qing period (1644–1679) presents diverse nostalgic expressions in terms of genre, approach and narrative, in which the writing itself usually has a deep link with the personal experiences of its author. These writings, for present-day readers and researchers, are significant sources

¹² On discussion between literati-loyalists' political-personal actions and late-Ming/early-Qing neo-Confucianism influence, see Grace Fong, 'Reclaiming Subjectivity in a Time of Loss: Ye Shaoyuan (1589–1648) and Autobiographical Writing in the Ming-Qing Transition', *Ming Studies*, 59 (2009), 21–38; and Gao Xiang, 'Expounding Neo-Confucianism: Choice of Tradition at a Time of Dynastic Change—Cultural Conflict and the Social Reconstruction of Early Qing', *Social Sciences in China*, 34/2 (2013), 105–133, at 122–129.

¹³ Manchu hairstyle affected men the most: it required men to shave their heads except for a section on the top of their head which was let to grow long and braided. In Confucian classics, a person's body, hair and skin are seen as gifts from parents and therefore one should protect them from any damage, as the start point of fulfilling filial piety. Thus, to mandate such a hairstyle on Ming subjects was extremely humiliating. Gao Xiang, 'Expounding Neo-Confucianism', 108; see also Chang and Chang, *Crisis and Transformation*, 103.

¹⁴ Robert E. Hegel, 'Dreaming the Past: Memory and Continuity Beyond the Ming Fall', in *Trauma and Transcendence in Early Qing Literature*, eds. Idema, Li and Widmer, 345–371, at 351.

of studying the late-Ming elite culture. Yet, for the Ming remnant authors, writing their daily lives during late Ming was a means of ‘reliving’. In particular, encounters ‘with musicians, performers, and artists’, as Wai-Yee Li has highlighted, ‘became a persistent theme in early Qing literature as a whole’.¹⁵ Such literary sources have been frequently studied in previous scholarship for they are not only reliable sources in exploring the literary trend of Ming loyalists and those living in the early Qing period, but they are also vivid narratives providing glimpses of the late Ming culture and society through personal portrayals of daily lives.

Loyalist sentiments and nostalgia for the Ming empire, however, continued in the writings of literati with historical engagements seeking answers for the dynastic fall. The richness of the surviving drama, poetry and anthologies of Ming literature produced during this transition period by men and women who had witnessed the dynastic fall first-hand provides present-day readers with diverse and abundant details in understanding the impact of the dynastic fall and the new regime at both a personal and a national level.

The social instability that the political disorder of the Ming-Qing dynastic transition also created space or even new possibilities for women, the subordinated social group that has been historically and traditionally excluded from participation in the division of the public realm of civil service exams, politics and holding a government post. These socio-political exclusions also exempted women from the political dilemma of personal choice in whether to serve under the new regime. ‘Loyalism in dynastic transition encouraged a measure of independence and self-assertion, even only by a few female writers’.¹⁶ Although writing politics places women beyond their gendered virtue, female writers left many poetic witnesses of the dynasty transition. The textual production of these works shows the ways in which literary expressions as agency test women’s boundaries in political discourse. Women, as a subordinate socio-cultural group, were outsiders of the political world. Expressing nostalgia and grief for their fallen country became a way in which women’s political opinions could be expressed.

¹⁵ Li, ‘Early Qing to 1723’, 199.

¹⁶ Li, *Women and National Trauma*, 100–101.

Even before the fall of Ming, the discontent with gender roles and expressions of personal struggling and frustration over gender inequality during the Ming-Qing transition,¹⁷ sometimes became, as Li suggests, ‘a precondition for, and a consequence of, political engagement’.¹⁸ Wang Duanshu, as one of the late-Ming born women of letters who publicly expressed discontentment for ‘womanly work’, as has shown in literary criticism, also transformed her literary energy into loyalist writings, as seen in her *Red Chantings*. Women’s loyalist sentiments, whether translated into political action to fight in battlefields or being actively involved in loyalist resistance, or the adoption of a non-militant approach by pledging allegiance to Ming and claiming the self-designation of ‘female remnant subjects’, or by means of addressing political critiques and concerns in writing, these women went beyond gender-specific virtue, transcended gender roles and challenged gender boundaries and limitations of the patriarchal social system.

4.3 Wang Duanshu on the Musicality of Courtesans’ Songs: The late-Ming Music Fashion Relived

This section explores how Wang Duanshu’s commentaries on late-Ming courtesans’ song was articulated through a ‘connoisseuristic’ perspective of the late-Ming male elite, such as Zhang Dai, Yu Huai or Mao Xiang. Although it is very unlikely that Wang Duanshu would have visited the pleasure quarters in person, reading courtesan songs for Wang Duanshu encompassed the emotional resonance with the literati’s memoir vignettes for recalling attending musical socials and encounters with late-Ming courtesans and actors. The appealing images of courtesans – their sensual auras, their abilities in music and ‘the melodious notes of flute and amorous songs that filled in the evening air’ – was a pervading theme in Yu Huai’s *Plank Bridge* (1693) memoir on the Nanjing Qinhuai pleasure quarters and was also reflected in Wang’s commentary voice.¹⁹ Wang’s editorial ‘gaze’ presents her commentaries through

¹⁷ On the late-Ming female loyalist poet and lyricist, Gu Zhenli 顧貞立 (1624–after 1685), see Li, ‘Women Writers and Gender Boundaries during the Ming-Qing Transition’, 201–206.

¹⁸ Li, ‘Early Qing to 1723’, 183.

¹⁹ Hegel, ‘Dreaming the Past’, 355.

the literati connoisseur's voice in expressing her 'admiration' for the courtesans' performances, the musicality of courtesans' musical composition, and the critical function of writing as a way of reliving and reprocessing a lost world.

During the late Ming, courtesans' songs were perceived as luxury objects, commodities and romantic tokens – 'affording pleasure for those in exalted positions'.²⁰ Courtesans' gift songs, as Chapter 3 argued, were tools at their disposal for power bargaining to enter the circles of the elite and for gaining fame. These songs are carefully crafted cultural artefacts, whether as singing repertoires for entertaining the elite or as gifts; they are a microcosm of the late-Ming 'lifestyle of refinement, or sensual, social indulgence'.²¹ In the early Qing context, however, courtesans' music and performance became one of the cultural symbols of the late Ming, and nostalgia for the lost world of the late-Ming culture. 'The lush tonalities of the late Ming music', as Cass observes, was 'aligned with the fall of the dynasty ... carried the frisson of national tragedy'.²² Such a loyalist sentiment, however, 'did not eschew sensuality and refinement', and draws a thin line between personal experience and Ming loyalism.²³

4.3.1 Wang Duanshu on Jing Pianpian (fl.1578–1620)

Courtesans in the late Ming era used musiking to enact musical performance through song. Jing Pianpian's fame as a celebrated late-Ming courtesan and her literary currency as a poet can be seen from her writings that are included in the major late-Ming literati-edited women's literary anthologies before the publishing of *Notable Women*, such as *Ming yuan hui shi* 名媛彙詩 (*Classified Poetry of Women, Ancient and Modern* 1620), *Ming yuan shi gui* 名媛詩歸 (*Sources of Poems by Notable Women c.1625*), and *Gujin nüshi* 古今女史 (*Female Scribes, Ancient and Modern* 1628).²⁴ In Qian Qianyi's *Lie chao shiji* 列朝詩集 (*Collective Poems of*

²⁰ Li, 'Heroic Transformations', 416.

²¹ Li, 'Introduction', 15-16.

²² Victoria Cass, 'The Theatre and the Crowd: Jiangnan Performance Culture and Regional Identity in the Ming', *Asia Major*, 29/1 (2016), 101-145, at 123–124.

²³ Li, 'Introduction', 15-16.

²⁴ All these anthologies are available on the Ming-Qing Women's Writing database, McGill University. <http://digital.library.mcgill.ca/mingqing/search/titles.php?language=eng> title numbers are 174, 175, and 61 respectively.

the Successive Reigns 1652) – an early Qing literary anthology showing the remaining strong interests in women’s writing – a biographical sketch by Qian is presented. Jing’s textual presence among these late-Ming and early-Qing published anthologies indicates her established name, fame and well-carved space in the public, intellectual world of literati. Wang Duanshu’s biographical account on Jing is identical to the one previously published in Qian’s edited *Successive Reigns*.²⁵ It is, thus, another example of how Wang textually engages with literati discourse during her editorial process.

Wang’s editorial act of ‘seeing’ is further supported by the connoisseuristic perspective expressed in Wang Duanshu’s last commentary on Jing Pianpian’s two arias: Wang praised the performance saying, ‘raising a wine cup and turning your head to look at her, what more would you ask!’.²⁶ Wang Duanshu’s editorial gaze, most likely imaginary, has indeed transformed her editorial role from an outsider-reader, to an insider-audience. It could also indicate Wang Duanshu’s practice of reading the aria lyrics as a self-reflection of a private moment of enjoyment of reading and thus evoked her sensation of viewing. Wang Duanshu’s contemporary, the female lyricist Gu Zhenli, wrote verses to express her self-indulgence in music and wine.²⁷ This poetic expression could not only be regarded as a gentlewoman’s protest against domestic womanly work, but also as a reflection of the fact that gentlewomen of seventeenth-century China incorporated literati culture into their daily life within the boudoir.²⁸

Wang Duanshu’s female editorial gaze, however, was possibly directed from her intertextual reading of circulation of the courtesan’s aria, rather than imaginary evocation. Jing’s poem ‘Song of Green Stream’ (*qingxi qu* 清溪曲) – portrays a scene that mirrors her professional life as a courtesan: ‘Together we feast deep into the night. After I’ve softly tuned the *zheng* [twenty-one string zither], we sit and tie a lover’s knot, inviting the moon (light)

²⁵ Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *Lie chao shiji xiaozhuan* 列朝詩集小傳 (*Collective Poems of the Successive Reigns*, Short Biographical Sketches) repr. (Shanghai, 1983), 764. [hereafter: LCSJXZ]; Wang Duanshu, ‘Yan ji’ Collection of Erotica, 24.8a.

²⁶ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ Collection of Elegance, 38.6a.

²⁷ Xiaorong Li, *Women’s Poetry of Late Imperial China: Transforming the Inner Chambers* (Seattle, 2012), 107.

²⁸ Ibid.

into the room'.²⁹ This verse cleverly incorporates images that are associated with courtesans that could make the readers directly link to the author's profession. Writing about musical instruments and the courtesan's action of 'tuning' defines Jing's very identity as an entertainer. Jing's 'Boudoir thoughts, also present to Scholar Chen', a gift poem to a lover-client, again incorporates Jing's musical activity into the verses, and is another example of Jing portraying her self-image of solitude: 'Flute sounds in this quiet room fill the morning with feeling', 'For short songs and long ones, I tune and return to the zither.'³⁰ The instruments mentioned by Jing provides insights into the ways in which she entertains both clients and herself.

Unlike Jing's poems in which music instruments – the material indication of her status as a music entertainer are frequently mentioned, Jing's arias were both written in 'boudoir lament' style, such as the first aria 'Winter thoughts' to the tune 'A Coil of Golden Rope':

A crimson candle is set on a silver stand, the brocade curtains are closed in my room the colour of jade. The flame burns in the hearth, but I am all alone, no one shares my loneliness.

银台绛蜡笼，翠屋金钩控。锦帐红炉，独自无人共。

Moon beams gleam, then hide, and the moonlight does not shine through the curtained house to light up the sickly appearance of my face.

月明初转却，小房枕，不放清光照病容。

With great sorrow, I listen to the woodwind playing various tunes. A night of wind has blown the plum blossom petals all over the place.

愁听画角声三弄，吹落梅花一夜风。

Dreaming of faraway mountains, while I am here in our love nest, how difficult it is for us to send messages.

关山梦，鱼沉雁杳信难通。

One who sleeps alone most fears deep winter. Now in the depths of winter I cannot dream of love birds.

孤眠人最怕隆冬，又值隆冬，做不就鸳鸯梦。³¹

²⁹ Zhou Shouchang 周壽昌, *Gong gui wenxuan* 宮閨文選 (Selected Verses from Palaces and Bourdoirs), 'Qing xi qu 清溪曲' (Song of Green Stream), 16.14b. Paul S. Ropp (trans.), 'Ambiguous Images of Courtesan Culture in Late Imperial China', in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, eds. Widmer and Chang, 17-45, at 21.

³⁰ Jing Pianpian 景翩翩, 'Guise yizuo ji Chen sheng 閨思一作寄陳', (Boudoir Thoughts, and Present to Scholar Chen), in *Gong gui wenxuan*, 26.4a. Ropp (trans.), 'Ambiguous Images', 23.

³¹ Jing Pianpian 景翩翩, 'Dong si 冬思' (*Winter Thoughts*), in Wang Duanshu 王端淑, 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, 38.6a. (trans.) author

Although above-mentioned poems are not included in *Notable Women*, Wang's suggestion within the 'Collection of Elegance' reflects the 'accuracy' of her editorial critiques. Commenting on two suites by Jing, Wang indicates the instrumental accompaniments of the arias, that the first aria 'Winter thoughts' to the tune 'A Coil of Golden Rope', sounds like 'string instruments played without a single broken note', while the second aria 'Present to a Friend' to the tune 'The Waters of the River', sounds like 'a duet of voice and bamboo'.³² Wang's suggestion of bamboo flute and string instruments to harmonize with the voice, once again, portrays the scene of private and exclusive entertainment, and indicates these suites were created for 'pure singing'.

It is also under the entry of Jing Pianpian that Wang mentions the notion of *danghang* (see Chapter 3). Such position of the comments also indicates that Jing's arias, and the melodious music accompanied by flute and strings, are works from 'professional hands'. These two selected songs of Jing, thus, display the late-Ming courtesans' professional expertise in music. Jing lived a few decades before Wang Duanshu, and it was not appropriate for Wang, as a gentlewoman, to witness a courtesan's performance within the pleasure quarters (although rare cases of gentlewomen attending courtesans' performances existed during the late-Ming period).³³ Therefore, one can easily argue that such 'witnessing' is imaginary or metaphorical. However, by employing musical 'jargon' in her commentary, along with the indication of instrumentation, Wang also showcases her broad knowledge as an editor.

³² Ibid. 'Present to a Friend' to the tune 'The Waters of the River' Zeitlin (trans.), 'The Gift of Song', 16.

³³ For instance, gentlewomen friends Xu Yuan 徐媛 (1560–1620) and Lu Qingzi 陸卿子 (fl.1590) both composed verses for courtesans. See Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 111–112; Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 271.

4.3.2 Wang Duanshu on Jiang Qionqiong (fl.1570s–1620s)

The emphasis of *qu* as a performance genre is further enhanced by Wang's comment on Jiang Qionqiong's aria. Jiang was a courtesan who flourished during the Wanli reign; while Jing was based in Jianchang (southern China, modern Jiangxi province), Jiang was a courtesan from the Nanjing 'Old Compound' – the heart of Ming fashionable entertainment. Wang's editorial comments on Jiang Qionqiong's arias suggests the witnessing of Jiang's entire compositional process of 'realizing' the tune. Wang suggests that the music and lyrics were created simultaneously during the process of *qu* composition; Wang states, 'humming with a low voice, so naturally, melody and rhythms come into being'.³⁴ The very act of humming the tune indicates that Jiang's aria was intended to be performed. Wang comments that 'there is not a single moment that Qionqiong cannot come with up fine ideas of music – the thoughts linger around the frivolous and flirtatious moments. When she is chanting with a low voice, so naturally, melody and rhythms bring into being – they fill the room/the air without picking up a *guan*'.³⁵

The expression of 'picking up a *guan*' also allows for a multi-faceted reading: the Chinese word *guan* not only refers to the brush for writing, but also the woodwind instrument. In this case, Wang's editorial commentary portrays a scene of appreciating an aria through the courtesan's performance on a woodwind instrument or by 'seeing' her writing down the lyrics with her brush. Furthermore, *guan*, or the bamboo flute, on an allegorical level, was an erotic double entendre in Ming dynastic erotic narratives. The portraying of a courtesan's musical performance on the flute for her client and the action of 'blowing the flute', as Zeitlin and Berg both suggest, is a euphemism of a courtesan's sexual service.³⁶ Wang Duanshu, as a gentlewoman editor, clearly had no intention to explicitly depict an erotic music-making picture in her editorial commentary. Her attitude towards bawdy songs is clearly addressed for the arias by Chu Ji. Yet, her suggestion that courtesan-composers' thoughts flowing in 'frivolous and flirtatious moments',³⁷ a voluptuous moment of courtesan-client romantic

³⁴ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance), 38.2b. All translations are my own, except where otherwise indicated.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Zeitlin, "'Notes of Flesh'", 78; and 'The Gift of Song', 4; Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 115.

³⁷ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' 雅集, 38.2b.

rendezvous, could have derived from her conjured reading of courtesans' songs in the late-Ming popularity of *qing*.

Jiang's aria is among a few entries within 'Collection of Elegance' that Wang provides her source-collection for.³⁸ Wang's annotation clearly refers Jiang's work to the *Wu sao er'ji* 吳騷二集 (*Second Collection of Poetry of Wu* 1616 preface), indicating Wang's source for Jiang's aria.³⁹ Jiang's suites, according to Wang Duanshu, were prefaced, and the texts collected, in Wang Duanshu's edited *Classical Prose of Notable Women*,⁴⁰ which is no longer extant. Writing the preface to *ziduo qu*, self-composed songs (in which melodies were composed based on the poems written by the composer),⁴¹ had been practiced by literati since the middle period.⁴² The preface to a self-composed song imposes an autobiographical voice, for it narrates the contexts in which the song came into being, and the lyrical emotion the writer wishes to express.

The narratives of Jiang's self-authored preface clearly indicates a courtesan's 'complaint' and lament in waiting for her client-lover, as Jiang departed him (or vice versa) in the autumn, meeting again in the spring.⁴³ Jiang laments on her sorrow in waiting alone, and yet the days they spent together felt like time was flying.⁴⁴ Desolated by the absence of her lover, while no one can share her deep feelings, she turns to 'delicate and subtle sweet music' to ease her sorrow.⁴⁵ The melancholic mood of Jiang's preface indicates the song, which is sung to the courtesan's *chou* – sorrow or melancholia – is tied to the Chinese music aesthetic that 'music was *supposed* to sound sad'.⁴⁶ Jiang's arias are musically set to the *xianlü* mode –

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid. 閨思有序見文瑋春思

⁴¹ Lau, 'History Through Qupai', 19.

⁴² The most representative lyricist who practices *ziduo qu* 自度曲 and with extant notated music is Jiang Kui 姜夔 (1151–1121). Lam, 'Ci Song from the Song Dynasty', 629–643; and also 'Music, Sound, and Site: A Case Study from Southern Song China (1127–1275), in *New Perspectives on the Research of Chinese Culture*, eds. Pei-Kai Cheng and Jiawei Fan (New York, 2013), 100–116.

⁴³ Zhang Qi 張琦 and Wang Ning 王寧 eds., *Wusao er'ji* 吳騷二集 *Second Collection of Poetry of Wu* (1616 preface), in 'Chu'er heke 初二合刻' first-second combined printed edition, digitalised facsimilia, seq. 220. 別時白帝徂秋，又見塞腓春卉流光飛駛黯然傷深情事無可對人，落寞何堪自解聊尋幽韻用展愁思

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Zeitlin, 'The Pleasure of Print', 46.

accompanied by the musical style and lyrical mood that creates an effect of ‘uplifting and lingering’. Yet, through ‘exclaiming over the feelings of sorrow’ in her preface, the singer/author ‘calls forth to praise her artistry’.⁴⁷



Figure 4.1. The pictorial illustration of Jiang Qiongqiong’s aria ‘Boudoir Thoughts’ to the tune ‘Fragrant Osmanthus Branch’ presented in the *Second Collection of Poetry of Wu* (1616 preface). The lyrics of ‘I tried humming your new song, just two or three’ is engraved in the upper left-hand corner.⁴⁸

This woodblock picture (Figure 4.1) illustrated and inserted in-between the pages, presents Jiang’s ‘Boudoir Thoughts’ aria within the *Second Collection of Poetry of Wu*. It portrays a solitary image of a young female figure sojourning alone with a narrow boat on a river surrounded by mountains, rocks, lotus and willow trees. Similar to Jing’s poetic depictions of her musical professional, this illustration is composed of metaphors that is closely associated to the images of courtesans in late Ming. Firstly, the combined image of the

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Zhang Chushu 張楚叔 ed. Wu sao ji 吳騷集 *Poetry of Wu*, (in ‘Chu’er heke 初二合刻’ first and second collections combining printed edition), facsimile, seq. 221.

boat and the lonely female figure underpins the action of sojourning and travelling. Such visual material accompanying the texts of a courtesan's song, and particularly the image of a boat, symbolizes the courtesan's detachment, freedom, independence and self-definition.⁴⁹ Secondly, the detailed surroundings of mountains and willows certainly enhances the melancholic mood of Jiang's song, as they are traditionally well-established metaphors depicting loneliness and solitude in Chinese classical quatrain poetry.⁵⁰

The illustration also echoes the lyrics of Jiang's aria 'I tried humming your new song, just two or three', as they are engraved in the pictorial illustration in the upper left-hand corner, and shows the female figure reading a book with a teapot or wine vessel on a table placed behind her. While the book that the courtesan holds in this illustration could indicate the courtesans' literacy, Jiang's lyrics suggest a different picture from what the pictorial illustration within *Poetry of Wu* attempts to tell its readers. Rather than reading her lover's newly composed songs on a solitary narrow boat, Jiang's third aria (of a set of six) clearly depicts her 'reading' the songs alone, 'leaning on pillars while waiting for her lover's boat to arrive'.⁵¹ In the Ming context, the courtesan would frequently read her lover-client's lyrics in order to 'realize the tune'; in other words, to set the lyrics to music and to be able to perform the lyrics. Thus, Jiang's words 'humming' also indicates her action of singing her lover's lyrics.

However, arias that were composed in such a context could result in an authorship dispute, as has certainly been shown in this specific case. In the late-Ming art song collection *Celestial Air played a New*, the last two arias within Jiang's 'Boudoir Thoughts' are attributed to Zhang Wenjie 張文介 (date unknown) by the editor Feng Menglong.⁵² In the *Complete Qu of Ming Dynasty*, this suite has been categorized as a 'repeated aria', which means that the songs have at least two attributed authors.⁵³ A similar situation also appeared in the case of

⁴⁹ On courtesans' independence, their physical and social mobility, and the boat motif, see Dorothy Ko, 'The Written Word and the Bound Foot: A History of the Courtesan's Aura', in *Writing Women in Late Imperial China*, eds. Widmer and Chang, 74-100, at 54-55.

⁵⁰ Ropp, 'Ambiguous Images of Courtesan', 23-25.

⁵¹ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji', 38.3a. 獨凭池欄候郎船

⁵² Feng Menglong, *Tai xia xinzou (Celestial Air Played Anew)*, SBXQCK, vol.5, no.4, 743.

⁵³ Xie Boyang 謝伯陽 ed., *Quan Ming Sanqu 全明散曲 (Complete Sanqu of Ming Dynasty)*, 4231.

[hereafter: QMSQ] Yet, it seems Feng's authorship attribution did not affect modern perceptions of its

Jing Pianpian, as her first aria ‘Red Candle on a Silver Stand’ was previously published in the mid-Ming songwriter Chen Duo 陳鐸’s (1454–1507) personal collection,⁵⁴ while a few late-Ming published songbooks, such as *Poetry of Wu* (second collection) and *Stylish Verses from Green Bowers*, all attribute the aria to Jing. This authorial attribution phenomenon could reflect the fact that celebrated courtesans like Jing and Jiang, who entertained the most exalted elite clients of their time, incorporated well-received and fashionable new literati-composed lyrics into their self-authored repertoires, so as to keep their music list up-to-date and make it the most appealing to entertain the elite clients. Through these performance repertoires, courtesans also demonstrate their artistic accomplishments as vocalists, as Cass observes, courtesans’ performance ‘requires specialization’, in which their singing repertoires are ‘selective, complex, and difficult’.⁵⁵

The preface to Jiang’s song and the pictorial illustration in *Poetry of Wu* would provide insights for readers, including Wang’s editorial interpretation of the lyrics. Wang depicts the courtesan’s realization of the song: it ‘naturally came into being with thoughts of *qing*’. This echoes the late-Ming literati discourse on *qu* as an ‘expression of hearts’.⁵⁶ Jiang’s ‘Boudoir Thoughts’ to the tune ‘Fragrant Osmanthus Branch’ goes:

The lake is as clear as a mirror, the peach trees in full bloom are like brocade.

澄湖如鏡。濃桃如錦。

Frightened by the invitation of a vulgar client, leaning against embroidered curtains, I say that I am ill.

心惊俗客相邀。故倚綉帷称病。

I serve you my darling with all my heart, for your elegant bearing, refined, pure and pretty. 一心心待君。一心心待君。为君高韵。风流清俊。

Let me follow you my darling, even half a day spent with you under the peach blossom tree is better than a whole lifetime.

得随君。半日桃花下。强如过一生。

Orchids are blooming and the red lotus buds are just showing. Alas, in my quiet and secluded chamber, my love is not here for me to entertain.

authorship; the modern scholarly edition *Complete Qu of Ming Dynasty* has acknowledged Jiang’s authorship of this aria.

⁵⁴ Xie, QMSQ, 3420–3421.

⁵⁵ Victoria Cass, *Dangerous Women: Warriors, Grannies and Geishas of the Ming* (Lanham, Md., 1999), 28.

⁵⁶ Zhang Qi, Heng qu chen tan 衡曲塵譚 (*Worldly Remarks on Qu*), in ZGXLJ, vol.4, 267. 曲者也，達其心而為言者也

碧兰将绽。红蕖初展，空怜金屋清幽。不共玉人欢宴。

The wind blowing from the south satisfies me, I roll up all the pearl curtains.

喜南熏可人。喜南熏可人。把珠簾尽卷。

Alone, I lean against a column by the lake, waiting for your boat my love, I try out your new songs, humming two or three.

独凭池槛。候朗船。试把新郎曲。微吟三两篇。⁵⁷

Jiang's opening song reveals 'being frightened by the invitation of a vulgar client, I have to find an excuse to say that I'm ill':⁵⁸ this displays her vulnerability and plight as a courtesan. The last line 'spend half day with you under the peach blossom tree [a metaphor of happy fate that brings lovers together or marriage], is better than a whole lifetime',⁵⁹ articulates the courtesan's love, passion and desire. Such comprehensible language shows the song is a work of *bense*, while the lyrical expression 'directed her passion to self-expression' and fashioned Jiang as a 'subject of *qing* and a female writer in her own right.'⁶⁰ Wang's editorial gaze of courtesans' performance, thus, is a medium through which the songs are realized, desires of the courtesans are expressed and the seduction is transacted.⁶¹

Courtesans' performances of arias, especially those composed by their lover-clients in which the lyrics often bear the function of a gift or token, as Zeitlin argues, are 'one of the most important currencies at a courtesans' disposal'.⁶² As mentioned in the previous chapter, the patronage of elite men, especially scholar-officials, helped courtesans gain their social and cultural power in late-Ming society. The gift songs exchanged between late-Ming courtesans and their literati clients also acted as a medium in power bargaining at a socio-economic level. Jing Pianpian's 'Presenting to a Friend' (without addressing to which specific friend, as no surname is mentioned) and Jiang's 'Boudoir Thoughts' (without addressing a specific recipient) could also be regarded as gifting songs in 'replying' to a lover-client's favour. Different from the gift songs by Ma Shou, in which the latter's songs have a targeted

⁵⁷ Jiang Qiongqiong, 'Gui si 閨思'(Boudoir Thoughts), in Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji', 38.2b. (trans.) author

⁵⁸ Jiang Qiongqiong 蔣瓊瓊, 'Gui si 閨思 Boudoir Thoughts' to the tune 'Gui zhi xiang 桂枝香' Fragrant Osmanthus Branch, in 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, 38.2b. 心驚俗客相邀

⁵⁹ Ibid, 38.3a. 半日桃花下，強如過一生

⁶⁰ Cass, *Dangerous Women*, 39–40.

⁶¹ Zeitlin, 'The Pleasure of Print', 46.

⁶² Zeitlin, "'Notes of Flesh'", 95.

dedicatee, Jing and Jiang's songs only refer to the recipients in their songs with the generalized wording of address as *jun* 君 – gentleman – and *lang* 郎 – darling.⁶³

When a courtesan's song was not written for gift-exchanging with a specific lover-client, the performance of such repertoire indeed has multiple functions and meanings. The flirtatious arias composed by courtesans, as Ropp defines, are 'intended to be circulated and to impress a wider audience than the "man" addressed'.⁶⁴ Thus, both Jing Pianpian and Jiang's arias entitled 'Present to a Friend' could have been composed in the fashion of a gift-song but without a specific recipient. Although Jiang Qiongqiong's aria seems to address a lover-client, whose newly-written lyrics were hummed by Jiang while 'waiting for his boat', the vagueness in the details of the lyrics might also indicate that such compositions could have a versatile use to entertain wider audiences, showcase musical skills and to create a scene of seduction.

Wang Duanshu's commentary style adheres closely to the established critical style of late-Ming music aficionado appreciation. The style also echoes the early-Qing memoir literature of reliving the past of the late Ming. Wang's editing highlights the sensual aesthetic experience of the courtesans' songs she had collected. In doing so, she valorises the late-Ming courtesan and their presentation of gender reality through their professional and performative roles. In the cultural context of early Qing, this valorisation carries an implicit political agenda invoked by her cultural nostalgia for the lost values of this prior, and by audience-inference, superior time.

⁶³ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, 38.3a and 38.3b.

⁶⁴ Ropp, 'Ambiguous Images of Courtesan Culture' 22.

4.4. Reading Late-Ming Courtesans' Self-Invention in Music

The artistry of the late-Ming courtesans' songs also lies in their 'unique ability to create and define a "self" both privately and as image for public consumption'.⁶⁵ Gender relations in the late-Ming era restricted women from fashioning themselves in public. For women from respectable backgrounds, the feminine selves were expected to remain hidden, private and restricted to the roles of wife, mother and daughter. However, late-Ming courtesans used artistic self-expression as an emancipatory device to operate outside and beyond these customary restrictions, 'overcoming the boundaries between private and public spheres'.⁶⁶ Through the mediums of art, music and advanced literacy, courtesans could navigate the power relations of gender to emerge into the public, and 'elevate herself as the symbol of refinement and high culture, freedom and possibility of action'.⁶⁷ Their authorship and lyrical expertise empowered them to be able to fashion their own public identities.

While courtesans never truly enjoyed the complete freedom of men and male artists in this era, Wang Duanshu, through her editorial strategies and commentaries, displays the means that courtesans employed to subvert expectations and use art as a means of not just self-expression, but self-invention. In this way, Wang reveals to the nuanced reader the gender relations extant within this elite cultural world, and allows us to engage with her editorial gaze as a complementary process in women's artistic self-fashioning that continues their efforts not just into the Qing era but into our views of women and courtesans today.

⁶⁵ Jean Wetzel, 'Hidden Connections: Courtesans in the Art World of the Ming Dynasty', *Women's Studies*, 31/5 (2010), 645-669, at 645.

⁶⁶ Harriet Zurndorfer, 'Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Confucian Moral Universe of Late Ming China (1550-1644)', *International Review of Social History*, 56/19 (2011), 197-216, at 209.

⁶⁷ Harriet Zurndorfer, 'Women in Chinese Learned Culture: Complexities, Exclusivities and Connecting Narratives', *Gender and History*, 26/1 (2014), 23-35, at 27.

4.4.1 Wang Duanshu on Ma Xianglan (1548–1604) and her operatic persona

Wang Duanshu's editorial gaze Ma Xianglan's arias showcases the operatic nature of their composition. Wang comments on the courtesan Ma Xianglan's suite 'Boudoir Thoughts' to the tune 'Winding Brocade Road', stating that the aria depicts 'the bright voice just tipped off her tongue', reflecting the primary reason to compose such arias for performing repertoire. This commentary could refer to both the musical style and lyrical articulation of this suite as lucid and graceful, smooth yet lively, and easy to sing. Wang comments further: 'as if I see Zhang Yiniang and Chemist Li at the same time'.⁶⁸ The Zhang and Li mentioned are fictional characters in Tang's tale, *Qiu ran ke zhuan* 虬髯客传 (*The Story of Curly Beard*), which was adapted into northern song-drama and southern drama by later Ming literati, including the four-act northern drama *Hong xian nü* 紅線女 (*Hongxian Cleverly Stole the Golden Box*) by Liang Chenyu 梁辰魚 (1521–1594) and *Hong fu ji* 紅拂記 (*Story of Hongfu*) by Zhang Fengyi 張鳳翼 (1527–1613), respectively.⁶⁹ In a detailed analysis of Ma's suites, Wei Hua suggests that Ma's work is similar in its music-lyric setting with a suite from scene two of the southern song-drama, *Story of Hongfu* (maiden with red duster). It could therefore be an imitation work based on the literati convention of *qu* writing.⁷⁰ Wang's commentary identification, therefore, could also have resulted from her sense of the similarity between the two. Ma's song-suite gives us another example of how late-Ming courtesans' performance repertoire and its offering of the latest musical entertainment was central to the professional expertise and trade. It is reasonable to assume that Ma rewrote the lyrics herself, as part of her profession as music entertainer and a courtesan; and under the probability of her ownership of a domestic music troupe, representing her exclusive position and cultural capital that not even every member of the elite class could possess.

Wang's identification of fictional characters in the song-dramas that were composed by Ma's contemporaries also reflects Wang's contextualized reading of *qu* composed during the late-Ming period. In turn, Ma herself also seemed to favour the song-drama that was based on *The Story of Curly Beard*. What specifically attracted Ma to this fictional story perhaps lies in

⁶⁸ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, 38.4b.

⁶⁹ Li, 'Heroic Transformations', 365.

⁷⁰ Wei Hua 華瑋, *Women's Voices and Historical Memories*, 44.

the self-identification with the Tang fictive heroine *Hongfu*, who was ‘taken as an archetype of a Chinese androgyny ... act as role models for heroines against cultural restraints for an independent identity’.⁷¹ Ma Xianglan is among the late-Ming courtesans whose androgynous charisma was celebrated in literati discourse. Qian’s *Successive Reign* anthology remarks Ma ‘in nature chivalric and knightly’.⁷² The concept of ‘female knight-errant’ was often applied to Ming courtesans who were ‘characterized by generosity, compassion, autonomy of spirit, and an unconventional moral and social outlook’.⁷³ Ma’s association with the idea of ‘knight-errant’ was reflected in her ‘deprecation of money’.⁷⁴ She financially sponsored the publication and printing of Liang Chenyu’s *Hongxian* northern song-drama, and wrote a short introductory note to the printed drama edition.⁷⁵ Not only did Ma declare in her attributed paratextual writing that she had ‘paid for the fine woodblock engraver’ for the printing of the drama edition,⁷⁶ but also she wished to perform this newly-composed drama with the ‘enjoyment of five nights’ dancing and ten days’ drinking with the company of its music’.⁷⁷ For Ma, as a skilled northern aria singer, such a statement also showcased the courtesan’s ability to actually stage the latest song-drama creation. Through operatic performance and appreciation, Ma also performs her ‘persona’ through the self-identified androgynous image that the song-drama female protagonist presents.

The second aria by Ma Xianglan in ‘Collection of Elegance’ could have been originally from her self-composed song-drama *San sheng zhuan* 三生傳 (*Story of Three Lives*). Although it is no longer extant, one aria and two suites have been preserved in late-Ming published song collections. It is extremely possible that Wang selected the aria to the tune ‘Young Man on a Journey’ from Shen Zijin’s 1659 formulary, which listed the title ‘Story of

⁷¹ Zuyan Zhou, *Androgyny in late Ming and Early Qing Literature* (Honolulu, 2003), 12.

⁷² Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *LCSJXZ*, 765. 性喜輕俠

⁷³ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 110.

⁷⁴ Merlin, ‘The Nanjing Courtesan Ma Shouzhen’, 640. Qian’s biographical sketch also depicts a scene where Ma ‘used to scatter money around to young men and even if her precious bangles fell on the floor and ended up in a pawn shop, she did not care’. (trans. Merlin), *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Zhao Shijie 趙世杰, *Gujin nüshi* 古今女史 (*History of Women from Antiquity to Present Day*) edition print between 1628 and 1644, 9.11a, 9.11b. available at Ming Qing Women’s Writing Database

⁷⁶ Ma Xianglan 馬湘嵐, *Hongxian chuanqi xiao yin* 紅線傳奇小引 (Short Introductory Note to the Legend of *Hongxian*), in *Gujin nüshi*, 9.11b. 迺屬良工爰俾繡梓

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 9.11b 郎當舞袖，儘可供五夜之歡，婉轉歌喉，尚可佐十日之飲

Three Lives’ alongside with the aria tune title. In particular, Shen clearly remarked that the aria was ‘composed by Courtesan Ma, courtesy name Xianglan’.⁷⁸ Ma Xianglan’s contemporary, literatus-critic Lü Tiancheng 呂天成 (1580–1618) rates her song-drama as ‘poor quality’, and suggests that Ma used a ghost-writer instead of composing the drama herself.⁷⁹ The tune title ‘Young Man on a Journey’ was categorized by theorist Shen Zijin as *yinzi*, namely the first song of a *qu* suite (in both northern and southern music),⁸⁰ indicating that this aria might have been extracted from a suite in Ma’s original *Story of Three Lives* song-drama.

The aria ‘Story of Three Lives’ by Ma Xianglan portrays an image of an amorous woman with no hints of erotic puns:

Her smiling face is a blossoming flower, the slender eyebrows are the leaves of the willow. Frowning or smiling, they do as they please.
 笑脸开花。顰眉锁柳。顰笑岂无繇。

For a moment she leaned in the doorway. She put down her embroidery and slipped away to her room. 且学倚门。休教刺绣。又上晚妆楼。⁸¹

The written lyrics are in accordance with musical styles, as the lyrics set to the tune ‘Young Man on a Journey’, which belongs to Da Shi *diao*, has a music style that is described as ‘amorous yet restrained’. The tune title is considered the introduction of the Dashi *diao* in Shen Jing’s *New Formulary*,⁸² indicating that this aria could very likely be the first song of a suite. From Ma Xianglan’s case discussed above, it is clear that skilled writers like Ma created music and lyrics in accordance with certain styles. Ma’s aria, despite its language and the emotional mood that the tune is aligned with, portrays the artistic image of an amorous female figure. Despite the fact that this aria is sung by a fictive female character in Ma’s song-drama, the aria can also be viewed as a figurative expression of Ma herself. Perhaps the aria

⁷⁸ Shen Zijin 沈自晉, ‘Nanci xinpu 南詞新譜’ (*New Formulary of Southern Song*), in *SBXQCK*, series 3, no. 3, 286.

⁷⁹ Lü Tiancheng 呂天成, ‘Qu pin 曲品’ (Appraises on Qu), in *LDQHBB*, vol.3, 183. 馬姬未必能填詞，乃所私代筆者

⁸⁰ Shen Zijin, *Nanci xinpu*, 286.

⁸¹ Ma Xianglan, ‘Sansheng zhuan 三生傳’ (Story of Three Lives), in Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ 雅集 (Collection of Elegance), *MYSWCB*, 38.6a. (trans.) author

⁸² Shen Zijin, *Nanci xinpu*, series 3, no. 3, *SBXQCK*, entry of Ma Xianglan, 286.

alone received popularity and became frequently performed, hence why, as Wei Hua suggests, only the first song from the suite has been preserved.⁸³

The way in which Ma fashioned her artistic persona not only reveals her personal interest and identification in the operatic protagonist *Hongfu*, but also in her operatic invention of creating a public self. One feature that both Zhang Fengyi and Liang Chenyu's song-dramas and Ma's *Story of Three Lives* have in common is the identity of their female protagonists as 'debased/displaced women'. Based on both accounts of Lü Tiancheng and Hu Wanhuan in *Story of Three Lives*, the plots of Ma's song-drama are based on the story of 'How Wang Kui 王魁 abandoned his courtesan-lover Gui Ying 桂英' (Lü listed it as one of the possibilities, while Hu confirms the plot is based exactly on this story).⁸⁴ Wang Duanshu refers to the sing-song girl Zhang Yiniang 張一娘, possibly identifying the female character that Ma portrays in her operatic aria.

Two extant song-suites from Ma's song-drama that were collected in Hu Wenhuan's *Selection of Numerous Sounds* give us a glimpse of the musical world of self-fashioning that the courtesan author created. The first suite, 'Learning to Sing and Dance', is set to both northern and southern tune titles.⁸⁵ The lyrics of 'Learning to Sing and Dance' showcase a scene of music entertainment with frequent mentions of musical instruments, such as woodwinds and string instruments.⁸⁶ These musical instruments are not merely objects; they are the symbols that signify courtesans' identity as music entertainers. Ma Xianglan's northern suite vividly depicts a scene of pleasure quarter entertaining as:

Listen! the music that lingers around the rafters does not fade. Listen! Even this beautiful sound relaxes every muscle, every bone.

清新，一曲绕梁声难并。听着这佳也么音，顿教人肌骨清。

⁸³ Wei Hua, 'Ma xianglan yu ming dai houqi de qutan 馬湘蘭與明代後期的曲壇', 55-82, at 44; also 'Xingbie shenfēn yu qing de shuxie 性别、身份、与情的书写', 109-132, at 67.

⁸⁴ Lü Tiancheng 呂天成, 'Qu pin 曲品 Appraises on Qu', 183. Lü provided three possibilities in his comments, 始則王魁負桂英，次則蘇卿負馮魁，三而陳魁彭妓; Hu Wenhuan 胡文煥 ed. Qunyin lei xuan 群音類選 (*Selection of Numerous Sounds*), vol. 18, late Ming printed edition, digitalised facsimile, seq. 35. Hu remarks 此系馬湘蘭編王魁故事.

⁸⁵ Hu Wenhuan, Qunyin lei xuan (*Selection of Numerous Sounds*), vol. 18, facsimile, seq. 35.

⁸⁶ Ibid. the lyrics mention instruments of 橫玉, 蕭韶, 笙簧, 箜篌, 琴瑟

Ribbons float in the air, jade waist ornaments bob up and down, and crimson skirts swirl, light and dark, like the dew on the lotus flower.

柳帶飄動佩環重輕，蓮花旋露絳裙淺深，

The head should be wrapped in red brocade, dazzling the eyes of guests and capturing their hearts. 头上应缠红锦，迷客目，动人情。⁸⁷

Perhaps the performance of the suite was not only a way of ‘dazzling the eyes of guests and capturing their hearts’ as stated in the lyrics,⁸⁸ but also a reflection of the professional life of Ma within the private space of the pleasure quarters. The song-suite is a realistic, yet artistic, portrayal of Ma’s life; the late-Ming scholar Wang Zhideng 王稚登 (1535–1612), who was a lifelong client-lover of Ma, wrote in his *The Biography of Ma Xianglan*:

She has her girl apprentices instructed in the theatrical arts and each day they would provide entertainment to the banqueting guests: the sounds of drums and lute would mingle with those of gold strings and red ivory clappers.⁸⁹

教諸小鬟學梨園子弟，日為供帳燕客。羯鼓、胡琵琶與金縷、紅牙相間⁹⁰

This suggests that Ma not only sang to an outstanding level, but also taught others. From this perspective, Ma was not only the author and performer of the suite (and the entire drama), but also her professional life was ‘performed’ and displayed to the public through the mediums of both print and stage.

‘Present a Jade Hairpin to Your Departure’ is another suite from Ma’s *Story of Three Lives* that was collected in the *Selection of Numerous Sounds*. The lyrics depict an emotional scene of the female protagonist Gui Ying parting from Wang Kui.⁹¹ This scene may have been inspired by Ma’s life-long romance with her lover-client Wang Zhideng, for Ma once

⁸⁷ Ma Xianglan, ‘Jiaoxi gewu 教習歌舞’, in Hu Wenhuan, *Selection of Numerous Sounds*, vol. 18, facsimile, seq. 35. (trans.) author

⁸⁸ Ibid. 迷客目，動人情

⁸⁹ Wilt Idema and Beata Grant (trans.), *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China* (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 366.

⁹⁰ Wang Zhideng 王稚登, *Biography of Ma Xianglan*, Qinghuai Yuke 秦淮寓客 ed., in Lü chuan nü shi 綠窗女史 (History of Women from Green Window), 明崇禎心遠堂藏版 (Yuanxin tang collector’s edition, published between 1628–1644), in Harvard Yen-Ching Library Chinese Rare Collections – Collective Works (digitised), vol. 19, seq. 812.

⁹¹ Hu Wenhuan, Qunyin lei xuan 群音類選 (*Selections of Numerous Sounds*), vol. 18.

wrote a sentimental letter to Wang to express her sorrow after parting him.⁹² Through writing and singing about their private feelings, music became a medium through which courtesan-writers expressed *qing*. Yet, their profession as entertainers often resulted in public performances of the songs that reveal their ‘private’ feelings and innermost thoughts, either on stage or through printed pages.

For courtesans, the public demonstration of ‘private thoughts’ was also an outlet for self-invention in establishing a public persona. The fictional female protagonist, Zhang Yiniang, who has being portrayed in an androgynous image where she would ‘successfully take up male roles, fulfil duties or aspirations, and then happily revert to female roles’, also embodied the ideal of ‘female knight-errant’, as Wai-Yee Li has pointed out.⁹³ Such an ideal fascinated the Ming theatre audiences, as many Ming writers adapted the plot of *The Story of Curly Beard* to their song-drama. Ma Xianglan’s imitation aria indicates her private self-identification with the heroine. When such singing repertoire was not addressed to any specific audience or client, the projected ideal of the ‘female knight-errant’ in the lyrics also became a public persona of Ma Xianglan herself.

4.4.2. Wang Duanshu on Hu Wenru’s song and wittiness

Hu Wenru’s aria is another example of how a courtesan skilfully created a scene of seduction and ‘employed her own artistic and musical talents to create a public persona’.⁹⁴ Wang Duanshu commented that in Hu’s aria, ‘Lyrics of Four Seasons’ to the tune ‘Purple Silk Robes’, Wang had ‘never heard such deep-seated bitterly sarcastic words among old tunes’.⁹⁵ Wang’s comment could be easily regarded as a criticism and disagreement on musical aesthetics and the moral stance of courtesans’ song, similar to the entries of Gu Changfen and Chu Ji (see Chapter 3). However, none of these comments can be read superficially. The short

⁹² Zhao Shijie 趙世杰, *Gujin nüshi 古今女史*, Ming Qing Women’s Writing Database, 8.50a.

⁹³ Li, ‘Heroic Transformations’, 365.

⁹⁴ Wetzel, ‘Hidden Connections’, 659.

⁹⁵ Wang Duanshu, ‘Collection of Elegance’, 38.1a.

comment that Wang has provided not only tells readers about the musical style of the aria, but also summarizes its carefully and skilfully created artistic style and persona. Although ‘Purple Silk Robes’ is among one of the most frequently used southern arias in Kunshan style, Wang describes Hu’s song as *jiu qiang* 舊腔,⁹⁶ namely the ‘old tune’ or ‘singing style’, probably referring to the fact that this aria was set to Yiyang operatic style. Yiyang was one of the four major southern singing music styles in performing southern drama in the early Ming period, when the northern style *zaju* song-drama still dominated the *qu* realm as a major music-drama genre.

Hu Wenru flourished during the Wanli period (1570s–1620s), when literati had favoured the *kunshan* singing style and claimed the genre as their own, so that it not only dominated the elite theatre but also lyrics of southern arias were set to this style. Wang recognized that the aria was one of the old tunes, possibly because Hu worked principally as an official courtesan within the army in Jiangxia 江夏 (the present-day Wuhan city in southern China),⁹⁷ where the Yiyang style of music was still circulated and performed. Wang’s selection of arias set to Yiyang music also diversifies the ‘Collection of Elegance’, demonstrating the comprehensiveness of women’s music practice in the late-Ming period. Further, in Ling Mengchu’s critique, regional tunes of Yiyang are described as ‘unrefined, random in rhythms, and lack [...] music prosody’.⁹⁸ Unlike the *kunshan* music (that was the literati’s new favourite) with its composition regulated to many elite standards of prosody and strict music-lyric setting, Yiyang tunes lack of refined prosody presented much more creative space for song-writers.

Hu’s ‘Lyrics of Four Seasons’ (*si shi ci* 四時詞) contains four individual arias that are set to the same tune title, with the repeated lyrics – *ren’er bu jian* 人儿不见 (‘without seeing

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Wang Duanshu 王端淑, ‘Zheng ji fu shang 正集附上’ Appendices to Main Collection, 19.1a.

⁹⁸ Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, *Tanqu za zha* (A Random Bundle of Notes on *Qu*): Ling criticizes the music of Tang’s *Peony*, as certain lyrics in this song-drama were set to local folk tunes sung in Yiyang style, and points out that Yiyang 弋陽 music has no compositional requirements to be harmonious or follow music-lyric rules, and one can sing as one pleases. 況弋陽土曲，句調長短，聲音高下，可以隨心入腔，故總不必合調 in *ZGXLJ*, vol.4, 254.

you my dear'), *bing er* 病儿 ('my sickness'), and *men er zhong yan* 门儿重掩 ('the door is tightly shut'), depicting scenes of different seasons:

It is spring: swallows cluster, nestling pair by pair. No money can buy a night of spring love. Willow catkins are dancing in the air; as if deliberately flying like the melting snow.
早是灯儿时节。见燕儿做垒，对对欹斜。榆钱儿买不得春风夜，杨花儿故意飞残雪。
The door is tightly shut, the lamp is half-out. Where are you my love? Who can I tell about my sickness? The folded dress hides my waist.
门儿重掩，灯儿半灭。人儿不见，病儿怎说？腰儿掩过裙儿折。

When summer comes, I see the lotus emerge from the water, and every petal speaks to me of love. Even my heart is on fire, I fear the red pomegranate, and my runny nose is sourer than plums.
早是莺儿时候，见莲花儿出水，瓣瓣风流。心儿欲火畏红榴，鼻儿酸涕过梅豆。
The door is tightly shut, the curtains are almost drawn. Where are you my love? how can my sickness be cured? I fold my fan and wrinkle my brows.
门儿重掩，帘儿半钩。人儿不见，病儿怎瘳？扇儿折叠眉儿皱。

The chilly dew in the autumn cools down the summer heat. Drop by drop the chilliness soaks into my clothes. The Qixi festival is like a needle that pinches me, and the happiness of reunited families shatters me.
早是雁儿天气，见露珠儿夺暑，点点侵衣。针儿七夕把肠刺，砧儿万户敲肝碎。
The door is tightly shut, the bed-curtain partly hang down. Where are you my love, how can I bear my sickness? It is hard to put my feelings into writing.
门儿重掩，帐儿半垂。人儿不见，病儿怎支？书儿难写心儿事。

I see snowflakes are falling, every elegant and pure plum blossom yearning for the spring. My dreams freeze and my soul slips away, I breathe and the mist disappears.
早见雪儿飘粉，见梅儿潇洒，蕊蕊争春。梦儿冻死也离魂，气儿呵杀全无影。
The door is tightly shut, the quilt is lightly scented. Where are you my love, how can I bear my sickness? The fire screen is warm, but my bed is cold.
门儿重掩，被儿半薰。人儿不见，病儿怎禁？屏儿靠热床儿冷。⁹⁹

The lyrics are, as other courtesans' entries within the collection, romantic sung-verses that might have been performed as part of courtesans' repertoires. With metaphors such as pairs of swallows,¹⁰⁰ along with the repeated words, the lyrics portray a female figure longing for her lover to reunite, and this longing might have caused her lovesickness (*bing er* 病兒), and her isolation behind a tightly closed door as expressed through the repeated words. Wang

⁹⁹ Hu Wenru 呼文如, 'Si shi ci 四時詞' (Lyrics of Four Seasons) to the tune 'Zao luo pao 皂羅袍' (Silk Purple Robes) in 'Ya ji' Collection of Elegance, 38.1b, 38.2a. red pomegranate a metaphor of pregnancy (trans.) author

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 38.1b.

Duanshu's comment on such lyrics as 'deep-seated bitter sarcasm', on the one hand, could be regarded as her criticism of Hu's lyrics as sensual, erotic, even bawdy words, such as the line 'my heart is on fire' which explicitly expresses Hu's personal desire.¹⁰¹ The 'lotus flower appearing above the water' is also a metaphor for beautiful women, indicating the courtesan herself. The bawdiness of Hu's lyrics is enhanced by describing the lotus of 'every petal of the lotus flower' as 'amorous', where the flower petals are a non-explicit double entendre in musical and literary erotica.¹⁰²

Unlike other courtesans' songs curated within 'Collection of Elegance' that do not refer to a specific dedicator or were sung for the spectacle of a broader audience, Hu's 'Lyrics of Four Seasons' was created, according to *Bronze Strings and Golden Threads* (an erotic anthology on courtesan culture) specifically for her lover-client, the late-Ming literatus Qiu Qianzhi 邱謙之.¹⁰³ Hu Wenru's purpose of dedicating this song to Qiu, based on the claim in *Bronze Strings and Golden Threads*, is to show her willingness to submit herself to Qiu; in other words, she proposes to marry him.¹⁰⁴ Although Wang Duanshu does not remark on Hu's dedication to Qiu, her comment of Hu's 'deep-seated bitter sarcasm', thus, could indicate the sarcasm of the courtesan Hu's 'scolding' and even 'mocking' of the unseen fickle lover, who caused her love-sickness and who might have treated her unfairly, in disguise for the emotionally distressed mind and heart that she expresses in the repeated words. This aria is perhaps not only an outlet for revealing her inner self, but is also a skilful portrayal of a distinctive lyrical persona that displays the courtesan's sharp-wittedness. As Ropp argues, the function of these courtesan writings that seems clearly to address the male reader 'was to make a certain kind of impression – whether of the elegance, the romantic lure, or the wit of the courtesan'.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰¹ Ibid, 38.2a.

¹⁰² Paul Ropp's analysis on the lyric 'to take my flower's heart and twist into pieces' 把奴的花心來揉碎 in an unknown courtesan song points out that 花心 – the flower heart, has the sexual connotation that implies clitoris or vagina; 'Ambiguous Images of Courtesan Culture', 41.

¹⁰³ Ren Zhongmin 任中敏, 'Qu xie 曲譜', in *SQCK*, entry on Hu Wenru 呼文如, 1295. Ren mentions her 'Four Seasons Lyrics' to the tune 'Silk Purple Robes' collected in *Tong pi jin lü* 銅琵琶金縷 (*Bronze Strings and Golden Threads*).

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Paul Ropp, 'Love, Literacy, and Lament: Themes of Women Writers in Late Imperial China', *Women's History Review*, 2/1 (1993), 107-141, at 115.

Courtesans' wishes to be liberated from the pleasure quarters and to turn away from their disorderly lives probably inspired them to compose songs and poetry. Hu's song was not the only example of a courtesan who took the initiative in proposing marriage. Ma Xianglan apparently proposed to her lover-client, Wang Zhideng, although her hope was in vain as the proposal was turned down.¹⁰⁶ Her *Story of Three Lives* may have been inspired by her unfilled love in real-life, as reflected in the drama's plot. This bold action by courtesans in a male-dominated, Confucian hierarchical society, when arranged marriage was the norm, shows the freedom that the courtesans' profession offered them in the fluidity and mobility of transcending gender roles in late-Ming society.

Hu Wenru had a successful outcome among her courtesan peers in longing for genuine love and redemption as 'respectable women'. Her poem 'Upon Hearing Your Dismissal from post after Parting' includes the lyrics:¹⁰⁷ 'What's the joy in official position? What's so sad about dismissal? Once you retire from office, that's when I can marry you'.¹⁰⁸ It was collected in 'Appendices to the Main Collection' (chapter 19, where writings of fallen women who had turned away from their disorderly life are categorized) of Wang's *Notable Women*.¹⁰⁹ Wang Duanshu seems deeply touched by the ideal of *qing* that Hu's poem and her devotion to Qiu embodied, and compared this poem to 'Song of Midnight', a music bureau ballad sung by the medieval songstress Ziye (also a pun for midnight).¹¹⁰ It is said that Ziye's song is full of sorrow and melancholy, even the ghosts in the household of Wang – a powerful and honourable clan at the time – were touched by the song and sang it at midnight.

By the time of late Ming, the 'midnight ballads of Wu regional tunes' (*ziye wuge* 子夜吳歌), as Xu points out, 'became a commonplace allusion to midnight solos in poetry and song, and the association of midnight with southern vocal style was well-established in the courtesan tradition of singing'.¹¹¹ By linking Hu's poem to the Six Dynasty folksong, Wang's editorial commentary reminds the readers of the author's profession. Moreover, Wang claims

¹⁰⁶ Mi Zhao, 'Ma Xianglan and Wang Zhideng Onstage and Offstage', 128.

¹⁰⁷ Wang Duanshu, 'Zheng ji fu shang' (Appendices to Main Collection), 19.2a.

¹⁰⁸ Paul Ropp (trans.), 'Love, Literacy, and Laments', 116. 有官亦何喜，罢官亦何悲。一官生罢去，是妾嫁君时。

¹⁰⁹ Wang, 'Appendices to Main Collection', 19.1a.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Peng Xu, 'Courtesan vs. Literatus', 412.

that the charm and deep affection of Hu Wenru's lyrics surpassed many gentlewomen,¹¹² and in recognising Hu's new social identity as she turned away from her disorderly life and the embodiment of *qing* in Hu's literary and artistic creation, Wang demonstrates that the aesthetics were deeply rooted in the late-Ming socio-cultural sphere.

4.4.3 *The 'courtesans' residence that vanished': A political statement?*

The turbulent social reality of the dynastic transition might have created a common ground in which the sharing of a topic that had been previously exclusive to the literati was now a common outlet of nostalgia. Writing about late-Ming courtesans and entertainers was indeed one of the most popular themes during the early-Qing period. By featuring courtesans' songs and commenting on them, Wang's commentary strategy might seem conventional or could be regarded as emulation of late-Ming literati's connoisseurship of courtesan culture. What was unconventional was that the very act of doing so meant that Wang had already transcended her social role and the limitations of a gentlewoman. Wang's editorial gaze into the corpus of late-Ming courtesans' songs curated within 'Collection of Elegance' changed her position from a critic to a member of the audience, witnessing the performance, whether vicarious or through contextualized reading.

In reality, the consolidation of Manchu Qing rule by the time of the succession of the Kangxi emperor in 1661 (also the year that Wang's 1667 anthology was prefaced), and his order for the execution of Jiangnan loyalists, might have destroyed any final hope left among Ming loyalists.¹¹³ Perhaps those who remained loyal to Ming at this point could only identify themselves as 'Ming remnants', and regarded the 'preservation of cultural continuity against all odds' as the utmost priority. Wang Duanshu's poem, 'The Song of Grief and Rancour', directly points out that 'Ravaged and violated is the Han (ethnicity) House: cap and gown are

¹¹² Wang Duanshu, 'Zheng ji fu shang', 19.1a. 文如深情逸韻非凡媛所及

¹¹³ Widmer, 'Ming Loyalty and the Women's Voice in Fiction', 371–372. Widmer observes that Wang Duanshu's visibility as a loyalist curtailed her performance with Kangxi's succession and loyalists' execution, and maybe have accelerated Wang's editing project of *Notable Women*; also see Li, 'Early-Qing to 1723', 153. Li points out that the major Qing cases of persecution from late 1650s onwards were Jiangsu-Zhejiang literati in south-eastern coastal provinces.

destroyed’.¹¹⁴ The ‘destroyed cap and gown’ refers to the early-Qing policy of the ‘mandated Manchu hairy style and costume’ imposed on Chinese subjects, which marked ‘Han cultural capitulation and occasioned intense anguish’, and indirectly points to the urgency in preserving Ming culture.¹¹⁵

Writing about courtesans after the fall of the Ming dynasty was a significant element in the preservation of Ming culture and an outlet through which to voice the cultural dislocation that Ming subjects had suffered in the early Qing period. Wang Duanshu’s editorial voice was immersed in the artistry of courtesan song composed during the Ming period. The painful reality of the Ming fall, and the trauma she had personally been through during the dynastic transition, however, still haunted her. She created a very contradictory scene in her editorial commentary of the courtesan Ma Xianglan, where she writes in a nostalgic and melancholic tone:

Nanjing has been called a “blessed land of golden powders”, and the north and west parts of the old town were where celebrated guests and scholars gathered. The luxuries of these places are beyond compare.

Xianglan was famous in her day, although she was in the pleasure quarters, but being a courtesan was never her ambition.

But now, all the elegant bowers with bamboo bridges and columns fell and became melon fields, while people who pass by still praises its formal glory, how could one not sigh with deep feelings.

Ma Xianglan’s poetry embodies both talents and *qing*, nurtured by Wang Baigu, naturally they are fragrant verses.¹¹⁶

The sharp contrast lies between the glory of the Nanjing pleasure quarters during the Ming period and after the dynastic fall. From the luxurious and elegant bowers where celebrated guests gathered to the abandoned field used for plantation in the time of Wang writing in the early-Qing period, the dramatic change of the Nanjing pleasure quarters was a microcosm of the destruction that the dynastic change had brought to society in all aspects. The late-Ming courtesan culture was grounded in the urbanicity of late-Ming south-eastern

¹¹⁴ Wang Duanshu, *Yin hong ji 吟紅集 (Red Chantings)*, chapter 3, 8. For a full translation of the poem, see Li, *Women and National Trauma*, 118–119.

¹¹⁵ Li, *Women and National Trauma*, 119.

¹¹⁶ (trans. author), original texts in Wang Duanshu, ‘*Yan ji 豔集*’ (Collection of Erotica); on Ma Xianglan, 24.3b.

Jiangnan cities;¹¹⁷ the post-war ruin of the urban space, as Wang and other contemporary memorial writers lamented on the destruction of pleasure quarters, also insinuates that the early-Qing policy of prohibiting prostitution, and the burning of the pleasure quarters,¹¹⁸ directly led to the decline, vulgarization and aesthetic downfall of courtesan culture after the fall of Ming.¹¹⁹ To mourn the lost world of the late-Ming courtesans would imply, as Li argues, ‘at least potentially, a political statement’.¹²⁰

Members of a class of cultivated courtesans, such as Jing Pianpian, as Grace Fong argues, ‘whose romanticised lifestyle, artistic talents, and liaisons with the scholar-literati were beginning to create a unique cultural phenomenon that perhaps belonged to the late-Ming moment alone’.¹²¹ Even towards the end of the seventeenth century, Ming loyalists, such as Yu Huai, still mourned the lost world of the late-Ming courtesans and attempted to preserve their former glory in writing. Yu explained the reason for dedicating his 1693 *Plank Bridge* to the pleasure quarters, elegiacally claiming that the memoir was not ‘merely about bewitching beauties’, but ‘all is connected with the rise and fall of a dynasty’.¹²²

For Wang Duanshu and her contemporaries, the late-Ming courtesans were cultural symbols and embodiments of the glamour and splendour of a bygone era alongside the fallen Ming dynasty. Their respectability as significant cultural producers was also unique to late Ming. Courtesans’ cultural ideal and their artistic creations were deeply intertwined in the late-Ming socio-cultural landscape and social practice of intellectual aesthetics and cultural norms. What Ming loyalists were attached to, as Mote argues, ‘were neither the Ming emperors nor Ming governing policies, but the cultural value of the past dynasty, particularly the romantic period of late Ming that was marked by imagination, humour and passion’.¹²³

¹¹⁷ On courtesan culture and its urban setting in Chinese imperial visual arts, see Lara Blanchard, ‘A Scholar in the Company of Female Entertainers: Changing Notions of Integrity in Song to Ming Dynasty Painting’, *Nan Nü*, 9/2 (2007), 192–197, 222–226 and 243–244.

¹¹⁸ Oki Yasushi, ‘Mao Xiang and Yu Huai’, 248.

¹¹⁹ Zurndorfer, ‘Prostitutes and Courtesans’, 216.

¹²⁰ Li, ‘The Late Ming Courtesan: Invention of a Cultural Ideal’, 48.

¹²¹ Fong, ‘Gender and the Failure of Canonization’, 143.

¹²² Yu Huai 余懷, *Banqiao zaji* 板橋雜記, 3. Oki Yasushi (trans.), ‘Mao Xiang and Yu Huai’, 244.

¹²³ Fredrick Mote, *Imperial China: 900–1800* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003), 850–851.

The consolidation of the Qing regime, and its policies of rehabilitating orthodox Confucianism as governing, social and moral guidance, led to the decline of courtesan culture. By the time of the High Qing era (1683-1839), ‘unlike the late Ming period, when courtesans still set the standard for “talented women”’, writes Mann, ‘courtesans became increasingly marginalized in the aesthetic lives of elite women’.¹²⁴ Yet, the decline of courtesan culture in early Qing also created opportunities for gentlewomen towards the end of the seventeenth century. However, the new ideal of femininity of the late sixteenth, as Berg argues, was derived from courtesan culture.¹²⁵ It is this cultural impact that shaped the gentlewomen’s culture in the seventeenth century.

¹²⁴ Susan Mann, ‘Entertainment’, *Precious Records: Women in China’s Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, 1997), 122-123.

¹²⁵ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 118.

4.5 Music as a Vehicle of Memory and Personal Remembrance in early Qing

4.5.1 Wang Duanshu on song of Zhang Siyin

The death of Zhang Siyin, Wang Duanshu's sister-in-law, was directly linked to the tragedy of women's fate during the turbulent times of the Ming-Qing transition. The specific reason for Zhang's death is vaguely described; Wang's biographic account indicates that Zhang died young due to being offended by *ni zei* 逆賊 – the upheaval of rebels, bandits or invaders that society suffered from greatly during the transition period.¹²⁶ The consequence of this violation might have been suicide, although Wang does not explicitly insinuate this. One of the multiple roots of the 'glorification of suicide' was, as Carlitz argues, that under the context of dynastic transition, 'women committed suicide in order to resist rape by foreign invaders'.¹²⁷ In choosing death to defend their bodies against violation, as Li argues, women's suicide was 'preserved as testament to the victims' virtue ... fusing chastity and political integrity'.¹²⁸

The biographical writing reflects Wang's mixed feelings. Wang Duanshu does not valorize or glorify Zhang Siyin's suicide; meanwhile her commentaries on Zhang hinted as a biographical preservation of a woman who perished with the country. Zhang's literary talents are praised as 'heavenly bestowed' and her moral character is described as noble and unsullied as an orchid.¹²⁹ Like many of the learned gentlewomen during late Ming, Zhang specialized in poetry and song-lyric writing, playing the zither and chess, and she also seems to have produced a personal literary collection, which does not appear to have been printed. Wang Duanshu recalls her friendship and companionship with Zhang; Wang writes that 'Zhang was a good friend',¹³⁰ and they used to 'chant poetry together'; Wang's statement that 'the complete manuscripts of her work have been lost' further suggests Zhang's collection existed at least in manuscript form.¹³¹

¹²⁶ Wang Duanshu, 'Zheng ji', 15.16b, 15.17a.; 'Ya ji', 37.16b.

¹²⁷ Katherine Carlitz, 'The Daughter, the Singing-girl, and the Seduction of Suicide', in *Passionate Women: Female Suicide in Late Imperial China*, (eds.) Paul S. Ropp, Paola Zamperini, and Harriet Zurndorfer (Leiden, 2001), also in *NAN NÜ*, Vol. 3, Issue 1, 22-46, at 38.

¹²⁸ Li, 'Heroic Transformations', 424.

¹²⁹ Wang Duanshu, 'Zheng ji', 15.16b.; 'Ya ji', 37.16b.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Wang Duanshu, 'Zheng ji' (Main Collection), 15.16b.

Wang's knowledge of lost, unpublished work also suggests that the circulation of gentlewomen's literary collections was first limited to their shared inner chambers. The elegy written by Wang in remembrance of Zhang, a poem published within *Red Chantings*, includes the recollection of scenes in which Wang and Zhang chant poetry on the green of lotus leaves together.¹³² The private scenes that Wang portrays in the poems further reflects the consumption and the production of culture that was evidently integrated into elite governing-class gentlewomen's lives in seventeenth-century China.

Wang's personal loss, and the loss of the cultural legacy (and in a broader historical sense, the loss of many other legacies by women during the dynastic transition), might have influenced Wang's energies in documenting women's literary works. In the short preface to the 'Collection of Omitted Writings', Wang lists the 'war' among the reasons why numerous women's writings were lost.¹³³ Wang Duanshu's view could have been derived from her learning of the history of previous dynasties, but also could be a personal observation of what happened to her female relations such as Zhang Siyin. In both comments to Zhang's quatrain and aria, Wang adapted very similar articulation in expressing her personal grief over Zhang's tragic death: the word appears in both comments, which means 'greatly, deeply, and extremely' (*bu sheng* 不勝), and is followed by the word for 'plaintive, grief-stricken, and full of despair' (chapter 15, *qi ce* 悽惻; chapter 37, *wan'e* 惋厄).¹³⁴

Zhang Siyin's writings collected in Wang's 1667 anthology appear to be addressed to her husband while he seems far from home.¹³⁵ The images portrayed in Zhang's poem and aria – the mirror, eyebrow painting, snuff, pen and ink – reflect a scene from a gentlewoman's daily life within her inner chamber. By addressing her husband and longing for his return (as Zhang metaphorically describes the swallows returning to their nests),¹³⁶ Zhang's writing can be identified as feminine and categorized as lady's boudoir laments, as the lyric goes:

In haste I put my thoughts on paper, missing my husband who is travelling far away.
忙将笔墨谱难愁。为忆儿夫在远游。

¹³² Wang, 'Ya ji' 雅集 (Collection of Elegance), 37.16b.

¹³³ Wang, 'Yi ji', 32.1a.

¹³⁴ Wang, 'Zheng ji' 正集 (Main Collection), 15.17a.; 'Ya ji', 37.16b.

¹³⁵ Wang, 'Ya ji', 37.16b.

¹³⁶ Wang, 'Zheng ji', 15.17a.

Why have you stayed away so long? (without message) Instead, gossip and rumours trouble me.

缘何一去遂淹留。反把闲言来迤逗。

How can you not remember, that when a young married woman waits in her chamber, her hair can turn white?

怎不记，少妇闺中，又白了头。¹³⁷

‘Thinking of My husband’ (*yi wai* 憶外) to the tune ‘Sluggishly Painting My eyebrow’ (*lan hua mei* 懶畫眉), which depicts a solitary young woman longing for her husband’s return to her boudoir. The nature of the boudoir laments, as shown in Zhang’s work, is enhanced by the last line of Zhang’s aria; her excess emotion has turned her hair grey even though the writer identifies herself as a ‘young married woman’.¹³⁸ Such delicate, intimate writing, even with a hint of sensual feeling, suggests that Zhang’s marriage, although possibly arranged, was compassionate. The companionate marriage itself, which was rooted in the cult of *qing*, culturally marks this historical period.

Wang Duanshu’s efforts to preserve women’s writings also saved Zhang’s work from vanishing completely. There are two works by Zhang in the 1667 anthology: a quatrain and an aria, in chapters 15 and 37, respectively. Based on Wang’s account, the former was accidentally found on scraps of paper;¹³⁹ there is no suggestion as to Wang’s source of Zhang’s aria. Instead, Wang metaphorically speaks that to preserve Zhang’s aria was as if she had got her ‘handkerchief’.¹⁴⁰ In particular, *shui* 幌 was a long decorative handkerchief that was traditionally given in imperial China to a daughter from her mother before she married. Married women were expected to wear it when they were not in their inner chambers or to hang it on the door when they were in their boudoir. The passing of the handkerchief from mother to daughter, and its subsequent utilization shows its gendered symbolic meaning. Thus, by comparing Zhang’s song to *shui*, Wang metaphorically indicates that the song is a memento of her sister-in-law, whose friendship Wang cherished. Zhang’s aria in the ‘Collection of Elegance’ is, thus, not only a physical legacy but also a reminder to Wang of

¹³⁷ Zhang Siyin, ‘Thinking of My husband’ (*yi wai* 憶外), in Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ 雅集 (Collection of Elegance), 37.16b. (trans.) author

¹³⁸ Wang, ‘Ya ji’, 37.16b.

¹³⁹ Wang, ‘Zheng ji’, 15.17a.

¹⁴⁰ Wang, ‘Ya ji’, 37.16b.

the writer's misfortune as happened to many other women during the transition period and war. The death of Zhang and the loss of her writings may have also acted as an aide-memoire of the pain and loss that not only Wang and Zhang suffered, but also that of the nation as a whole during the transition period.

4.5.2. *Music as memory in early Qing: Shen Zijin's sanqu collections*

Song-drama with an autobiographical pulse was not the only means for late-Ming literati to seek outlets under the post-conquest context: independent songs, another sub-genre of *qu*, also became a medium for self-reflection and grieving over the fallen Ming dynasty. The importance of writing and anthologizing songs as eye-witness accounts and personal memories of life before the Ming fall can also be seen in Shen Zijin's writings. Many of his songs composed after the conquest were later collected in his single-author compilation *Jutong yuefu* 鞠通樂府 (*Music Bureau of Master Jutong*), which almost functions as a way to document his adjustment to the new dynasty.

Shen Zijin's 沈自晉 (1583–1665) song-writing during the transition period is one of the best examples of speaking personal sentiments, grief and nostalgia through music. Shen was a prominent late-Ming songwriter, music theorist and anthologist, whose songs were deemed 'the best' during the late Ming. Like many other literati and scholar-officials who were loyal to Ming, Shen became a recluse after the Ming dynastic fall and firmly refused the invitation to serve the Qing court. Shen Zijin's deep sorrow for the dynastic fall was reflected in his stylistic change in song-writing after the dynastic transition. As Chinese scholars commonly agree, a dramatic stylistic change can be seen in Shen Zijin's music written during the late Ming, in which he clearly favoured the feminine style in contrast to the songs that he composed during the Ming-Qing transition and early-Qing period, which are plaintive, mournful and nostalgic.

Sub-collections within this book were sorted and arranged in chronological order, and each sub-collection demonstrates a very strong lyrical theme. The songs are not only a musical reflection of the social reality after the war, as many of the songs depict what Shen

had seen or heard, but they can also be regarded almost as diaries recording the Shen Zijin's life as a loyalist adjusting to the new era. The first volume, composed after 1644, consists of works remembering Ming and the life of a recluse; the second volume, written after 1647, comprises works of correspondence to friends expressing nostalgic feelings; the third volume, composed after 1652 when Shen was in his 70s, consists of works of 'chanting on objects' and nostalgic recollections of bygone days. In short, writing independent song was also a self-reflective act and a political statement. Shen's *New Formulary of Southern Music* (c.1659), a published music register book based on an expansion of his uncle Shen Jing's formulary, was also a material space of gathering and remembering personal and family relations after the war.¹⁴¹

4.5.3. *When music triggered nostalgia towards the end of the seventeenth century*

Although many of the political dramas were written almost as immediate responses to the fall of the Ming dynasty and the rise of the subsequent Qing rule, *Tao hua shan* 桃花扇 (*Peach Blossom Fan* 1699) by Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648–1718) is deemed a masterpiece and is still being performed in the original *kunqu* form on Chinese stages today. The personal struggle of the earlier generation of playwrights to accept Qing rule is often examined in their writings, but this is not the case with Kong Shangren. Unlike preceding late Ming playwrights who had lived through the dynastic fall; Kong was born under the Qing regime, was a Qing subject and once a scholar-official. However, the plot lines of both dramas are set in dynastic-transitional contexts and are based on real historical events, drawing great analogies with the Ming dynastic fall a few decades earlier. In particular, Kong set his *Peach Blossom Fan* in the

¹⁴¹ Shen Zijin 沈自晉, 'Chong ding nanci quanpu fanli houji' 重定南詞全譜範例續紀, *ZGXQXH*, vol. 1, 43. In this piece of writing, Shen recalls his friendship with Feng Menglong and how the collection was edited in remembrance of their friendship and Feng's legacy in *qu*, 39–45. *Nan ci xinpu* is also, as Chinese scholars argue, one of the significant pieces in studying Wujiang Shen family members and their connections and writings. See Zhou Gong-ping 周巩平, 'Wujiang shen shi xiqu jiazui zhi xueyuan hunyin guanxi yanjiu' 吴江沈氏戏曲家族之血缘婚姻关系研究 'The Study on Kinship Bonds of Shen Family as Opera Composers at Wujiang, Yishu bai jia 艺术百家 *Hundred Schools in Arts*, 5 (2015), 160–165.

historical period of Southern Ming (1644–1662), a short-lived regime that attempted to restore the Ming rule.

The meta-theatricality of *Peach Blossom Fan* was celebrated and manifested in its dramatization on-stage and its reflection of historical realities of the fall of Ming off-stage. The female protagonist and young courtesan, Li Xiangjun 李香君 (1624–1653), was debuted (scene 2) at the Mei House (a brothel in the pleasure quarters) by performing operatic arias from Tang Xianzu's *Peony Pavilion*.¹⁴² Li's performance not only marked her official career as a courtesan, but also established her music reputation as a singer-actress.¹⁴³ *Peach Blossom Fan*'s historical 'authenticity' also evokes a nostalgic sensation of the surviving Ming loyalists through its dramatization of real historical figures onstage. Kong Shangren noticed that 'in the midst of the music, song, and lavishness ... the former ministers of Ming and old survivors ... sighed, full of pain, and dispersed', as he reports in a private staging of *Peach Blossom Fan* that he attended in late 1699.¹⁴⁴

Written in the last decade of the seventeenth century, a period in which, as Wai-Yee Li points out, 'both playwright and audience are close to and at the same time distant enough from the event',¹⁴⁵ the drama and theatre as a whole became 'a venue for memory, nostalgia, and historical retrospection.'¹⁴⁶ Kong Shangren uses the play to ask the question 'how did Ming fall?', as Kong enquires in his preface to the printed edition: 'the songs and dance on-stage; the pointing and commenting off-stage ... thus does one understand [the demise of] three hundred years of imperial achievements, in whose hands did it decline? With what

¹⁴² Xue Ruo-lin 薛若琳, 'Mian huai kunan, jiang shu shang hen – shi lun Qing chu chuan qi taohua shan 缅怀苦难, 讲述伤痕—论清初传奇桃花扇' *Memorising Misery, Narrating Hurt: Review of Early Qing Legend Peach Blossom Fan*, *Yishu bai jia 艺术百家 Hundreds Schools of Arts*, vol. 4, 2017, 156-165, at 162.

¹⁴³ Tseng Yuho, 'Women Painters of the Ming Dynasty', *Artibus Asiae*, Vol. 53, 1/2 (1993), 249-259, at 250.

¹⁴⁴ Lynn Struve, 'History and Peach Blossom Fan', in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 2/1 (1980), 55–72, at 66. Kong Shang-ren 孔尚任, 'Tao hua shan benmo 桃花扇本末' (Trivial of *Peach Blossom Fan*), in ZGXQXH, vol. 5, 1604.

¹⁴⁵ Li, 'Early Qing to 1723', in *Cambridge Literary History of China*, 243.

¹⁴⁶ Wai-Yee Li, 'The Representation of History in the Peach Blossom Fan', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol.115, No.3, 1995, 421.

events was it destroyed? When did it vanish? Where did it end?’¹⁴⁷ The enduring influence of Kong’s play and its cultural impact at the time are rooted in its cultural symbolism. Kong openly longs for something lost and seeks it in the late Ming era. This sense of loss and searching moved the audience, and appears to have touched something deeply felt across society, and across time.

4.6. Wang Duanshu’s inclusion of a rebel’s suite

If curating late-Ming courtesan arias and Wang’s sister-in-law’s song can be read from a loyalist perspective of the editor’s cultural nostalgia over the bygone dynasty and lamenting of personal loss, the inclusion of a rebel’s suite within the ‘Collection of Elegance’ and the accompanying anger that is explicitly expressed in Wang’s biographical account transforms Wang’s commentary voice into a powerful form of critique from the perspective of historical retrospection.¹⁴⁸ More specifically, Wang Duanshu included poems and songs in her *Notable Women* written by Li Cuiwei, the daughter of Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606-1645) – the leader of the peasant rebellion force, who headed the revolution that is seen to have led to the collapse of the Ming Empire.

Modern Chinese reviewers regarding Wang Duanshu’s editorial decision to include works by someone who opposed the dynasty described Wang as ‘generous’ and ‘open-minded’.¹⁴⁹ However, a close reading of Wang Duanshu’s critique shows a very different picture. Li’s suite, ‘Romantic Song on Lantern Festival’ to the tune ‘Fishing Lanterns in the Mountains (Reprise)’, was placed as the final entry of ‘Collection of Elegance’. Li was

¹⁴⁷ Kong Shangren, ‘Tao hua shan xiaoshi 桃花扇小識’ Short Introductory Note to *Peach Blossom Fan*, ZGXQXH, vol. 5, 1601. 場上歌舞, 局外指點, 知三百年基業, 隳于何人? 敗于何事? 消于何年? 歇于何地? Li (trans.), ‘The Representation’, 421.

¹⁴⁸ Li, *Women and National Trauma*, 413–414; on discussion of *Poems on White Silk* by a maiden from Hanyang, see Wang, ‘Xin ji 新集’ (New Collection), 21.3b, 436; on discussion of *Poems on the Wall of Ye Zhou* by Nanjing palace lady Song Hui Xiang, see Wang, ‘Gong ji 宮集’ (Palace Collection), 1.12a. MYSWCB

¹⁴⁹ Online short remarks posted by Shi Zhuang-ning in his history blog, published on <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1570724210322461>, uploaded 20, June, 2017, (accessed on 29, August 2019). Shi remarks that Wang including Li’s suite in the anthology must mean she is more broad-minded than men.

neither positioned among gentlewomen nor courtesans. In fact, according to Wang's biographical remarks, Li was once made a princess by her father and later married to a young scholar. Wang Duanshu's source for Li's writing is unclear; the modern scholarly-compiled edition of *Complete Sanqu from the Ming Dynasty* gives Wang Duanshu's 'Collection of Elegance' as its source.¹⁵⁰

Li's suite begins with an aria to the tune 'Fishing Lanterns in the Mountains', which depicts a romantic scene of two lovers meeting secretly during the Lantern Festival celebration scared of incurring other people's disapproval:

The lanterns are like daylight (bright as day), The crowds like ants, Have come to celebrate the Lantern Festival.
While lanterns paint sky and earth, The music of the crowd resounds. What is this special day?
Our meeting is curious; We speak in whispers, And quiet laughter.
Though we linger in the shadows, My face must not give me away.
I die for love of you, Whose beauty would bring down a city.
After an age of longing, Our hearts soar together today.¹⁵¹

From a present-day reader's perspective, the lyrics were written with a cheerful disposition and free spirit; the female figure portrayed in the lyrics could be Li Cuiwei or as a lyrical embodiment of herself. Li's suite could be regarded as a composition that expresses her innermost feelings, a reflection of her sensibility and subjectivity, amorous rather than erotic.

Wang Duanshu's comment on this suite clearly demonstrates her strong disapproval, annoyance, or even outrage on reading the lyrics:

How could anyone not want to extinguish such a song of 'pigs'? There is a small armoury on the desk, is Heaven going to punish this? I have to cover my ears.¹⁵²

端淑曰：不廢此者，其猶獲豬艾豨之歌也欤，案有寸鐵，天其厭否？吾將掩耳。

The commentary itself was also a display of Wang's classical Confucian education, in which two classical allusions are employed. Firstly, Wang compared this suite to the song of female pigs and male pigs, a classical allusion derived from Zuo's *Commentary on The Spring and*

¹⁵⁰ Xie Boyang ed., *QMSQ* 全明散曲, entry Li Cuiwei, 4265–4266.

¹⁵¹ Li Cuiwei, 'Yuan xiao yan qu 元宵豔曲' (Romantic Song on Lantern Festival), Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji', 38.7a, 38.7b. MYSWCB.

¹⁵² Ibid., 38.7a.

Autumn Annals. In Zuo's *Commentary*, this articulation refers to the love affair between Song Chao, an aristocrat of the state of Song, and Lady Nanzi, the wife of the Duke of Wei (540BC–493BC). One day, the heir apparent of Wei passed through the state of Song and heard the commoners of Song mocking and singing: 'the female pig [referring to Lady Nanzi 南子] has been satisfied, why have you not returned our pretty male pig [referring to Song Chao 宋朝] to us?'¹⁵³ Later, the articulation of *louzhu aijia* 獐豬艾豕 became a reference to adultery and sexual promiscuousness. Wang's harsh critique towards this suite, for which she would rather 'cover her ears', is because this song is the sound of adultery, dissipation and debauchery. Wang's moral stance towards Li's suites perhaps slightly contradicts Wang's previous critique of courtesan songs, where, although some are regarded as 'ingenuine and only for business', an 'offence against the decency' or 'deep-seated bitterly sarcastic lyrics',¹⁵⁴ Wang has shown appreciation of the artistry of courtesan song for their excellent lyrical persona and mastery of music.

The reason why Wang Duanshu harshly condemns Li's suite as the sound of adultery, dissipation and debauchery is clearer when reading Wang's comment alongside a long critique that accompanies the entry of Li Cuiwei in the 'Collection of Rebels' (chapter 34) – a sub-collection within Wang's 1667 anthology where Li's poem was curated. Wang Duanshu accuses Li's father of being 'completely lawless', the murderer of the Ming emperor and consort, responsible for the extinction of three-hundred years of glory of the Ming empire.¹⁵⁵ Wang continues with her critique on Li Cuiwei's husband: 'for those who have slight courage and up-righteousness would be itching for consuming his [Li Zicheng] flesh and sleeping on his skin, how dare someone take his rebellious daughter as a concubine!'¹⁵⁶ Wang's anger and frustration is represented in her radical language of 'consuming flesh' and 'sleeping on skin', which could be regarded as contradictory to her image as a gentlewoman who was expected

¹⁵³ *Chun qiu Zuo zhuan zheng yi* 春秋左傳正義(Commentary on The Spring and Autumn Annals) vol.56. 'Ding gong shisi nian 定公十四年' (the Fourteenth Reign of Duke of Wei), original texts 過宋野人歌之曰: "既定尔獐豬, 盍歸吾艾豕?" online transcribed edition, available at <https://ctext.org/wiki.pl?if=gb&chapter=398740&remap=gb> accessed on 13 March 2020 by revising this reference.

¹⁵⁴ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance); these are the remarks Wang makes on the entries of Gu Changfen 顧長芬(37.17a), Chuji 楚妓(38.4a), and Hu Wenru 呼文如(38.1b), respectively.

¹⁵⁵ Wang Duanshu, 'Ni ji 逆集' Collection of Rebels, 34.5b and 34.6a.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 34.5b.

to ‘speak in a womanly way’ and should be careful ‘to pick the words to say and do not speak evil languages’.¹⁵⁷ When these biographical accounts and comments on Li Cuiwei are read as Wang Duanshu’s historical retrospection of ‘what has caused the collapse of Ming’, her radical wording thus becomes a passionate political criticism.

Wang Duanshu’s questioning of ‘is Heaven going to punish this’ might indicate her further attempt to make sense of the trauma that not only the reading of Li’s indecent songs had caused, but also, ultimately, the suites as a whole as a reminder of the catastrophic dynastic collapse that the rebellious father-daughter team had caused that led to the suffering of the whole nation. ‘Is Heaven going to punish this’ is the second classical allusion that Wang employs in her comment. The articulation relates to the historical reference to the adulterous Lady Nanzi and was recorded in *Lun yu* 論語 (*The Analects of Confucius*). One day, Confucius was summoned to meet Lady Nanzi and one of the students of Confucius, Zi Lu 子路 (542–480 bc), and he was not happy about this. Confucius made an oath saying, ‘if I would do anything that is shameful, let Heaven denounce me! Let heaven punish me!’¹⁵⁸ This classical allusion employed here perhaps also firmly established Wang’s identity as a Confucian.

The ‘utter indecency’ of Li’s suite has to be punished, from the Confucian perspective, as proper music was not only an indispensable tool for maintaining the social structures and order in early imperial China, but also music operated as a function of governance and self-cultivation.¹⁵⁹ Confucianism itself was not only the official governing ideology and the moral guidance of subjects’ self-governance, but also a hallmark of ‘Chinese-ness’ itself. Wang Duanshu’s metaphor could also indicate the morale degradation that such a song could bring.

¹⁵⁷ Lü Kun 呂坤 ed., ‘Gui fan 閨范’ *Female Exemplars*, (Second Part), Chapter 3, ‘Shan xing, furen zhidao 善行·婦人之道’ (Righteous Deeds, Womanly Ways), 1493. On womanly four virtues: 婦德尚靜正, 婦言尚簡婉, 婦工尚周慎, 婦容尚典雅。

¹⁵⁸ *Lun yu* 論語 (*Analects*), 雍也第六, original passage goes 子見南子, 子路不說。夫子矢之曰: 予所否者, 天厭之, 天厭之!

¹⁵⁹ Joseph Lam, ‘Musical Confucianism: The Case of ‘祭孔樂舞’, in *On Sacred Grounds: Culture, Society, Politics, and the Formation of the Cult of Confucius* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002), 134-173, at 135.

Instead of firmly expressing that ‘Heaven will punish’ such ‘utter indecency’, the rhetorical question Wang asks in her comments might also reveal Wang’s personal doubts of whether Heaven would do its justice on the chaos that Li and her father had caused, or in a broader historical sense, the collapse of Ming and its culture. Sage Confucius believed that the Heavenly force in witnessing, punishing and blessing incidents happened on earth, as he says when he was trapped in the State of Kuang:

after King Wen of Zhou [reign 1100–1150 BC] passed away, am I not the embodiment of culture of Rites and Music of Zhou? If Heaven would let the culture of Zhou extinguish, then there is no way it can be invested in me; if Heaven does not extinguish the culture of Zhou, what could you people of Kuang do with me anyway?¹⁶⁰

The articulation of *sang siwen* 喪斯文 – ‘the culture is destroyed’ – contrasts with Confucius’s claim that ‘he could master the culture of Zhou’ and perhaps reveals his status as the true successor of the culture and reflects his sense of heavenly-granted duty, in which he would pass down and revive the culture of Zhou, the roots of orthodox culture, from Chinese antiquity as his mission.

Comprehending these cultural contexts, Wang Duanshu’s comments perhaps reveal a slight desperation of whether or not Ming culture would have its blessing from Heaven, under the political context where Ming loyalists were purged, and the consolidation of the Qing rule strengthened. Possibly without hope that any political action would change the nation’s fate, Wang Duanshu could only ‘cover her ears’ to avoid listening to the song of morale degradation. However, by following the example of Sage Confucius in preserving and reviving the culture of Zhou, curating women’s writing from the Ming period to form a ‘complementary canon’ to the six *classics* was a self-appointed mission by a woman scholar and lady historian in the hope of saving the culture of Ming from vanishing completely.

Whether Wang Duanshu’s critique of Li and her father reflects her real historical reflection on the dynastic fall or served as a disguise in avoiding the toughened Qing state censorship on ‘anti-Qing thoughts’ in publications, the editorial process of the ‘Collection of

¹⁶⁰ *Analects* 9.5, 論語·第九·子罕篇, original passage goes 子畏於匡, 曰: 文王既沒, 文不在茲呼? 天之將喪斯文耶, 後死者不得與于斯文也; 天之未喪斯文也, 匡人其如予何?

Elegance’ was also a carefully decided ‘historical inclusion and exclusion’.¹⁶¹ For Wang Duanshu’s early-Qing readership, especially her contemporaries who had also suffered the dynastic transition and had an equivalent classical education, the sense of personal loss, emotional attachment to late-Ming culture and anger at historical incidents that caused the collapse of Ming would have become a mutually-understood historical retrospection conveyed through the printed pages.

Twentieth-century Chinese intellectuals have looked upon late-Ming culture, and Ming loyalists during the early-Qing period, as inspirational in forming a consciousness of being ‘the remnants of a culture’, and in their broader quest to construct a ‘national identity’ in the Republican era.¹⁶² As chapter 2 mentioned, Lu Qian (1905–1951), a Republican-era intellectual, and one of the founders of the modern study of *qu* in China, not only reprinted ‘Collection of Elegance’ individually and re-entitled it, *Women’s Sanqu from the Ming Dynasty* (1937),¹⁶³ but also reprinted in his multi-author anthology *Songs Printed by the Yinhong Studio*.¹⁶⁴ Lu pays his respect to the Ming canonical *qu* composers and theorists, such as Prince Zhu Youdun, literatus writers Tang Yin, Chen Duo, and Chen Yujiao, but also he allocates certain percentages of space to the Ming remnants in his *Yinhong Studio* reprint. Works include Shen Zijin’s individual song anthology, *Music Bureau of Master Jutong*, and *Written in Prison* by Ming loyalist Xia Wanchun 夏完淳 (1631–1647), who was martyred at the age of sixteen. Whether Lu’s selection strategy was influenced by the twentieth-century consciousness of being ‘the remnants of a culture’, so that he took inspirations from the cultural productions of ‘Ming remnants’, is another topic worth exploring in the area of Chinese *qu* editorship.

Wang Duanshu’s selection of the second half of ‘Collection of Elegance’ and her editorial comments accompanied with the presented arias hint at a degree of not explicit, but

¹⁶¹ Lynn Struve, ‘History and Peach Blossom Fan’, in *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews*, 2/1 (1980), 55–72.

¹⁶² Wai-Yee Li, ‘Early Qing to 1723’, in *Cambridge Literary History of China*, 152–244, at 155.

¹⁶³ Lu Qian 盧前, ‘Ming dai furen sanqu ji 明代婦人散曲集’ *Women’s Sanqu from Ming Dynasty*, (Shanghai, 1973 repr.), SOAS Archives and Special Collections, ref. C.367.m2.81001.

¹⁶⁴ Lu Qian, ‘Ya ji 雅集’ Collection of Elegance, in *Yin hong yi suo ke qu 飲虹簾所刻曲 Songs Printed by the Yinhong Studio*, *Jin ling Lu shi kan ben jing yin 金陵盧氏刊本景印* (Edition of Lu Printed in Nanjing) (Taipei, 1961).

coherent and deft loyalist thought, political criticism and nostalgic lament of the Ming dynastic collapse. Juxtaposing courtesans' arias – a cultural hallmark of late Ming – and a song-suite from a rebel whose father's revolution was regarded as the cause of the fall of Ming, created a degree of textual conflict within the collection. This conflict is also a microcosm of the turbulent transition period from Ming to Qing, a painful process of regime change accompanied by personal loss, violence and cultural alienation. Wang navigated this transition by evoking cultural nostalgia for the glamorous world of late Ming, that was marked by *qing*, creativity and pleasure.

4.7 Chapter Conclusion

In the opening comment in the 'Collection of Elegance', as explained in Chapter 2, Wang Duanshu summarized the phenomenon of contemporary music entertainment of elite society. This description would fit perfectly in the narratives of literati's artistic pursuits in the late Ming context, while the editor's vague description of the specific time that she refers to – by only using the word of *er lai* 迺来, which means 'lately' – opens various interpretations. Wang Duanshu's revisiting of 'late Ming' in print, a label of periodization that was invented by early-Qing writers, may have been a strategy 'under the burden of trying to understand and define their own historical moment' as seen in many early-Qing writers and anthologists' practice.¹⁶⁵ In other words, editing and reprinting late-Ming women's songs in the early-Qing period, and situating them among the 'lately' produced music texts, was part of the dialogue in defining the 'late Ming' and its cultural legacy.

This late-Ming legacy, when viewed from the cultural influence of the courtesans, was clearly an inseparable part of the late-Ming elite discourse. As Ko argues, 'visibility and respectability of courtesan culture was a historical fact particular to the late Ming moment'.¹⁶⁶ These professional female entertainers embody a ray of hallmark late-Ming cultural ideas: *qing*, self-fashioning and the performative self. Through music and poetic references, these

¹⁶⁵ Li, 'Early Qing to 1723', 153.

¹⁶⁶ Ko, 'The Written Word and the Bound Foot', 86.

courtesans' songs created scenes of seduction to negotiate their power at the core of the Ming elite society. Moreover, sophisticated musical-lyrical artistry was employed to negotiate the complexities of gender and identity-performance through the display of private thoughts in texts used for the self-fashioning of public personas. The courtesan world of late Ming, as Li argues, 'is associated with pleasure and passion, it is premised on performance, including theatre, music, storytelling, various modes of acting and self-dramatization'.¹⁶⁷ Courtesans were able to challenge gendered behaviour expectations through elaborate androgynies and adopting typically masculine roles to defy and subvert social norms of power and identity.

Wang Duanshu's editorial gaze in constructing the late-Ming courtesans' public persona through performance texts, viewed in the early-Qing socio-political context, hints at the sentiments of retrospective nostalgia. The ways in which Wang interprets courtesans' songs in her collection is tied with late-Ming tastes, social customs and aesthetics preferences. Both her critique on courtesans' erotic and crafty songs, discussed in Chapter 3, and her connoisseurship of the artistry of courtesans' songs demonstrated in this chapter show both sides of her conflicting view but affirms her subtle appreciation of courtesans as a Ming cultural producer. Through close reading of her commentary on these women's songs we see that, as Widmer observes, 'Wang Duanshu's writing about women are also writings about the Ming'.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁷ Li, 'Heroic Transformations', 442.

¹⁶⁸ Widmer, *Under the Confucian Eyes*, 193, n35.

Chapter 5

Wang Duanshu on Gentlewomen's Songs: Artistry, Subjectivity and 'Canonicity'

5.1 Chapter Introduction

This chapter¹ investigates Wang Duanshu's editorial-critiquing voice concerning gentlewomen's song in the 'Collection of Elegance'. The core research question of this chapter is: to what extent was the 'canonization of women's songs' used as a strategy by Wang Duanshu in tackling the problem of gentlewomen's *qu* publication? In the production of poetry anthologies, canonization is an essential process that has been identified by literary historians as largely absent for the majority of published women's anthologies since the 1550s. Yet, the attempts of canonization of women's poetry failed; firstly, due to literati's lack of genuine intention of constructing a women's canon rather than their interest in anthologizing women's writing as a self-negotiation of marginalized elite social status,² or 'their 'obsession' and enchantment of women's lives, writings and femininity led them to the world of self-contentment'.³ Secondly, the editors of women's literary anthologies often selected arbitrarily and collections also 'pirated' each other in their contents, thus a lack of genuine intention to 'name' the tradition.⁴

This chapter demonstrates how Wang Duanshu's editorial commentary shifts the presentation of women's *qu* from musical-lyrical expressions of female *qu* writers' 'private thoughts' to artistic presentations of female authorship. In doing so, Wang Duanshu also displays her knowledge and preference of music aesthetics through editing, and her

¹ All primary source cited in this chapter, either in direct quotation or paraphrased, all translations are my own, except where otherwise indicated.

² Sufeng Xu, 'The Rhetoric of Legitimation' 259, 285 and 288.

³ Kang-I Sun Chang, 'Questions of Gender and Canon in the Ming-Qing Literature', in 'Ming Qing wen hua xin lun 明清文化新論' (*New Directions in the Study of Ming-Qing Culture*), ed. Chen-main Wang (Taipei, 2000), 217–239, at 221–222.

⁴ Fong, 'Gender and the Failure of Canonization', at 132–136 and 146–147.

intentional comparison between gentlewomen writers' arias and late-Ming male canons in *qu*, as part of the process in forming women's writing as a complementary canon or 'canon-in-becoming' during her editorial negotiation. This specific editorial agenda also echoes what Wang had envisaged for the entire *Notable Women* anthology: to 'emerge a women's canon that complements the *classics*'.

This chapter first explores the phenomenon of women's 'illusionary absence' in music as a way of 'reinforcing the canon of male directly constructed print culture' in literati-mediated works.⁵ Through looking at the contemporary textual and paratextual presentations of women in the male-mediated materials of *qu* publications, this chapter reveals the gendered ideologies in constructing authorship. This chapter investigates, how Wang Duanshu's presentation of women through her editorial voice as rewriting the 'dominant modes of authorisation' in 'Collection of Elegance'.⁶

This chapter perceives Wang Duanshu's editorship as 'reproductive authorship'. This notion has been defined by Patricia Sieber in her study of literati's editorship of drama miscellanies between the mid-Ming and early-Qing periods, in which literati recycled pre-existing materials to create their own distinctive editions. Literati editors and anthologists, as Sieber argues,

did not simply attribute these works to an original or pseudonymous author. Likewise, they did not declare the edited works to be their exclusive creation ... more or less self-consciously flaunting their editorial impersonations, such "reader-writers" concentrated on pre-existing texts, but they leveraged the textual and visual particulars of their works to considerable effect ... Through the creation of elaborately conceived paratexts, revision, commentary, order, pairing, and illustrations, they could translate a consummately construed vision of the past into the detailed materiality of particular editions.⁷

This analytical approach offers a lens in which to not only explore how Wang Duanshu's role in anthologizing women's *qu* could be regarded as editing, but also as a form of rewriting. Wang Duanshu's dual role as curator of the texts and textual commentator provides a materiality to the placement of the texts in relation to each other. The ordering of the texts,

⁵ Wall, *The Imprints of Gender*, 6-7.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Sieber, *Theatres of Desire*, 170-171.

in which Wang's paratexts – her commentaries – are always physically foregrounded, have formed a discursive channel by which meaning was and is transmitted, and the meaning can be shared between Wang Duanshu and her intended readers. This chapter examines Wang's authorial role in re-introducing texts as part of the ongoing discourses of gender identities and women's voices and allows it to both enter the canon and formulate a women's canon.

5.2 Gentlewomen *qu* Writers from 'Absence' to 'Presence'

Ming China, as Lam argues, enjoyed many genres of music that 'men and women, elite and commoners, collectively produced and consumed'.⁸ This production and consumption, however, was 'neither gender-blind nor class blind'.⁹ Previous chapters show that *qu*, as a literati genre, was taken into practice by women from both elite and artisan classes in Ming. Among these female songwriters we see the leading role of courtesans as performers, writers and transmitters of the new music fashion of *qu* in late Ming. Courtesans' elegant and yet seductive performance of independent arias were central to the male elite entertainment culture. Contrasting with courtesans' music practice, Ming gentlewomen's choice of engaging with music was more conditioned and restricted. However, 'literati daughters and wives', as Ko argues, have 'benefited from a daily immersion in music and literature'.¹⁰ In an era of publishing boom and expansion of women's education, 'gentry women had relatively more opportunities than previous to learn about, read, and acquire the textual production of other women'.¹¹

This 'loosened' limitation on gentlewomen's involvement in cultural learning and production other than 'womanly work' also signified the social changes in the thinking, ideologies and customs of the late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Chinese elite society. The contemporary discourse on gentlewomen's cultural practice affirms their new role as female poets, as a part of the idea of 'new womanhood'. In particular, music created a space where class and gender boundaries were permeable in Ming. Courtesans' musical allure

⁸ Lam, 'Music and Male Bonding in Ming China', 75.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 78.

¹¹ Fong, *Herself an Author*, 121.

helped them to gain ‘special access to the elite circle’,¹² as seen in Chu ji’s case (discussed in Chapter 3), and fashioned themselves among elite audiences through an artistically constructed public persona. In a sense, gentlewomen in *qu* writing may have mirrored social changes more distinctively, as their practice itself does not link with the intention to allure clients as their contemporary professional female musician counterparts did.

The fixity of womanly conduct and cultural practice can also be seen through music listening practice. Even for women as auditors, their social behaviour was tied to the idea of respectability. The gentry-born woman sat behind a screen attending a music-drama performance was a listening ‘ritual’ that symbolized the physical separation of gendered spheres.¹³ In early-Qing memoirs, descriptions of how ex-courtesans who married into the elite class unbound her ‘disorderliness’ of being a professional musical entertainer, by ‘dropping off’ their artistic talents, shows that their musical talent was tied to their previous profession.

It is helpful to first look at presentations of gentlewomen’s cultural contribution in liberal genres such as *qu* and music in contemporary male-authored textual sources. It demonstrates the socio-cultural contexts in which Ming female *qu* writers practiced their writing, and how the phenomenon of ‘illusory absence’ of women in music permeated these sources. Secondly, it is important to consider the seventeenth-century literati’s changing attitudes towards gentlewomen’s cultural involvement in liberal genres as a part of women’s education that offered women a larger role than the objectified presence in previous textual collections.¹⁴ However, this larger role was still restricted by the male expectation of appropriate feminine behaviour which limited the critical engagement with women’s song and did not showcase its

¹² Lai, ‘Pipa Artists and Their Music in Late Ming China’, 59. I have found courtesans’ modes of production of *sanqu* art songs bear striking resonance in terms of their social functions with late-Ming female instrumentalists’ performance, as discussed in Lai’s article.

¹³ Lu Eting 陸萼庭, *Kunju Yanchu Shigao* 昆曲演出史稿 *Sources on Historical Performance Records of Kunqu*, (Shanghai, 1980), 120.

¹⁴ Joseph Lam, ‘Reading Music’; on Dong Bai after her marriage with esquire Mao Xiang, 216; Yu Huai’s *Plank Bridge* memoir entitles Dong Bai as *qu sheng* 曲圣, namely ‘highly skilled in playing all sorts of music’, indicating that Dong was an outstanding instrumentalist, 2015 reprint, 34; in Zhang Dai’s *Dream Reminisce* memoir, Dong’s name is listed among the courtesans who Zhang considered a skilled operatic singer, in ‘*Guo jian men* 過劍門’, 2015 reprint, 137; also see Cass, ‘The Theatre and the Crowd’, discussion on Dong as skilled *kunqu* singer, 112.

full vitality and nuance. This liberal attitude did provide certain possibilities for gentlewomen writers to break the gendered barriers of traditional practice and enter the field of *qu* in a dynamic and fluid society.

Wang Duanshu's commentary explores women's songs in greater critical depth, drawing out the experiences and critiques of contemporary society implicit in the realities these women songwriters displayed, in comparison with the pre-existing male-mediated textual presentations. This brief exploration contributes to the understanding of how Wang Duanshu's editorial practice in 'Collection of Elegance', despite the contemporary traditionalist, if passive rather than aggressive, hostility to women's practice, defied critical convention in its engagement with sources while employing the techniques and language of canonization. In this way, Wang Duanshu challenged critical and cultural orthodoxies and fully embraced women's agency in music.

5.2.1 *The 'illusory absence' of gentlewomen in qu writing*

In his attributed preface (dated 1636) to his niece's *Dreams of Mandarin Ducks*, male critic Shen Zizheng 沈自徵 (1591–1641) claimed that 'lyrics and arias are prosperous since the Yuan dynasty, however, I have never heard of a gentlewoman who is an expert at composing it'.¹⁵ Praising Ye Xiaowan's 葉小紈 (1613–1657) achievements in composing this northern song-drama, Shen continues, 'thanks to my unusually talented niece Huichou 蕙綢 [Xiaowan's courtesy name] her drama fills the gap of what boudoir has never had'.¹⁶ Shen's claim could be interpreted as a deliberate plan to compliment his niece and market her work as a unique 'phenomenon' in *qu* circles: a northern drama composed by a female writer and a piece that 'filled the gap' both in terms of gentlewomen's contribution and the absence of gentlewomen in the field of *qu*. However, his claim that gentlewomen have not achieved in this area, or that he 'has never heard of a gentlewoman who is expert at composing' demonstrate the ignorance of men to the work composed by women. Whether this was a

¹⁵ Shen Zizheng 沈自徵, 'Yuan yang meng xu 鴛鴦夢序' Preface to *Dreams of Mandarin Ducks*, in ZGXQXH, vol.4, 929–930. 若夫詞曲一派，最盛于金元，未聞有擅能閨秀者。

¹⁶ Ibid. 綢甥獨出俊才，補從來閨房所未有。

deliberate ploy on his part to raise the profile of his niece, or genuine ignorance, it is remarkable that someone claiming the authority to speak to the value of composition could profess not to know any talented women without losing all credibility.

Ye Xiaowan composed *Dreams of Mandarin Ducks* to mourn the premature deaths of her sisters: Ye Xiaoluan 葉小鸞 (1616–1632) and Ye Wanwan 葉紈紈 (1610–1633).¹⁷ This piece is also said to be the first complete extant northern song-drama that was composed by a female author.¹⁸ The drama tells a story of three brothers (as the thinly disguised three Ye sisters) reunited (after the death of the eldest and youngest brothers) and immortalized in the other world. The plot dramatizes the tragic early death of two sisters, while the gender crossing of three Ye sisters that appeared in the drama as men is indeed open to interpretation.¹⁹ This drama piece, alongside Ye Xiaoluan's individual collection and their mother Shen Yixiu's (1580–1635) poetry collection are all included and collectively published in Ye Shaoyuan's 葉紹袁 (1589–1648) edited family literary anthology, *Wu meng tang ji* 午夢堂集 (*Collected works from the Daydreamer's Studio* 1636).²⁰ Literary and artistic endeavours were encouraged on a daily basis in the Ye household; however, the collection is filtered through Ye Shaoyuan's editorship and his editorial ploy of presenting the writings of his wife and daughters through his prefatory writing and commentaries and thus shaped the contemporary perceptions on how to read these writings.²¹

Shen Zizheng's claim might have been true in the socio-cultural contexts of the Yuan dynasty (1260–1368); as previous research has shown, female *qu* writers of the Yuan period were exclusively courtesans.²² The genre of *qu*, which Shen claims was 'prosperous since

¹⁷ Ibid. Shen's preface identifies that the drama is to mourn her sisters through theatrical metaphors and dramatized emotion through dramatic fantasies. 故寓言匹鳥，託情夢幻，良可悲哉。

¹⁸ Liang Hon Lam, 'Ye Xiaoluan', in *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women, Volume II: Tang Through Ming 618–1644*, Lily Xiao Hong Lee and Sue Wiles (London, 2015), 337–338.

¹⁹ Ibid; also see Chiu-Ti Liu, 'Shen Yixiu and her Daughter, Ye Wanwan, Ye Xiaowan, and Ye Xiaoluan', in *Women Writers of Traditional China*, eds. Chang, Saussy and Yim-Kwong, 383–414, at 267.

²⁰ Ye Shaoyuan 葉紹袁, 'Wu meng tang ji 午夢堂集' (*Collected works from the Daydreamer's Studio*), (Shanghai, 1926 reprint), first volume, 1–16. [hereafter: WMTJ]

²¹ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 58.

²² Guo Mei 郭梅, 'Zhong guo gudai nü qu jia de chuang zuo shijian ji xintai 中国古代女曲家的创作实践及心态' (Practice and Mentality of Chinese Female *qu* Writers of the Imperial Dynasties), *Hebei xue kan* 河北學刊 *Hebei Academic Journal*, 2 (1995), 65–69, at 65.

Yuan', blossomed and reached its pinnacle of popularity, especially with the emergence of *zaju* – a type of four-act song-drama set to northern music in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries.²³ However, extant late-Ming historical evidence suggests that gentlewomen produced *qu*, including song-dramas, even before Ye's 'first-ever' female-authored piece was published. Gentlewomen *qu* writers, such as Liang Mengzhao (c.1572–1640) who composed at least the song-drama *Xiang si yan* 相思硯 (*Inkstone of Lovesickness*), and courtesan writers, such as Ma Xianglan whose song-drama has not survived, lived a few decades before Ye Xiaowan.

The process of publicizing Ye's drama – from its publication to the paratextual contribution perhaps displays the dominant, male-mediated approach of disseminating gentlewomen's writing in seventeenth-century China. The position of gentlewomen was still presented from a Confucian traditionalist perspective, and the ways in which women's practice were presented through male-mediation functions as 'a metaphor for the insecurities of a patriarchal order', and as a way of 'reinforcing the canon of male directly constructed print culture' in literati mediated works.²⁴ Specifically, in the realm of music, this strategy of the textual representation of women led to a cultural phenomenon of 'illusory absence' that existed, as Lam identifies, since antiquity.²⁵ This illusion of the absence of women in music was created through the 'Confucian strategy of banishment and retreat'; that is, to intentionally leave out women in textual records, official treatises and canons.²⁶ The illusion also lies in the gaps in women's practice in reality and on-page, between official disdain and popular embrace.²⁷ The illusion is deeply grounded in the conflicts between the Confucian treatises regarding the proper function of music as a means of 'self-cultivation and governance', and the male desire for the sensuality of women's music when presented with the physical presence of the female performers.²⁸

²³ Sieber, *Theatres of Desire*, 1–3.

²⁴ Wall, *The Imprint of Gender*, 7.

²⁵ Joseph Lam, 'The Presence and Absence', 97, 98, 106 and 116.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid. On music as a means of virtue cultivation in Confucianism, see Lam, 'Musical Confucianism: The Case of "Jikong yuewu"', 134–173.

The authorial attributions of gentlewomen to *qu* compositions may even suffer the elimination of the authorial role. The eliminated attribution to the woman's contribution to a song-drama piece, or the fact that male literati 'did not acknowledge any help that she may have given', as Lam points out, 'is typical of the traditional Chinese treatment of female musicians'.²⁹ Ye Xiaowan's contemporary Ruan Lizhen 阮麗珍 (?-1653), a late Ming gentlewoman and dramatist – daughter of the notorious Ming court official Ruan Dacheng (c. 1587-1646), may have been left out completely as the author of a song-drama in textual evidence. Ruan is said to be the true author of the romantic comedy song-drama *Yanzi jian* 燕子箋 (*Swallow Letters*). In a canonical early twentieth-century textual study on the source of imperial Chinese female writers, Hu Wenkai claimed that Ruan Dacheng's role in producing this song-drama was only in 'revising', while Ruan Lizhen was the real drafter.³⁰ Despite Ruan's expertise in composing, her other song-dramas did not avoid the common destiny of many women's writing that eventually 'vanished like smoke and water'. Instead, both historically and today, this piece is regarded as one of Ruan Dacheng's best works, which flourished in theatres and 'became widely and wildly popular, and it was presented at the court in Nanjing in 1644'.³¹

It is not known whether the disputed authorship of *Swallow Letters* was an act of appropriation by Ruan's father, or a mutually agreed decision in order to make the song-drama enter the public realm so that Ruan Lizhen could strategically distance herself from *qu* due her elite status as a powerful (yet notorious) courtier's daughter, who was expected to perform her womanly virtue when accessing liberal genres. The Ruan father-daughter example mirrors the contrast between power dynamics of the 'illusory absence' of the gentlewoman-composer and their outputs in *qu* production, and the strong dominance of literati writers and critics, such as Ruan Dacheng, who used music and theatre as social occasion to plot political agendas, establish bonds of allies and gain the favours of their sovereign.³²

²⁹ On Hong Sheng's concubine and her contribution in finalizing the scene of ballads, see Lam, 'A Kunqu Masterpiece and its Interoperations', 112.

³⁰ Hu, *Textual Research on Women's Writing of Past Dynasties*, 120–121.

³¹ Cyril Birch, *Scenes for Mandarins: The Elite Theatre of the Ming* (New York, 1955), 220.

³² Ibid.

Ming gentlewomen's absence in the field of *qu* (and music in general) and the construction of gendered ideals reflects how Confucian traditions and ideology of presenting women in public was still the dominant mode of production even in the liberal society of late Ming and early Qing. Wang Duanshu's collection clearly demonstrates not just the quality of women's song at this time, but that it was widely known and favourably regarded – even if not on equal terms with men. Shen's freedom to make this claim without losing cultural credibility is evidence of the entrenched hostility that manifested against affording women's status in the canon as equals before Wang created her collection.

5.2.2 *Gentlewomen's practice of qu in the seventeenth century*

The upheaval in seventeenth-century Chinese society due to political changes and the continuing philosophical influence of late-Ming liberal thought extended to contemporary literati's liberal views towards women and their artistic practice in liberal genres. The playwright Li Yü can be viewed as a representative of those who publicly supported women's literary and artist talents.³³ Li was educated under late Ming and achieved career success as a literati-entrepreneur-dramatist during early Qing; he expressed his doubts on the previous view against women's liberal education to include music and the practice of the arts.³⁴ Li's action of inviting Huang Yuanjie and Wang Duanshu to preface his own song-dramas, as discussed in Chapter 1, displays his recognition not only of women's talents, but also his liberal thoughts on women's practice and knowledge in the liberal arts. Li's advocacy of women's education in liberal genres is a reflection of social progression; such a view could be ultimately 'self-serving', revealing not only Li's own eccentric public persona but also a male desire to define women's beauty.³⁵ Women's talents, as the new social expectation of gendered performance in the seventeenth century, was a significant component of the new womanhood.

³³ Chang, *Crisis and Transformation*, 68–69.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Chang, *Crisis and Transformation*, 69–70. For Li Yü's view and cultivation of womanly beauty and education of concubines (he was himself a polygamist), see Ko, *Teachers in the Inner Chambers*, 264–266.

Despite the expansion of women's education indicating a measure of social progress in terms of gender equality, the ultimate purpose of women's education was to serve her expected gendered performance. This aim of education was distinct from the men, whose education was aimed to prepare them for *wen* 文 (literature) and *zheng* 政 (governance, officialdom and statecraft).³⁶ Paradoxically, women from elite backgrounds were prepared for the roles of wife and motherhood,³⁷ and 'gained access to the world of scholarship previously reserved for the public men ... [as it] enlarged gentlewomen's horizons without her having to step out of her home'.³⁸ Re-viewing Ruan Lizhen's example from this angle, it is perhaps due to her being able to access the resources that her father – a talented dramatist and owner of one of the top-ranking domestic music troupes – could offer that her talent in *qu* could be encouraged and put into action.

Wang Duanshu also paid attention to 'women's poetry that has vanished like smoke and water, or those women ... [who] have left behind no poetry' in *Notable Women*,³⁹ by including names of female writers who had left behind no surviving work in the 'Collection of Omitted Writings and Pictorial Collection', showing her genuine editorial concern for the preservation of women's writings and their authorship. As a result, women's talents in music are recorded in Wang's biographical accounts. In her lists of names, it can be seen that Ming women practiced music in a broad sense: it shows courtesans acted as instrumentalists, singers, composers or operatic actresses; their musical skill was vital to their professional career. However, gentlewomen were present in the late-Ming music scene as music producers. Wang Duanshu's mother, for example, was among those listed who Wang claimed had a good knowledge of music, and may have influenced Wang from an early age.

Compared to a longer list of their courtesan counterparts (see Appendix B), the Ming gentlewomen perhaps had less initiative in music as a practical subject, due to their privileges by birth and their daily immersion in literature and music; they did not need to use music as a

³⁶ See Lisa Rosenlee's discussion of gendered division of labour in Confucian hierarchical society, in *Confucianism and Women: A Philosophical Interpretation* (New York, 2006), 29, 133 and 153.

³⁷ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 11–12 and 156.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

³⁹ Wang Duanshu, 'Zi xu 自序' (Preface to *Notable Women*), 3.b. 其或能詩而湮沒擅書事而不能詩者，皆為存其姓氏則為遺集繪集

way of making a living. *Qu* may not have been a desirable genre of self-expression for gentlewomen, as has been partially explained by Wang Duanshu, due to the difficulty in mastering its composition. Apart from the impact on womanly conduct for choosing such genres, Wang's comments within 'Collection of Elegance' perhaps also reveals certain reasons why *qu* would appear to be less desirable. As Wang writes in her opening commentary on the entry of Liang Mengzhao, 'it is easy to possess talents in poetry; to learn *qu* composing, however, is very difficult. One can make painstaking efforts to learn the music of Suzhou, even until one's "hair turns white", one can still not be proficient in *qu* composing'.⁴⁰ 'Music of Suzhou' that Wang refers to is the Kunshan (a county of Suzhou) style of music that was in vogue among the elite and was utilized in the composition of independent arias and southern song-dramas during the late-Ming period. Wang Duanshu's commentary could have derived from her own experience of, and reflection on, *qu* compositional practice. She composed six independent arias, and they were placed in the last chapter of her individual collection, *Red Chantings*.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji 雅集' Collection of Elegance, 37.8b. 詩才易，曲學難。苦心吳歆，浩首難精

⁴¹ Wang Duanshu, 'Yin hong ji 吟紅集' *Red Chantings*, chapter 30, in vol. 82, *QDSWHB*, facsimile (Beijing, 2011 repr.), 111.

Table 5.1. Wang Duanshu's biographical accounts of gentlewomen's musical talents recorded in the 'Yi ji 遺集' (Collection of Omitted Writings) and the 'Hui ji 繪集' (Pictorial Collection) in Notable Women.⁴²

<i>Names of entry</i>	<i>Social status</i>	<i>Page numbers in collections</i>	<i>Biographical account</i>	<i>English translation</i>
Chapter 32 – first half of <i>Collection of Omitted Writings</i>				
Lady Yao 姚孺人	Gentlewoman, mother of Wang Duanshu	32.2a	曉音律，工圍棋	has good command of knowledge in music, also good at chess
Madame Chen 陳氏	Gentlewoman	32.3a	夫婦皆讀書，善琴	Chen and her husband are both learned; she is good at zither playing
Hu Zhenbo 胡貞波	Gentlewoman	32.3b	能琴能蕭，曉音律	plays zither and vertical bamboo flute, and has good command of knowledge in music
Chapter 40 – <i>Pictorial Collection</i>				
He Yuxian 何玉仙	Gentlewoman	40.1b	解音律，尤善琵琶	possesses knowledge of music, especially good at pipa-lute playing
Wu Xiaokun 吳小坤	Gentlewoman	40.1b	能文，琴奕書畫，無不精曉	can write prose, play zither, chess, calligraphy, and painting; there is none that she could not master
Wang Zhaungshu 王莊淑	Gentlewoman, cousin of Wang Duanshu	40.1b	能文，善琴畫，早歿	can write prose; good at zither and painting; she passed away at a young age

The extant textual evidence of Ming gentlewomen's cultural involvement in music, although thinly described and scattered in writings, reflects a space in the domestic and private sphere in which women's musical activity was allowed despite its gendered and hierarchical socio-cultural expectations and restrictions. It is also worth noticing that four out of the six gentlewomen listed in Table 5.1 all played *qin* 琴 – the seven-string zither. As a musical instrument that was learned and practiced by Confucius himself, 'the supremacy of the *ch'in* in [Chinese musical] aesthetics is little disputed'.⁴³ To Ming gentlewomen,

⁴² Wang Duanshu, 'Yi ji 遺集' (Collection of Omitted Writings) and 'Hui ji 繪集' (Pictorial Collection), *MYSWCB*.

⁴³ Tien, *The Semantics of Chinese Music*, 185.

practising *qin* music was not merely a subject of learning. It was a means of self-cultivation of moral virtue, self-consciousness of the orthodox practice of Confucianism, and self-identification with the contemporary aspirational literati elite. This particular music instrument was chosen for a reason, as the instrument and its music carried a prestige, and most importantly, its properness was reflected in *qin* music aesthetics and was deemed appropriate for the expected social performance of gentlewomen's virtue.

The brief survey of this section on gentlewomen's output in Ming music production examines the socio-cultural context regarding the reality of gentlewomen's involvement in music covered by the intentionally created 'illusory absence'. It also shows that gentlewomen's practice was bound by a series of codes of conduct defined by womanly virtues. The genres of *qu* and *qin* constituted the music sub-culture of Ming literati.⁴⁴ While *qin* music embodied the orthodox and ancient aesthetics, *qu* was a challenge to the orthodox, an alternative genre for which mid-Ming literati initially needed to justify their engagement.⁴⁵ However, the late Ming saw the blossoming of literati discourse and creation in *qu*. It reflects a freedom which literati had when engaging with the popular, fashionable and unorthodox; without the professional background as music entertainers to fall back on, gentlewomen's practice in *qu* needed to earn a place in the field.

⁴⁴ Lam, 'Imperial Agency in Ming Music Culture', 299-303

⁴⁵ Tian Yuan Tan, *Songs of Contentment*, 14, 235 and 248.

5.3 The Rise of Gentlewomen Songwriters in Ming

In ‘Collection of Elegance’, the texts of Wang Duanshu’s opening editorial commentary guided the readers and indicated the duality of reading the lyrics as performance repertoire and lyric texts. By placing this commentary at the beginning of the collection and before the first entry of Huang E 黃峨 (1489-1569), suggests that Wang allegorically spoke of the fine quality of gentlewomen’s arias. Wang Duanshu’s personal preference for favouring gentlewomen’s songs is reflected in the number of entries. Gentlewomen authors featured within the collection are represented by the number of their works: the first three gentlewomen entries – Huang E (1498–1569), Xu Yuan 徐媛 (c.1560–1617) and Liang Mengzhao 梁孟昭 (c.1572–1640) – take a relatively large amount of the entire sub-collection, with twelve independent arias and song-suite in total. Such selection may have been due to the authors representing her own social standing and womanly virtue, or the fact that she had easier access to gentlewomen’s writings while collecting sources.

The gentlewomen-composed songs that Wang Duanshu presented and selected in her ‘Collection of Elegance’, as discussed so far (see Chapter 3 for Hao Xiang’e and Chapter 4 for Zhang Siyin) illustrate the composers’ excellent skills and sophisticated lyrical writing that were grounded in seventeenth-century elite fashion. Due to their different social backgrounds and expected gendered performance, gentlewomen and courtesans are represented in comparison in this collection, as the analysis has illustrated, showing the diversity of musical styles and social functions of the composition. If courtesans’ songs are grouped to preserve the aura and allure of the unique late-Ming courtesan class as retrospective nostalgia, the specifics of Wang’s selection of gentlewomen’s songs may be linked to genre that was regarded as alternative, liberal, and perhaps inappropriate to the gentlewomen’s social status.

5.3.1 *From the perspective of contemporary aficionados*

The late-Ming period witnessed an increased public visibility for gentlewomen writers through their contemporaries' written appreciations of their writings. Despite not achieving as wide a circulation or attention that female-composed poetry received, many songs that Wang Duanshu presented and selected in her 'Collection of Elegance' were previously printed in literati edited songbooks. This suggests a certain degree of publicity or popularity of some gentlewomen's songs. The primary function of these literati songbooks, as mentioned in Chapter 3, was the guidance of song appreciation, singing and composing. This feature of the source materials could also suggest that gentlewomen-authored songs were performable; these songs fit literati standards for *qu* writing and thus indicate the high standards of women's composition.

Perhaps there would have been no better choice than presenting Huang E (1489–1569) as the first entry of the entire 'Collection of Elegance'. Not only is Huang the only mid-Ming (1470s–1570s) writer included in the sub-collection, but also most of Huang's preserved works are written in *ci* and *sanqu* genres, unlike the predominant trend of the preserved writings of the late-Ming gentlewomen in *shi* poetry. In other words, Huang could be perceived as a female songwriter or lyricist, as her major accomplishments are in lyrics and songs.⁴⁶ She did, however, compose poetry; as Qian's *Successive Reign* anthology claims, Huang occasionally wrote poems and she did not save her manuscripts, so not even her younger family members could access these writings.⁴⁷ Many of Huang's writings, as discussed in Chapter 2, were written to communicate with her husband, who was sentenced to exile in Yunnan while Huang spent the majority of her years of married life alone to manage the household.⁴⁸ In the *Notable Women* anthology, Huang's poems are preserved in 'Main Collection', with Wang Duanshu's biographical account clearly remarking that Huang's poems were to 'mainly recall [the] past with emotion for sending to her husband', so they

⁴⁶ Idema and Grant, *The Red Brush: Writing Women of Imperial China*, 287–288.

⁴⁷ Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *LCSJXZ* (Shanghai, 1983 reprint), 730. 詩不多作，亦不存稿，雖子弟不得見也

⁴⁸ Chen Hsiao-Lan and F.W. Mote, 'Huang E (1498-1569)', in *Women Writers of Traditional China*, eds. Chang, Saussy and Yim-Kwong, 172-178, at 173.

have been named as ‘Collected Poems of the Wife of Yang *Zhuanyuan* 楊狀元’.⁴⁹ The conjugal communication between Huang and Yang is one of the most famous poetic dialogues in Chinese literary history; Qian’s biographical account claims that ‘the lyrics and songs that Huang E sent to her husband have been widely read in artistic and literary circles’.⁵⁰ Huang’s poems that were previously circulating through print attest to Qian’s statement of the wide circulation: four particular poems are present in literati-anthologized multi-author women’s collection during the second wave of Ming anthologies of women’s writing – *Ming yuan hui shi* 名媛彙詩 (*Classified Poetry of Women, Ancient and Modern* 1620), *Ming yuan shi gui* 名媛詩歸 (*Sources of Poems by Notable Women c.1625*), and *Gujin nüshi* 古今女史 (*Female Scribes, Ancient and Modern* 1628).⁵¹

Whereas Huang’s writing dedicated to Yang Shen shows her wifely devotion and loyalty to her husband, the artistry of her songs, in particular, were appraised publicly in the ‘world of art’ (*yi lin* 藝林). Specifically, her ‘Bitter Rain’ suite to the tune ‘Golden Oriels’ was especially well-known among mid- and late-Ming literati critics, and a few representative remarks on this song-suite follow:

In 1608, five volumes of *Song Lyrics of Huang E* published under the name of Xu Wei, speak highly of Huang’s songs, observing that the quality of her lyrics are ‘refined, elegant, and genteel; the way she fills the lyrics and uses the rhyme to fit the metrical pattern and music temperament well’ and praises ‘Huang’s talents ranks the first amongst women’.⁵²

In his *Yi yuan zhi yan* 藝苑卮言 (*Remarks on the Arts*), Wang Shizhen 王世貞 (1526–1690), the leader of the ‘seven late masters’ (*hou qi zi* 後七子) praised ‘the wife of Yang Shen [who] also has literary and artistic talents. While Yang was in exile in the southern border, Huang sent a poem and the lyrics of ‘Golden Oriels’ to her husband. Yang

⁴⁹ Wang Duanshu, ‘Zheng ji 正集’ (Main Collection), 4.2b. *Zhuanyuan* was the optimum title that was conferred on the number one top-ranking candidate in the highest imperial civil service examination. 黃所作詩多寄遠感懷，名曰楊狀元妻詩。

⁵⁰ Qian Qianyi, *LCSJXZ*, 730. 寄用修長句及小詞，為藝林傳頌

⁵¹ All these anthologies are available on Ming-Qing Women’s Writing database, McGill University. The four poems are ‘ying ying 鶯鶯 orioles’, ‘wen jun 文君 my husband’, ‘ji wai 寄外 send to my husband’, and ‘ting liu 庭榴 pomegranate tree in the courtyard’. Wang Duanshu, in *MYSWCB*, selected three of the listed apart from the last ‘pomegranate’; ‘Zheng ji’ 4.3a, 4.3b.

⁵² Yang Yusheng 楊禹聲, ‘Yang Sheng’an xian sheng furen yuefu xu 楊升庵先生夫人樂府序’ (Preface to *Song Lyrics of Huang E*), in *QMSQ*, 1769. 旨趣嫺雅風致翩翩，填詞用韻天然合律，才藝冠女班。

replied with three matching ‘Parting’ lyrics to Huang E; however, none of them can defeat the original’.⁵³

Wang Jide observed in his *Qu lü* 曲律 (*Prosody of Qu*) for ‘the northern songs of [the] Yuan dynasty, a few courtesans could have had a hand in its composition. For the southern lyrics of this dynasty, only Yang Shen’s wife and her ‘Golden Oriels’ ... is slightly circulated, despite the inconsistency of its rhyming, it does not engage with the reserved and charming expressions of the boudoir style’.⁵⁴

Later critics including Zhang Qi’s *Heng qu chen tan* 衡曲塵譚 (*Worldly Remarks on Song* 1637) also speak highly of Huang’s literary gifts. In his essay, Zhang remarks on Huang’s suites, set to the tune ‘Golden Oriels’, as ‘reaching excellence in each character, even her husband’s three parting and reunion lyrics cannot defeat, thus it is truly a rare piece’.⁵⁵

These critical contemporary evaluations of Huang E’s song-suite reflect the few concurrent trends of publicizing women’s writings from mid Ming onwards. Huang’s individual song collection, *Song Lyrics of Huang E*, along with the preface that was signed and written by the literatus-critic Xu Wei, is known to have been forged by the commercial book-trader Yang Yusheng 楊禹聲 (date unknown).⁵⁶ This forgery not only shows Huang’s fame during the late-Ming period, but also, considering the historical context of the late-Ming book market and its rising demand of women’s writing and writings about women, the intentional combination of Huang and Xu Wei would have created an appealing commercial market commodity. In Yang Yusheng’s preface to this forged collection, he also claims Huang’s ‘Golden Oriels’ lyrics ‘enjoy great popularity’, and ‘her prolific talent could favourably compare with Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084–1151) and Zhu Shuzhen 朱淑真 (1135–1180)’ – both prominent female lyricists of the Song dynasty.⁵⁷

⁵³ Wang Shizhen 王世貞, ‘Yi yuan zhi yan 藝苑卮言’ (*Remarks on the Arts*), in *LDQHBB*, vol.1 521. 楊用修婦亦有才情，楊久戍滇中，婦寄寄外一律...又黃鶯兒一詞...楊又別和三詞，俱不能勝。

⁵⁴ Wang Jide, *Prosody of Qu* 曲律, in *LDQHBB*, vol. 2, 140–141. 元人北詞，二三青樓人尚能染指。今南詞僅楊用修夫人黃鶯兒...一詞稍傳，第用韻出入，亦恨無閨閣婉媚之致。

⁵⁵ Zhang Qi 張琦, *Worldly Remarks on Song* 衡曲塵譚, in *LDQHBB*, vol.3, 350. 楊夫人亦饒才學，最佳者如黃鶯兒...一曲，字字絕佳，楊別和三詞，俱不能勝，固奇品也 all four quotes translated by author.

⁵⁶ Xie Boyang ed., *QMSQ*, 1770.

⁵⁷ Yang Yusheng 楊禹聲, ‘Yang furen yuefu ciyu yin 楊夫人樂府詞餘引’ (Introduction to *Song Lyrics of Huang E*), in *LDQHBB*, vol.1, 263. “積雨釀輕寒“一律膾炙人口...夫人才情甚富，不讓易安、淑貞。

On the other hand, remarks by Wang Ji-de demonstrate the stereotyped view of what women's writings should have been. In Wang's view, perhaps due to a lack of the feminine traits in Huang's lyrics, he stated: 'I doubt if it is a piece of work that her husband writes on her behalf'.⁵⁸ This stereotyped view also exist in early Qing era, as editor Zhou Liang-gong 周亮工 (*jinshi* 進士 1640) points out that women's epistolary writings 'if not express boudoir laments, they report nuptial dates; if the letters are not about love affairs of making an oath, it is the sorts about fixing arrangement for fine tea tasting'.⁵⁹ Despite Zhang Qi making a similar remark about Wang Ji-de in terms of the style of gentlewomen's song-writing (as discussed in Chapter 3: Zhang regarded 'lyrics from the fragrant boudoir should be reserved while meandering and full of beauty'),⁶⁰ Zhang and Wang Shizhen both give recognition to Huang's original song, and regard it as superior to her husband's three matching lyrics.

Wang and Zhang's recognition of Huang's *sanqu* indicates a power dynamic of female writer's position and cultural agency in later Ming society. Huang's expected social role, which had been constantly addressed as 'the wife of Yang Shen', shows her subordinate status to her husband. Huang E was indeed an exemplary governing class lady of the inner chamber. Qian described her managed domestic sphere as 'solemn and peaceful'.⁶¹ During the physical separation from a husband, female literary writing was 'a device to substantiate' their marriage; thus, to *changhe* 唱和 ('harmonize' or 'sing in harmony') with her husband, Huang as the wife was supposed to be 'in compliance with the husband'.⁶² This is not to say that Huang-Yang's poetic exchanges show divergent opinions; the equal and even superior literary talent that Huang's songs demonstrate suggests a degree of intellectual comparability, and by the public recognition of later literati-critics, Huang as a gentlewoman-writer transcends the conventional gender roles and socio-cultural boundaries of the inner chambers.⁶³

⁵⁸ Wang Jide 王驥德, *Prosody of Qu*, 141. 余疑以為升庵代作

⁵⁹ Zhou Liang-gong 周亮工, 'Chi du xin chao 尺度新鈔' (*Newly Copied Letters*) (Hunan, 1983 reprint), 'selected editorial principles', 5. 非抒閨怨，則報幽期，非申花月之盟，則訂香茗之約。

⁶⁰ Zhang Qi 張琦, *Worldly Remarks on Song*, in *ZGXLJ*, vol.4, 263. 香閨之語宜于閨藏而饒旖麗

⁶¹ Qian Qianyi 錢謙益, *LCSJXZ*, 730. 閨門肅穆

⁶² Xiaorong Li, "'Singing in Dis/Harmony" in Times of Chaos: Poetic Exchange Between Xu Can and Chen Zhilin During the Ming-Qing Transition', *Research on Women in Modern Chinese History*, 19 (2011), 215-254, at 250.

⁶³ Ibid.

The second entry of the collection is by Xu Yuan (c.1560–1617), another gentlewoman-writer who, in addition to her role as a traditional wife, wrote independent aria compositions that were publicized and praised among contemporary literati critics. Xu Yuan's songs were originally published in her own poetry collection, and a few were collected in several literati-edited collections. For example, Xu's aria 'Writing Feeling on a Spring Day' to the tune 'Cotton Wadding' had already attained public recognition and was praised by Feng Menglong in his multi-author art-song collection *Celestial Air Played Anew* (c.1627).⁶⁴ Feng's editorial commentary clearly indicates that Xu Yuan's 'specialty is in quatrain poetry', and that she 'occasionally wields her pen on music bureau'.⁶⁵ Feng points out that, although *qu* is not a genre that Xu frequently practises, 'her aria does not have a note that is discordant'.⁶⁶ This commentary was, in fact, also a criticism of Feng's contemporary composers, as he teases 'those writers who self-claim as experts in writing lyrics', compared with Xu Yuan as someone who occasionally composed *qu* 'should feel ashamed'.⁶⁷

Feng's editorial and critiquing focus on the accuracy of the composition was, in fact, the basis by which Feng selected arias for his *Celestial Air Played Anew*. As he explicitly claims in his attributed preface to the collection, he 'selected independent arias composed by contemporary famous writers, who are skilled lyricists yet do not play crafty tricks in music'.⁶⁸ The 'crafty tricks' refer to how Feng's contemporary practitioners of *qu* did not follow the compositional rules for music-lyric setting of pre-existing tunes. Xu Yuan's aria is presented in Feng's *Celestial Air Played Anew*, a collection that collectively highlights Wujiang school aesthetics. Feng's selection criteria not only reflect the fact that Xu's composition could be performed harmoniously, but also the accuracy of her composition verifies that gentlewomen-writers like Xu Yuan exceeded many male writers of their time.

Born almost seven decades later, Xu Yuan lived in the late-Ming period when the burgeoning of female literacy created new expectations of feminine identity-performance in

⁶⁴ Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Celestial Air Played Anew*, in *FMLQJ*, vol. 10, (2009), 146.

⁶⁵ Ibid. 徐工詩，樂府偶拈耳

⁶⁶ Ibid. 然能不落調

⁶⁷ Ibid. 彼自號詞家者可愧矣

⁶⁸ Feng Menglong, Preface to *Celestial Air Played Anew*, in *FMLQJ*, vol. 10, (2009), 1. 問取近日名家散曲，擇其嫻於詞，而復不詭于律者

the elite class, known as the ‘new womanhood’, as discussed earlier. Xu Yuan’s social activities show a certain degree of the relaxed gender restrictions: Xu was famously known among the elite circle for her *changhe* 唱和 (harmonising) with another Suzhou gentlewoman poet Lu Qingzi.⁶⁹ Xu’s poem to a courtesan, which was written from a connoisseuristic gaze that emulates her contemporary literati’s practice and fashion, illustrates how female writers of late Ming edged towards the centre of elite discourse.⁷⁰ Like Huang E, married to a well-versed literatus husband, these female writers show the matching literary gifts that fit for a companionate marriage. There was clearly a gap between the appearance of Huang E in mid Ming and Xu Yuan in late Ming for a gentlewoman writer to appear. The transition from mid to late Ming was also a period of changes in philosophical ideas, social customs, and consequent changes in attitudes towards women and education.⁷¹ As a result, gentlewomen’s songs along with their other writings became available for public appreciation in the publishing boom.

Wang Duanshu’s ‘Collection of Elegance’ also reflects the historical context of the expansion of late-Ming gentlewomen’s education, when music knowledge as *jia xue* 家學 - a family tradition of learning was incorporated into governing class ladies’ education. Similar to Wang’s own experience of learning from her father and alongside her brothers when she was a child, family could be a locus in which gentlewomen writers’ learning and practice in *qu* could be nurtured. As previous research has shown, liberal genres as subjects of learning was a part and parcel of the wider acceptance of women’s education in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁷² The limited textual evidence from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries indicates music was a part of the cultural literacy of gentlewomen;⁷³ cultural and moral education together increased a gentlewoman’s marital value and her cachet as elite wife

⁶⁹ Qian Qianyi, *LCSJXZ*, 751–752. 與寒山陸卿子唱和

⁷⁰ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 194. On Xu Yuan and Lu Qingzi, who both composed verses for courtesans, see *Ibid.*, 111–112; on Lu Qingzi, see Lu, ‘The Literary Culture of Late Ming’, 147–148.

⁷¹ Chang, ‘Literature of the Early Ming to mid-Ming (1375–1572)’, 47–51.

⁷² Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 244. Ko points out that seventeenth-century gentlewoman Chai Jingyi learnt music: she learnt to play *qin* from her father, and she later taught *qin* music to her sons.

⁷³ Lam, ‘The Presence and Absence’, 103; Anne Gerritsen, ‘The Many Guises of Xiaoluan: The Legacy of a Girl Poet in Late Imperial China’, *Journal of Women’s History*, 17/2 (2005), 38–61, at 40. Gerritsen points out the Ye sisters and ‘their daily curriculum in the inner quarters was divided between books and music instruments’.

and mother.⁷⁴ Yet, the Ming elite society showed a paradox in terms of gentlewomen's cultural involvement in liberal genres such as *qu*. On the one hand, Ming gentlewomen's involvement in non-orthodox subjects, such as music and fiction, was more conditioned and restricted, as Lam remarks: 'male official ... fathers wrote familial rules to restrain daughters from engagement in music, especially operas'.⁷⁵ On the other hand, as Ko argues, during late Ming, gentlewomen 'as playwrights, readers, critics, and audience took drama seriously both as a literary genre and as a performing art', 'women's eagerness to dramatize emotion, were in fact, second to none'.⁷⁶

In 'Collection of Elegance', the entries by gentlewomen writers Shen Huiduan (chapter 37) and Shen Jingzhuan (chapter 38) represent how Ming gentlewomen's talents in *qu* were centred in the locus of family learning and artistic prestige. These two gentlewomen entries were derived from the same family with rich *qu* writing and critiquing traditions in the Wujiang county (of Suzhou). Shen Jingzhuan was a daughter of Shen Jing: as mentioned in Chapter 3, Shen Jing was one of the most significant *qu* writers and music theorists of late Ming, and was also the leader of the Wujiang school of *qu*. In particular, Shen Huiduan (1612–?), of a generation younger than Jingzhuan, was the grand-niece of Shen Jing and was one of the gentlewomen *qu* writers who was publicly recognized for her composing talent. Shen's eulogy song-suite, composed to mourn the premature death of the two Ye sisters (as mentioned above),⁷⁷ daughters of her aunt Shen Yixiu, shows her expertise in composing *qu* and earned her public recognition as an accomplished song-writer. In Qian's *Successive Reigns*, a brief mention of Shen Huiduan describes her as a music theory expert. Unlike her aunt Shen Qianjun, who composed mourning poems (*dao wang shi* 悼亡詩) to lament the death of Ye sisters,⁷⁸ Qian particularly mentions Huiduan's elegiac song-suite which made her famous at the age of twenty, and the piece itself was widely circulated and appreciated at

⁷⁴ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 156.

⁷⁵ Lam, 'Ming Music and Music History', 42.

⁷⁶ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 78.

⁷⁷ Shen Huiduan 沈蕙端, 'Wan Zhaoqi Qiong zhang 挽昭齊瓊章' (Mourning Zhao Qi and Qiong Zhang), in *WMTJ*, second volume (1926 reprint), 14–15. The song-suite is attached with Huiduan's prose writing.

⁷⁸ These poems were also collected in Wang Duanshu, 'Zheng ji' Main Collection, 8.17a, 8.17b.

the time.⁷⁹ This is the second known female-authored piece that was written in the genre of *qu* upon lamenting the early death of Ye sisters.

When gentlewomen earned their place in public through the composition of songs and music drama, this phenomenon is a lens through which we see gentlewomen's negotiation of gendered boundaries in their literary and artistic practice. Wang Duanshu's 'Collection of Elegance' and her selection of late-Ming gentlewomen's songs do not merely reflect the modes of cultural production by elite women in seventeenth-century China; it is a material which helps us to understand how gentlewomen could rise to the role of cultural producers in the Ming public world, and earn their place in the field of *qu*. Through the media of performance literature, gentlewomen's cultural sophistication was fashioned, and their emotion was dramatized. The discussion above that illustrates Ming gentlewomen's song-writing receiving public recognition suggests how Wang Duanshu could have intentionally made her selection to make editorial statements. Wang Duanshu engaged with the critical acclamation these gentlewomen song-writers received and sought to challenge the parameters of this acclaim, especially when the songs were made public through the medium of print. These parameters existed within a dichotomy which restricted the interpretation of courtesans' songs as written exclusively for public entertainment and gentlewoman's songs as 'self-entertainment' or purely private amusements.⁸⁰ Wang's editorial comments on gentlewomen's songs also helps to develop the on-going understanding of lives, thoughts and cultural involvement of gentlewomen in Ming, and how the society of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century China underwent changes in cultural and philosophical arenas.

5.3.2 *Wang Duanshu's elevation of gentlewomen's songs*

Wang Duanshu's selection and sequencing of Huang E and Xu Yuan's songs as the first two entries in 'Collection of Elegance', as discussed above, indicates Wang's editorial decision

⁷⁹ Qian Qianyi, *LCSJXZ*, 757. Shen Huiduan's biographical entry is distributed under the entry of Shen Qianjun 沈倩君, another daughter of Shen Jing. 精曲律，作小令惋二女，為時人所傳，年二十

⁸⁰ Hua Wei, *Women's Voices and Historical Memories*, 96–97. Hua's analysis summarizes this mode of production of women's songs by comparing Ma Xianglan and Liang Mengzhao.

was possibly based on the authors' established public fame, as a milestone in the rise of female song-writers in Ming history. As opposed to courtesans' songs that were evaluated through instrumentation and performing styles, Wang transformed her critical narrative on gentlewomen-composed arias, such as those from Xu Yuan, into soundscape: Wang describes Xu's first entry aria, 'Writing Feeling on a Spring Day', as 'loud and clear, yet relaxed and melodious';⁸¹ the second entry aria, 'Writing Sorrows in a Chilly Winter Night', as 'the tone and spirit is impassionate and uplifting, as if it is the sound of a battle';⁸² the third entry, a song-suite to both southern and northern melodies, 'Writing Grief', sounds 'like drumrolls in a crowded noisy ground, cool and refreshing'.⁸³

Wang's commentary of the sonic evaluation of Xu Yuan's arias could have been based on Wang's reading in relation to the tune titles and their matching music mode. According to the tune titles and their associated music emotion, Xu Yuan's aria to the tune 'Cotton Wadding' and its musical style was classified in the treatise as Yue *diao*, that is 'playful and joyful'; the second aria to the tune 'Fragrant Osmanthus Branch' by Xian Lü *gong* as 'uplifting and lingering'; and the song-suite to the 'New Water Tune' by Shuang *diao*, classified as 'impassioned and vigorous'. When comparing Wang's commentaries to the mode and music style classification in *Rhythms and Rhymes*, it is clear that Wang's sonic depictions of Xu Yuan's arias match the classification to a good extent, showing Xu's *qu* among skilfully-created music compositions.

If the first two entries in 'Collection of Elegance' represent gentlewomen *qu* writers' achievements to attain public recognition among male critics, the third entry, by Liang Mengzhao, can be interpreted as Wang Duanshu's personal tribute to a female *qu* writer from her own perspective. It is probably not an exaggeration, at least from Wang Duanshu's point of view, to praise Liang as 'the writing hand of the generation, the paradigm amongst female scholars'.⁸⁴ Liang's six suites are the largest quantity of work composed by a single author within 'Collection of Elegance'. Meanwhile, based on the given biographical account on

⁸¹ On Xu Yuan, see Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance), 37.4a.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Wang Duanshu, 'Zheng ji' (Main Collection), 12.1a. 夷素一代作手為女士中之表表者

Liang, Wang Duanshu points out that Liang also composed several song-dramas,⁸⁵ and she is one of the few female writers who were proficient in both *sanqu* – independent songs – and *juqu* – song-drama sub-genres.

Wang Duanshu's comments on the first three gentlewomen's entries demonstrate Wang's recognition of gentlewomen's composing talents. In doing so, Wang almost adopted a similar tone when commenting on the first three gentlewomen's songs:

these twelve songs from Huang E, even Shen Jing (1553–1610) could not reach its perfection.⁸⁶

Xu Yuan's 'Writing Feeling on a Spring Day' is ... on par with the songs of Shen Shi 沈仕 (1488–1586), Yuan Chongmian 袁崇冕 (1486–1566), Tang Bohu 唐伯虎 (1470–1524), and Zhu Zhishan 祝枝山 (1461–1527) ... compared to her 'Writing Grief' suite, despite Tang Xianzu (1550–1616) not following the forms and formulas when composing song-drama, but still, his work is inferior to Xu Yuan's creativity;⁸⁷

The emotions portrayed in her *The Lovesick inkstone* are deeply felt yet proper, the sentiments are genuine yet charming, which makes her works formal but appealing,⁸⁸ even when a generation of *qu* makers like Liang Chenyu (c.1521–1594) and Shen Shi make a comeback, they have to step down in the field when compared to Liang Mengzhao.⁸⁹

Wang Duanshu's editorial comments on the first three entries show a clear intention of comparing gentlewomen's songs to literati composers and music theorists who achieved canonical status in the field of *qu*. These literati-writers that Wang named, including Shen Shi (1488–1586), Liang Chenyu (c.1521–1594), Tang Xianzu (1550–1616) and Shen Jing (1553–1610), are among the most representative writers of Ming, and their works also constituted the 'canon of *qu*'. Wang's comparison reflects, on the one hand, the male-dominated reality in *qu* writing with male literati setting the standards for measuring compositional abilities. On the other hand, Wang Duanshu's comments indicate her intention of claiming the superiority of these three gentlewomen's work, and elevating gentlewomen's position in the field to match against the paradigms that the literati had established. Wang's gamble at making such a claim

⁸⁵ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance), 37.8b. 每拈一劇，必有卓識

⁸⁶ Translated by author. Ibid., 37.1a

⁸⁷ Translated by author, Ibid., 37.4a.

⁸⁸ Laura Long (trans.), in Lin and Wiles eds., *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Women: Tang Through Ming, 618-1644*, 241.

⁸⁹ Wang Duanshu, 'Zheng ji' (Main Collection), 12.1a.

in her comment perhaps is not self-evidential when compared to pre-existing recognition from literati on gentlewomen's *qu*, as has been seen in cases where literati have praised gentlewomen-writers such as Huang E, Xu Yuan and Shen Huiduan.

Wang Duanshu's remark on two gentlewomen from the Shen family is more grounded in the recognition of their family's cultural accomplishments, as Wang's remark on Jingzhuan's aria shows her admiration: 'the emotion of the lyrics and strains of the music that this aria delivers are meticulously written. She is the true disciple of the tradition of her family, I admire, I admire!'⁹⁰ Wang's comment clearly points to the family connection of Shen Jingzhuan as a daughter of Shen Jing, and also her father's accomplishments in music theory. Defining Shen as a 'true disciple' of the family artistic heritage, Wang also suggests Shen Jingzhuan's application of her father's theory in her song-writing practice. Wang Duanshu also speaks highly of two 'ode on object' arias by Shen Huiduan: the aria 'Finger Citron' is 'an artistic treasure of supernatural workmanship', and 'Weaving Girl' is 'lucid and lively, fine and delicate, conceived anew and well-crafted. The twist of the song transfigures and reaches the acme of perfection'.⁹¹

Wang Duanshu's extolment of gentlewomen-authored arias is not simply exaggeration in order to advance gentlewomen's song. The following section examines these gentlewomen-authored songs by the standards of contemporary literati's criteria. It proceeds to explore the grounds in which Wang Duanshu selected these authors and songs that collectively demonstrate late-Ming gentlewomen's advanced level of song-writing. Finally, this section draws these discussions together, to conclude that Wang's editorial strategy of targeted comparison canonizes gentlewomen's writing in *qu*. This targeted comparison specifically refers to the first three gentlewomen entries, elevating previously excluded gentlewomen to be alongside well-established male authors.

⁹⁰ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance), 38.1a.

⁹¹ Ibid., 37.15a.

5.4 Writing *qu* as a ‘family tradition of learning’

Wang Duanshu’s ‘Collection of Elegance’ reflects the social progression of expanding women’s education that late-Ming gentlewomen’s music knowledge was obtained through family learning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Among Wang’s selections, the entries of two gentlewomen from the Shen clan of Wujiang – with rich *qu* writing and critiquing family traditions – represents how Ming gentlewomen’s talents in *qu* was centred in the locus of family learning and artistic prestige. The family ties between these two gentlewomen reflect the socio-cultural change in women’s education during the late-Ming period, that women from gentry backgrounds in particular were not excluded from, and were even encouraged in, daily artistic and literary learning. For gentlewomen like Shen Jingzhuan and Shen Huiduan who, from prominent family lineages, had resources and accessibility to knowledge and learning, they could have been educated by male kin and nurtured in specialities that were handed down within the family unit.⁹² Biographical accounts of both these gentlewomen posits them in a web of prominent late-Ming and early-Qing music critics and *qu* theorists connected through family ties: as mentioned above, Shen Jingzhuan was the daughter of Shen Jing; Shen Huiduan (1612–?), of a generation younger than Jingzhuan, was the grand-niece of Shen Jing, and niece of *qu* writer and dramatist Bu Shichen 卜世臣 (fl.1610) and *qu* theorist Shen Zijin.⁹³ Shen Huiduan’s husband, Gu Bitai 顧必泰, who also wrote *qu*, was also the nephew of Shen Zijin. By including these two gentlewomen entries, Wang also displays editorial knowledge in contemporary prominent elite families and their cultural accomplishments.

Shen Huiduan and Shen Jingzhuan’s songs had previously been published in *A New Formulary of Southern Aria* comprising music formerly edited by Shen Zijin. In Shen Zijin’s edition, in particular, the tune titles that Shen Huiduan and Shen Jingzhuan’s songs are set to, are marked as *xin ru* 新入- ‘new in’, and no other lyrics set to these tune titles are listed.⁹⁴

⁹² Ko, *Teacher of the Inner Chambers*, 154. Ko argues that ‘all the most prolific women writers and poets of the seventeenth century benefited from the cultural resources of their family’.

⁹³ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), on Shen Jingzhuan, 38.1a; on Shen Huiduan, 37.15a.

⁹⁴ Shen Zijin, *Nan ci xin pu* (*A New Formulary of Southern Aria*), series 3, no. 3, *SBXQCK*, on Shen Jingzhuan, 464; on Shen Huiduan, 670 and 813.

Shen Zijin's editorial principle also states that 'new models' were presented alongside the established old ones in the expanded edition of his uncle's register.⁹⁵ Based on the fact that Shen Zijin's edition was an expanded, re-edited edition of his uncle's music registers indicates that both these gentlewomen writers from the Shen family were among the first writers who used, or even created these new tunes. Moreover, as Chapter 2 has mentioned, both gentlewomen's arias were written in the format of *jiqu* 集曲, the assembled arias include music material from more than two pre-existing tune titles,⁹⁶ and shows two gentlewomen's innovative approach in song-writing by adopting the late-Ming music fashion of literati-playwrights in creating operatic arias (as the *jiqu* method is used to create new melodies to accommodate artistic purposes),⁹⁷ suggesting they were conversant with pre-existing melodies.

In terms of subject matters and lyrical themes, as members of the elite, Ming gentlewomen's songs were often inspired by daily encounters and experience (as discussed in Chapter 2). This contrasts with courtesans' songs that were written and aimed for social intercourse with male elite clients, and for entertaining. Wang Duanshu describes this type of text written 'only after the intricate labours of our sex' that 'we women are able to ... confide their thoughts to the scrolls of paper ... so it is that in their writing ... [they] take their subject matter from their daily surroundings, ... weaving girls, silk cocoons, and un-dyed silks'.⁹⁸ For gentlewomen such as Shen Jingzhuan and Shen Huiduan, who was excluded from the public sphere for pursuing a degree and professional post, writing was an entertainment for passing the time, or a medium of self-expression.

⁹⁵ Shen Zijin, 'Chong ding nanci quanpu fanli 重定南詞全譜範例' (editorial principle), *ZGXQXH*, vol. 1, 40.

⁹⁶ Joseph Lam, 'A Kunqu Masterpiece', 102.

⁹⁷ Peng Xu, 'The Music Teacher: The Professionalization of Singing and the Development of Erotic Vocal Style of Late Ming China', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 75/2 (2015), 259-297, at 283-284.

⁹⁸ Wang Duanshu, 'Zi xu' (Preface to *MYSWCB*), 3.b, 4.a., Haun Saussy (trans.) in *Women Writers of Traditional China*, 692-693.

5.4.1. A 'true disciple': Wang Duanshu on Shen Jingzhuan

Although the lyrics were written and inspired by everyday life, the skills of both Shen Jingzhuan and Shen Huiduan transcended the boundaries of their daily encounters with the artistic presentation of lyricism. Jingzhuan's aria, 'Boat Journey on an Autumn Day', is an assembled aria set to the tune 'Lazy Oriel' that composites both 'Leisurely Eyebrow Painting' and 'Golden Orioles'. The lyrics of the aria rhymes at the end of each line harmoniously (*gan* 竿 *lan* 灘 *lan* 欄 *yuan* 遠 *han* 寒 *can* 殘), shows the author paid attention to the principle of 'using the same rhyme through to the end', shows the writer's special attention to prosody and the music-lyric fitting – a facet of composition that the Wujiang school writers emphasized. Shen Zijin's *New Formulary* register, a composing manual based on Shen Jing's music registers, also honours music temperaments and prosody.⁹⁹ Shen Zijin praises the first line of the aria, that it was ingeniously written and follows a 'classic form' (or 'old style') of writing,¹⁰⁰ referring to the opening line of the aria as written in the style of seven-character quatrain.

The scenery depicted in the first line of Shen Jingzhuan's aria draws on a parallel with the second line of the Tang dynasty poem 'Jiangnan *nong* (variation)' 江南弄 by Li He 李賀 (790-816).¹⁰¹ As the first half of Shen's aria goes:

Sailing boats are scattered in the wind, with a myriad mast. Seagulls dot the beach. The distant grey of the sky is reflected in the elegantly carved rails.
風渚蕭疏竹千竿。次第閒鷗鷺點幾灘。遙天青碾到雕欄。¹⁰²

Both lines from these two different writings describe 'the wind on the lake and the canvas of the sail boats as if they were bamboo sticks sprung up from forests'.¹⁰³ The title of Li's poem is classified as a title of the music bureau ballad *qing shang qu* 清商曲 – a type of

⁹⁹ Shen Zijin, editorial principle, 31. Shen claims that he left out songs that do not follow prosodic rules even though the lyrics are beautifully written. 他如詞采可觀，而律法未合者，槩不及混入。

¹⁰⁰ Shen Zijin, *Nanci xinpu*, series 3, no. 3, *SBXQCK*, entry of Shen Jingzhuan, 464. 首句從舊體

¹⁰¹ Li He, 'Jiangnan nong 江南弄', in *Complete Quatrain Poetry of the Tang Dynasty* (Shanghai, 1986), 981.

¹⁰² Shen Jingzhuan, 'Zhou ci ti qiu 舟次題秋' (Boat Journey on an Autumn Day), in Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance), 38.1a.

¹⁰³ Li He writes 水中浦雲生老竹，渚暝蒲帆如一幅; Shen Jingzhuan writes 風渚蕭疎竹千竿。

Six Dynasty (220–589) court music-poetry. The last line of Li He’s poem describes the entertainment of singing the *wuyu* 吳歎 – the song of wu, the regional music of Jiangnan that echoes the poem title Jiangnan with the ‘round jade’ moon rising before the song is finished. By the time of late Ming, the term of *wuyu* specifically referred to the independent and operatic arias in the *kunshan* musical style. Mid-Ming theorist Xu Wei praised *kunshan* music for being ‘harmonious and pleasant to the ears ... soothing, elegant, and tranquil; it is superior to other southern regional tunes, which sound the most moving and touching’.¹⁰⁴ Shen Zijin himself was an aficionado of *kunqu* 崑曲, his *New Formulary* music register was dedicated to the songs that were composed in this elite music fashion.¹⁰⁵ Consequently, by including Shen Jingzhuan’s aria in this songbook means the lyrics would have been sung in the *kunshan* style.

Shen’s writing in this ‘old classic form’ locates the lyrics within the lineage and artistry of Tang poetry, or even its ‘novelty with the attempts to locate a source of cultural validity outside the canon’.¹⁰⁶ Musically, Shen’s aria is set to Nan Lü *gong* with the emotional identity as ‘sorrowful, sighing with sadness’. Even without knowing the melody today, the melancholy of Shen’s song is clearly expressed through the last four lines of lyrics:

I have my private dreams, but the one on whom I lean is faraway. The setting sun makes me feel chilly, for ships on a long voyage sail one by one. How can I across the water at the end of autumn.

閨夢依誰遠。落霞寒。征帆幅幅。欲渡奈秋殘。¹⁰⁷

This highly matched lyrics and emotive expression further indicates Shen Huiduan’s aria in following the “melody-lyrics” setting of tune title when composing. As daughter of Shen Jing, Shen Huiduan’s composition musically displays the artistry of *qu* composing that advocated by her father in musical and prosodic norms, while the first line lyrics that written in ‘old form’ shows her learning in canonical poetic tradition. Shen Jingzhuan is a poet; according to Wang Duanshu, besides writes *sanqu*, Shen published an individual literary collection entitled

¹⁰⁴ Xu Wei, ‘Nan ci xu lu’ A Record of Southern Drama (1559), in *LDQHHB*, vol.1 (2009), 478 and 488.

¹⁰⁵ Zeitlin, ‘Between Performance’, 263–267.

¹⁰⁶ Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 263 and n.33.

¹⁰⁷ Shen Jingzhuan, ‘Zhou ci ti qiu 舟次題秋’ (Boat Journey on an Autumn Day), in Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), 38.1b.

Didi cao 適適草 (*The Befitted Drafts*).¹⁰⁸ This collection mainly consists of poems and lyric poetry.¹⁰⁹ Wang's admiration of the aria is based on how the song delivers emotion through lyrics, while the prosody of the lyrics fitted with the pre-existing melody mellifluously. Shen's father as the most accomplishment theorist of the late Ming, Shen Jingzhuan, as Wang defines, is the true disciple of her family tradition, indicates her song reflects her father's Wujiang school aesthetics.

5.4.2 Picking a difficult subject: Wang Duanshu on Shen Huiduan

Shen's example shows how a gentlewoman's song and artistry was linked to a family tradition of learning. Although the education of female kinfolk of the late-Ming Shen clan is a topic worth its own attention, Shen's aria offers us a glimpse into the life of gentlewomen and how their family emerged as 'a repository of knowledge and learning'.¹¹⁰ This can also be seen in Shen Huiduan's arias in 'Collection of Elegance'. Despite having been a generation younger, Shen Huiduan was a publicly recognised songwriter, displaying her matching skills in *qu* composition that could bring honour to the learning tradition of the family. Perhaps through these entries Wang intended to show that gentlewomen could learn as well as their brothers and fathers, and thus, women's cultural literacy should be credited. Two arias by Shen Huiduan not only have original tunes both written in the form of assembled arias, but also by taking on 'ode on object' in both songs, a subject matter which Wang herself admits 'the writing is extremely difficult',¹¹¹ demonstrates Huiduan's advanced levels of *qu* writing. The first aria, 'Ode to Finger Citron', depicts fruit through a pun on the *fo shou* 佛手 - 'hand of Buddha', in which the Chinese name for the finger citron is also the fruit's bright yellow colour, implying the 'golden body of the Buddha'. The aria creates a vivid image of a golden Buddha statue, as the lyric goes:

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 38.1a.

¹⁰⁹ Zhang Qinghua, 'Ming dai nü zuojia Shen jingzhuan jiashi sheng pin ji zhu shu kao lun 明代女作家沈静尊家世生平及著述考论' (A Study of Shen Jingzhuan's Life and Writing), 青岛大学师范学院学报 (*Journal of Qingdao Teachers University*), 28/1 (2011), 48-53, at 50.

¹¹⁰ Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 154.

¹¹¹ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance), 37.15a. 詠物甚難

I pick up a handful of incense, and see the golden Buddha. The autumn breeze plays, and dew settles in the holy hand. Coming from the garden, you point to the thousand images.
兜罗一握香,分现金身样。把玩秋风,岂承露仙人掌。来从祇树园,指点成千相。
Instead of clenching the fist to vanquish demons, bring your fingers together in a gesture of mercy.不须拳作降魔,却撮合慈悲向。
Picking a flower, a faint smile crept without even a word.
可也拈花一色晚篱黄。¹¹²

The fruit's multiple pointed branches makes a pun with the line, 'the fingers of Buddha pointing to thousands of *forms*'.¹¹³ Wang Duanshu spoke highly of this aria as 'an artistic treasure of supernatural workmanship',¹¹⁴ and the artistry of Shen's lyrics lies in the clever use of the pun.

Musically, 'Ode to Finger Citron' is set to the tune 'Golden Chinese Parasol Fell on Dressing Table', an assembled aria also comprising two pre-existing tune titles – 'Golden Chinese Parasol' and 'Lean on Dressing Table' – categorized as *Shangdiao* with emotional identity as 'plaintive and resentful'. However, the lyrics were written in a lucid and lively style, as discussed above, depicting finger citron, its shape and colour with the pun of Buddha's hand and fingers in cleverly written puns. Late-Ming theorist Wang Ji-de also covered the 'matching' music-mood issue in his *Prosody of Qu*, as he used the *xianlü gong* as an example:

There are seventeen *gongdiao* recorded in *Rhythms and Rhymes of Central Plain*, the so-called Xian Lü is designed as lucid and lingering in general ... however, for the composers who have written arias in Xian Lü mode, and the singers who perform arias of Xian Lü mode, does 'lucid and lingering' be the only stylistic choice and cannot apply to other *gongdiao*?¹¹⁵

What Wang indicates is that, in music practice, writers and singers should not be bound by this 'renewing and lingering' style; definitions of music-emotion in *Rhythms and Rhymes* should be interpreted flexibly. This can also be demonstrated in entries in 'Collection of

¹¹² Shen Huiduan, 'yong foshou gan 詠佛手柑' (Ode to Finger Citron), in Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance), 37.15a. (trans.) author

¹¹³ Ibid. *Form* is a term in Buddhism; it is the quality of solidity, permanence, separateness, continuity and definition. It also refers to everything on Earth.

¹¹⁴ Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji 雅集', 37.15a. 巧奪天花

¹¹⁵ Wang Jide, *Prosody of Qu*, LDQHHB, vol.2, 112. 中原音韻十七宮調, 所謂仙呂恭清新綿邈等類, 蓋謂仙呂宮之調, 其聲大都清新綿邈云餌...豈作仙呂宮曲與唱仙呂宮曲者, 獨宜清新綿邈, 而他宮調不必然?

Elegance’ where the lyrics are written to the tune titles that show different or even contrasting styles, while certain cases, such as Shen Jingzhuan’s aria discussed above, shows ‘accurately’ fitted lyrical emotions and the music mood of the tune. Shen’s ‘finger citron’ song perhaps is an innovative writing where the flexibility of combining different styles of music and lyrics happened during the composition; thus, it is not bound by ‘plaintive and resentful’ dogma and is subject to a flexible stylistic interpretation in Shen Huiduan’s writing.

The second aria might also require the same flexibility when readings its lyric-musical emotion setting. Written in a playful literary style, the first aria ‘Ode to Weaving Girl’ set to the tune ‘A Letter’ portrays a visual and sonic picture of a busy needlewoman:

Sitting in front of the loom, the hard-working mother weaving a brocade.

他娘在锦机，促绞梭，呼纬急。

She stops weaving and picks up her needle, she sows and embroiders the curtain. Busy as a silkworm, she swiftly reels off raw silk from cocoons.

停针响绣帷，学蚕丝，抽茧急。

like wasps buzzing among willow catkins floating in the air, the draft of her rapid movement cools her sweat-soaked clothes.

似你蜂簧吟柳絮，两腋风生冷衣。

How busy! Compared to my half-day of playing on the swing, until I see the circle of haze surrounding the moon.

姜劳矣！不比半天秋千戏，敢月晕娇娥吐在圆。¹¹⁶

The second half of the song, in which it musically modulates to the tune ‘My Good Sister’, is also matched with a change in its lyrical tone into a banter that depicts gentlewomanly leisure.¹¹⁷ Musically, as a composite tune, this assembled aria created a new tune title named as ‘Sending a Letter to my sister’ and was categorized as *xianlü* modulate to *shuang*, with music style ‘uplifting and lingering’ to ‘impassioned and vigorous’.¹¹⁸ Wang Duanshu’s comment on this aria reaffirms the flexible use of tunes, as she praises the song as ‘lucid and lively, fine and delicate, conceived anew and well-crafted. The twist of the song transfigures and reaches the acme of perfection’.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Shen Huiduan, *yong fangsha nü* 詠紡紗女 ‘Ode to Weaving Girl’, in Wang Duanshu, ‘Collection of Elegance’, 37.15b. (trans.) author

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ See chapter 2 table 2.3

¹¹⁹ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’, 37.15a.

Wang Duanshu's extolment of Shen Huiduan's arias is similar to her editorial comments reflecting her music aesthetics of *qu* writing (as discussed in Chapter 3). Wang's editorial judgement on Shen Huiduan's songs can also be backed up by late-Ming literati-critics' views on what was regarded as good *yong wu sanqu* 詠物散曲: namely, the independent aria that 'odes on objects'. For instance, the famous late-Ming professional literatus-composer Liang Chenyu (1521–1594) points out:

odes on objects is a theme that has been written since ancient times. Yet, it is really rare to see anyone get the trick of it. If it is not because these songs lack harmony musically or in prosody, then it is the lyrics that did not express *qing* the best. When people follow examples of the old composition, (the old) entangles the new sound as a consequence.¹²⁰

Shen's two songs, like her aunt Jingzhuan's composition, rhymes harmoniously at the end of the lines.¹²¹ As Lau argues, '*qu* composing uses 'melody-following-text approach, in which the compositional process likely involves greater altering of pitch, melodic contour and rhyme according to the text.'¹²² It is possible that, due to there being no good existing models for song-writing on objects, Shen Huiduan chose to create new tunes for the specific purpose of creating these two songs. Their earlier curation into *New Formulary*, indicates not only these arias can be used as compositional references, but also can be realized into singing repertoire, as Carlitz observes, 'the literati-compiled song collections that were often intended for used by cultivated amateurs who performs for reach other'.¹²³

The novelty and 'supernatural workmanship' of Shen's arias are also reflected in the cleverly conceived lyrics. Wang Ji-de (?–1623) remarks that a song 'ode on the object' should not directly describe its subject, but through metaphorically and artistically conceived language – or through an indirect yet indicated or suggestive way of describing the object:

writing "ode on objects" cannot let lyrics wide of the mark of its subject, readers have to know what the lyrics are written about once "open the mouth". It is not about what the

¹²⁰ Liang Chenyu 梁辰鱼, 'Jiang dong bai mang 江東白苧' (*White Ramie of the East River*), in Wu Shuyin 吳書蔭 ed. 'Liang Chen yu ji 梁辰鱼集' (*Complete Works of Liang Chenyu*) (Shanghai, 1998), 394. 詠物之作，其來尚。模寫之妙，世或鮮焉。非音調之不諧，即情文之未至。既乖舊譜，復累新聲。

¹²¹ For the first song, rhymes at 香樣掌相向黃, the second song rhymes at 機急疾衣矣戲。

¹²² Lau, 'History through *Qupai*', 22 and 40, n.37.

¹²³ Carlitz, 'Printing as Performance', 274.

object is, but how to describe it ... slightly sketch the charm of the object, as if people see a shadow through the mirror with the candlelight in front of them, yet they cannot capture it, this is what I call a highly skilled composition.¹²⁴

Shen Huiduan's arias were written in a metaphorical way, in which both songs do not directly name the objects in the lyrics, nor do they describe the objects straightforwardly: as discussed above, the first song on the finger citron is using the name, shape, and colour of the fruits that puns with Buddha's hand and fingers; moreover, words such as 'a handful of incense', 'vanquish the demon' and 'mercy' appear in the lyrics all metaphorically linked to Buddhist images. In the second song, the object 'weaving girl' is portrayed through the woman's actions of weaving and the sound of the spinning machines to indicate the main protagonist's identity as a weaving girl. The second half of the song, by making the twist of the leisure life of the author herself, which makes a sharp contrast between herself and the hardworking weaving woman, enhances the liveliness of portraying the 'object' of the song.

Further, the subject of 'play on the swing' of the second half of the song itself has been used in previous literati-composed arias as the 'object to ode', such as in Chen Duo's northern aria and Feng Weimin's southern aria to the tune 'Golden Orioles'.¹²⁵ These two arias portray girls' enlightened spirit and happy body movement of the feminine pleasure of playing on the swing. Despite these two literati-composed arias being examples of how feminine images were constantly reinvented in literati-authored songs, this particular object of the swing and the pleasure of playing on it metaphorically speaks of the composer's life attitudes of distaining from worldly affairs.

For gentlewomen such as Shen Huiduan who was naturally excluded from 'worldly affairs' preserved for men, the song of 'ode on weaving girl' is more likely to have been a realistic yet artistic portrayal of real-life experiences and surrounding domestic life in the women's sphere, as opposed to literati's impersonation of women's voices in boudoir-themed writings that are imaginative. Shen Huiduan's song, thus, is a song of authenticity';¹²⁶ the

¹²⁴ Wang Jide, *Prosody of Qu*, 93. 詠物毋得罵題，卻要開口便見是何物。不貴說體，只貴說用。約略寫其風韻令人髣髴中如燈鏡傳影，了然目中，卻捉摸不得，方是妙手。

¹²⁵ Chen Duo 陳鐸, 'Swing' to the tune (northern) 'Xiao Liangzhou 小梁州', 448; Feng Weimin 馮維敏, 'Swing' to the tune 'Golden Oriole', 1936, both in *QMSQ* (Jinan, 1994).

¹²⁶ Anne McLaren, 'Lamenting the Dead: Women's Performance of Grief in late Imperial China', in *The Inner Quarters and Beyond*, ed. Fong and Widmer, 49-77, at 76-77.

song is a medium that channels her daily sentiment. The song itself not only reveals the author's identity and thoughts, but also reflects Ming lives and gives the reader a glimpse into Ming gentlewomen's daily pleasures. Therefore, by reading, chanting or even singing these songs, readers of 'Collection of Elegance' experienced the private thoughts and messages of late-Ming female writers, delivered through their lyrics and music.

Although gentlewomen's writings were less likely to circulate beyond the domestic women's sphere and under public scrutiny of connoisseurs, contemporary late-Ming literati-critics still came up with expected terms and standards regarding writing relating to the 'boudoir'. Due to the limited style and hype-feminine contents of boudoir-themed writing perceived in literati discourse, late Ming literati-critics came up with tactics in order to avoid the generic patterns appearing in this subject matter in writing *qu*, as He Liangjun writes,

Descriptions of matters in the boudoir are necessarily colourful and charming. They should thus be presented in sardonic and ironical ways and mixed with jokes; it is only then that they are in good taste.¹²⁷

語關閨閣，已是濃豔。須得以冷言剩句出之，方才有趣。¹²⁸

Wang Duanshu's selection of two female writers from the Shen family shows how gentlewomen's songs, while inspired by daily surroundings, could be lively, lucid and artistically sophisticated. Even under the measurements of late-Ming male critics in *qu* composition, these songs could be regarded as outstanding. It is an example of how the seventeenth-century Chinese gentlewomen incorporated tropes that established 'men of the past' had used to inscribe their own voice on elite male discourse. Wang Duanshu as a poet and a poetry critic advocated that female writers should discard the 'powder and rouge' 鉛粉 in their verses.¹²⁹ Similarly, in song-writing, as discussed in Chapter 3, Wang Duanshu's aesthetic preference towards *bense* – the naturalness, genuineness or expression of *qing* – shows her attitudes against an elaborative, feminine style of writing.

¹²⁷ Grant Shen (trans.), *Elite Theatre in Ming China, 1368–1644*, Routledge Studies in the Early History of Asia (Abingdon, 2009), 84.

¹²⁸ He Liangjun 何良俊, 'Remarks on songs and Lyrics', in *LDQHBB*, vol.1, 466.

¹²⁹ Wang Duanshu, 'Wai ji 外集' (Collection of Foreigners), on entry Guo Zhenshun 郭真順, 28.4a. Wang remarks that Guo's writing is 'full of strength and powerful', sweeping all 'powder and rouge' away. Therefore, she collected Guo's poem to show that such a style should be fortified in writing.

The artistry of these two gentlewomen's songs reveal, as seen through Wang Duanshu's editorial comments, a carefully crafted demonstration of their talents. When the lyrics are based on subject matters from their daily experiences – domestic, private and confined within the feminine domain – these songs also display how gentlewomen's writings, while advancing their talents, were practiced 'in line with class and gendered conventions'.¹³⁰ When these writings were collected by family members and became public through print, 'women's literary prowess', as McLaren argues, 'became a signifier of social status ... [and] exhibits the extraordinary female talent their family had nurtured'.¹³¹ Under this circumstance, these songs that document real events happening in gentlewomen's lives also became a public performance of artistic sophistication and literary accomplishment of the governing-class women, even if their 'performance' was restricted in accordance with the expected social performance of gender and class.

¹³⁰ Ibid. McLaren points out that in Chinese funeral rituals, public mourning performing of ceremonial songs at the village level (of commoners), 'was not available to women of the literati class'. Gentlewomen adopted the tradition of the *dao wang shi* 悼亡詩 (mourning poem) to exhibit controlled emotions of grief, while the poetic writings demonstrate their literary accomplishments.

¹³¹ Ibid., 52. I find McLaren's research on late imperial Chinese gentlewomen's mourning literature and its implied social performance and gendered protocols also fits the modes of production of other genres that were practiced by gentlewomen.

5.5 Writing *qu* as Self-Expression and Testing Gender Boundaries

If Wang Duanshu's editorial commentaries on the two gentlewomen-writers from the Shen clan argue that women 'can be as good as men', her critiques on the first three gentlewomen-writers indicates that female writers could 'outdo' male writers who earned canonical status in the field. Wang's editorial voice shows a degree of distinctiveness through the targeted comparison with specific literati-writers from mid to late Ming; this targeted comparison only appears in Wang's comments on gentlewomen's songs, none of the similar tones of criticism appeared in her comments on courtesans' songs. This reveals Wang's inclination of the Ming tradition in southern *qu* writing, an editorial gesture that could be associated with a loyalist sentiment of preserving Ming culture in the early-Qing political environment. Also, by comparing authors of different sexes but shared social class, Wang distinguished the songs of entertainers and of the elite. This section argues that Wang's targeted comparison is understandable when considering the aesthetics of the literati writers within their historical context. Wang's paratextual commentaries show her deft understanding of Shen Jing's school of aesthetics – both his theory and compositional technique – and suggests her knowledge of the contemporary critiques of his work; thus, Wang was able to ground her comparison between literati and gentlewomen's songs.

The way in which Wang’s editorial comments ‘make matches’ between gentlewomen and literati authors is also worth noticing, as shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2. Wang Duanshu’s editorial comparison of three gentlewomen entries.¹³²

<i>Gentlewomen Authors</i>	<i>Literati-author for comparison</i>
Huang E (1498–1569)	Shen Jing (1553–1610)
Xu Yuan (c.1560–1617)	Tang Xianzu (1550–1616)
	Yuan Chongmian (1486–1566)
	Tang Yin (1470–1524)
	Zhu Zhishan (1461–1527)
	Shen Shi (1488–1586)
Liang Mengzhao (c.1572–1640)	Liang Chenyu (c.1521–1594)
	Shen Shi (1488–1586)

By not matching gentlewomen’s songs with their contemporaries, Wang suggests that gentlewomen’s songs, such as those by Xu Yuan and Liang Mengzhao, surpass their mid-Ming predecessors in artistry, and that Huang E’s practice in song-writing was half a century ahead of Shen’s theory on music prosody, the latter of which became the basis of theoretical criteria for late-Ming *qu* criticism and the method of song-writing for Wujiang school aesthetics. Unfortunately, Wang does not elaborate in detail on these comparisons. Therefore, this section proposes that Wang’s comparisons were based on the lyrical or musical styles that standard male literati practice drew on, as they all have distinctive composing styles that made them well-known. Wang’s targeted comparison indicates the gentlewomen’s songs were written, not only as emulations, but also were able to transcend the style and form of the established practices in the field. Thus, Wang specifically elevate gentlewomen-writers’ status in the field and posits them among canonical literati song-writers.

5.5.1 Huang E: Songs of harmony and bense

Wang Duanshu’s targeted comparison between Huang and Shen Jing, rather than with any mid-Ming song-writers, indicates the appreciation she sought for Huang’s composition. Shen Jing’s aesthetics in song-writing was the ‘harmony’ of metrical, prosodic patterns and the

¹³² Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’, on Huang E, 37.1a; on Xu Yuan, 37.4a; on Liang Mengzhao, 37.8b.

strict ‘lyric-music’ setting. In Shen’s view, to pursue the harmony of song, the lyricism which the song delivers can be compromised.¹³³ Shen’s theory also advocates the naturalness of the language. However, Shen Jing’s stubbornly biased pursuit for the ‘harmony’ of song led to a shortcoming that was denounced by his contemporary critics. Shen’s songs were often regarded as vulgar.¹³⁴ Shen boasted about his ability for composing metrical, prosocial patterns, but his *sanqu* was criticized by Feng Menglong. Despite being a faithful follower of Shen and holding a strong belief in Wujiang school aesthetics, Feng, in his *Celestial Air Played Anew*, openly pointed out the mistakes in metre and prosody found in Shen’s independent arias.¹³⁵

Wang Duanshu did not explicitly criticize Shen’s writings and theory in ‘Collection of Elegance’, but Shen’s shortcomings in song-writing could be one of the reasons for Wang’s argument towards the finer songs by Huang. There is no textual evidence that can directly link Wang’s insightfulness of Shen’s practice, but Wang’s comment on Shen Jingzhu as a ‘disciple of her family tradition’ reflects, to a degree, Wang’s knowledge of the ‘tradition’. Meanwhile, Wang’s view on *danghang* in song-writing, as examined in Chapter 3, shows great overlap with the opinions of Shen Zijin, another member of the Shen clan and master of the Wujiang school aesthetics. Thus, Wang’s comment could indicate her view that Huang’s song was not only harmonious in prosody and metre, but also the lyricism of her song surpasses Shen, due to the vulgarity of the latter’s song.

Huang E’s independent arias receives sustained attention Chinese literary historians.¹³⁶ They commonly point out that Huang’s songs are composed in *bense*, and her lyrics are fluid, frank, and elegant. However, as a mid-Ming author, Huang E’s song-writing artistically

¹³³ Wang Ji-de, *Prosody of Qu*, chapter 39, ‘Za lun 雜論’ (Miscellaneous Remarks second part), 125. 吳江嘗謂: “寧協律而不工, 讀之不成句”

¹³⁴ The critiques on the vulgarity of Shen’s songs can be seen in Wang Ji-de, *Prosody of Qu*, 120. It marks that Shen favoured songs that were merely doggerel, and some of his compositions were also written in this same style. 至庸拙俚俗之曲…皆打油之最者, 而極口贊美…所以自己所作諸曲, 略墮此一劫; Ling Mengchu, *A Random Bundle of Notes on Qu*, 189–190, also discussed in Chapter 3.

¹³⁵ Feng Menglong, *Celestial Air Played Anew*, chapter 1, editorial commentaries on Shen Jing, in *LDQHHB*, vol.3, 12, 13–14 and 15.

¹³⁶ Yao Rong 姚蓉, ‘Yang Shen, Huang E fuqi wang huan zhizuo kaolun 杨慎、黄峨夫妻往还之作考论’ (An Analysis of the Corresponding Works of the Couple Yang Shen and Huang E), 中南大学学报 *J. Cent. South Univ.*, vol. no.3, 2013, 140-145.

‘anticipated the tone of the late Ming’.¹³⁷ The romantic lyrics of Huang, in which she laments the separation from her husband, the loneliness of domestic life and the longing for reunion, valorise the ideal of *qing* that later became the anchor of literary expression in late-Ming writings. Huang’s second entry aria ‘Spring thoughts’ offers a glimpse of her loneliness of domestic life, which is expressed through refined lyrics:

In the long night, I walk the empty steps. Regretting the news of concubines procured against my wishes. 遥夜步闲阶。恨玲珑音信乖。

When will us be together - do I have to wait three incarnations? I cannot tell, it cannot be settled. The moonlight shines through my window, yet you are not here.

三生未了鸳鸯债。道来不来。说谐不谐。窗残月夜人何在。

I pace the steps, and the narrow blue bridge. It is useless to guess the mood of lovebirds. 步闲阶。蓝桥路窄。空使燕莺猜。

I sit in my lonely study and listen to the rain. May the bright-coloured flowers bloom, and may the clouds to hear and decide what is beyond the sky of Yunnan.

听雨坐空斋。任闲花烂漫开。碧云听断南天外。

The wind blows the green scholar tree, and the dew covers the moss. The poet wife wilts, while the warbling concubines bloom.

风摇绿槐。露零紫苔。诗人老去莺莺在。

I sit in this empty room, in the twilight. I have no choice, The candlelight flickers on my thoughts of parting. 坐空斋。黄昏无奈。灯影照离怀。¹³⁸

This explains why Huang’s songs frequent many late-Ming songbooks.¹³⁹ Some of her songs are even ‘erotic and burlesque pieces’,¹⁴⁰ a feature that has led scholars to conclude that these songs are a false attribution and are in fact courtesans’ works.¹⁴¹ The republican era *qu* theorist, Ren Zhongmin 任中敏 (1897-1991), appreciated the straightforwardness and sincerity in Huang’s song, and even defended her ‘erotic and burlesque pieces’ by arguing that the sensual and erotic boudoir theme was an artful style of song-writing that was widely

¹³⁷ Chen and Mote, ‘Huang E (1498–1569)’, 178.

¹³⁸ Huang E, *chun si* 春思 ‘Spring thoughts’ to the tune ‘Golden Oriels’, in Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), *MYSWCB*, 37.2b-37.3a. (trans.) author

¹³⁹ Chang, ‘Literature of Early Ming to Mid-Ming (1375–1572)’, 46.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Fang Yu 喻芳, ‘Huang E sanqu de xiju yinsu 黄峨散曲的戏剧因素’ (Dramatic Effects in Huang E’s Independent Arias), *四川戲劇 Sichuan Drama*, vol 5 (2013), 56-58, at 57.

applied especially in the Ming dynasty tradition; as a popular writing style of the Ming, ‘erotic and burlesque’ should not be linked to the lady’s respectability.¹⁴²

5.5.2 Xu Yuan: lyrical creativity and writing in a ‘masculine’ voice

On commenting on the third entry by Xu Yuan, a song-suite set to both northern and southern melodies, Wang Duanshu praised the creativity of the suite, stating that it surpasses those by Tang Xianzu. More specifically, Wang makes the analogy of Tang’s creativity with ‘crossing the marked lines on the civil service exam paper,’¹⁴³ a metaphor for overcoming cliché. For Tang Xianzu, *Peony* crosses many lines of the ‘orthodox’ or canon in its implied philosophical agenda. Tang constantly tested the new ideas of the Taizhou school liberal thought – the philosophical thinking that later developed the cult of *qing* in the late Ming.¹⁴⁴

Xu Yuan’s creativity lies in how her song-suite is not confined to a feminine cliché. The song-suite that Wang comments on mirrors Xu’s masculine voice against the gendered conformity of female writers. The suite was written, according to pre-existing textual research, after her husband’s resignation from an official post.¹⁴⁵ The song is written in a narrative style as if Xu herself experienced the rise and fall of a public career: the suite delivers a sequence of articulation – withdrawing (retiring from official post), reclusion and the pursuing of otherworldly transcendence.¹⁴⁶ These are established themes of writing (especially in poetry) in the Chinese literati tradition.¹⁴⁷ The last few lines of Xu’s suite expresses her wishes of withdrawing from the worldly affairs, as the lyric goes:

I visit Shaoxing to see a friend, and bring home some local wine. Call the singers – let’s go on a spring excursion.
访故友山阴载酒回，唤秦娥采珠拾翠。

¹⁴² Ren Zhongmin 任中敏, *Qu xie* 曲谐 *Banters of Qu*, in *SQCK* 散曲丛刊 (*Collections of Sanqu*), repr. 2013, 1143–1145.

¹⁴³ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), 37.4a.

¹⁴⁴ Yu-Yin, ‘Tang Xianzu’s (1550–1616) Peony Pavilion and Taizhou Philosophy’, 14–24.

¹⁴⁵ Wang Li-fang and Zhao Yi-shan, ‘Wan Ming nü qu jia Xu Yuan chu lun 晚明女曲家徐媛初论’ (An Initial Discussion on Late Ming Female Song Writer Xu Yuan), *苏州大学学报 Academic Journal of Suzhou University*, 4 (2004), 91–96, at 93–94.

¹⁴⁶ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’, 37.6a.–37.8b.

¹⁴⁷ Robertson, ‘Voicing the Feminine’, 68, 73 and 85.

While the boiling pot brews the fine tea, we listen to a young boy singing the latest songs.

听青童演出新词，茶烹着武夷雀嘴。

A water gourd hangs from the thatched roof, vines are climbing along the low eaves. I gaze at fishes swimming in the pond.

松棚上挂着军持，矮茅檐牵着薜荔，池塘内觑着游鱼。

I say! How fickle are those who chase after fame! Not for me!

我呵！笑劳名的朝东暮西，白眼看趋跄路歧。

Alas! No more dust of this world will ever again touch the sleeves of my official robe.

呀！乱黄尘再不上俺缁衣双袂。

(Coda) Small fortunes and fame are just a pipe dream. From this day onwards, I will lock my door, and let the moss guard the imperial edict.

（尾声）蝇头蜗角，瓦枕上黄粱睡起，从今后门锁苍苔护紫泥。¹⁴⁸

The suite is written with extensive classical allusions (see Appendix C). Although such practice was fundamentally opposing the criterion of *bense* (naturalness of language), it shows the author's learning beyond the scope of gendered social expectations. Writing in a masculine voice and tradition, *qu* provided an artistic medium that allowed the author to entail a shift in gendered lyrical voice, position and identity.¹⁴⁹ Wang Duanshu praised Xu's suite as 'cool and refreshing', implying her appreciation for the masculine style of writing, just as Wang clearly expressed in her poetry criticism (see Chapter 3).

On the contrary, the first set of Xu's songs, 'Writing Feeling on a Spring Day', is written in feminine style. It is expressed through many objects that are depicted in the lyrics associated with femininity and the boudoir, as the lyric goes:

In the cool and the quiet, my angry tears soak the red New Year note. Rue scents my emerald green shirt, in a butterfly wisp of smoke.

薄寒轻悄，红雨染春条。翠衬香芸，一片烟丝软蝶娇。

On the tip of a branch covered in apricot blossom, a strange bird tweets loudly. As I kill time on the swing in the empty courtyard, sleep has crumpled my muslin.

杏花梢，啼鴂声高。闲杀秋千院落，睡损蛟绡。

I am afraid in this beautiful springtime, in great boredom and low spirits, I can only pluck the fine white hair between my eyebrows.

担害得、闷对芳辰，结思空拈白玉毫。

¹⁴⁸ Xu Yuan, *shangshi* 傷逝 'Writing grieve' to *xin shui lin* 新水令 'New Water Tune', in Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji', 37. 8a - 37.8b. (trans.) Author.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 68.

Petals fall in riotous profusion and the scenery of the bridge is bright (as brocade).
There are faint shadows on the curtains, as the sun appears, and rises over the willow tree.

落英铺绣，景色艳河桥。帘影疏疏，晓日瞳眈映柳梢。

In the mirror I pin my hair up and paint my eyebrows. I long for the bee to fly home from the frontier, (I miss him, and he is) so far away.

镜花销，翠黛慵描。盼杀蝴蝶塞远，离恨天遥。

I sigh mournfully over and over, waiting for the wedding day, waiting for him to return.
断送得、短叹长吁、三度瓜期折大刀。

When Spring returns, I sit in my little courtyard, watching the warm winds blow the pale clouds. Outside on the green hills, little birds are tossed in spirals by the breeze. But I am bored, and downcast.

春归院小，风暖淡云飘。户外青山，缭绕吹丝送伯劳。总无聊、都上眉梢。

I think of the famous poem by Du Fu: 'drinking alone on the double ninth festival.' I read fine literature and wear my official robe.

想杀曲江诗酒，锦字宫袍。

Discarding powder and rouge, I sympathise with the courtesan Jade Flute, as her youthful beauty fades.

抛闪得、粉剩脂残，肠断东风为玉箫。

A life of wandering frustrates me, looking at an official edict, moonlight falls on the high roof beams.

栖迟荒檄，落月户梁高。

In the courtyard in this season of White Dew, a gentle breeze ripples the water, and casts reflection of bamboos.

露白中庭，风细云波竹影抛。

I hear the rustle of plantains, and (a line of) wild geese flying to the faraway horizon. It extremely saddens me; a golden horsewhip is hard to bend, but coloured sashes vanish without trace.

听旅雁天遥。愁杀金鞭难拗，宝袜烟消。

I keep gazing anxiously till my eyes are strained, I suffer tortuously, yet in days to come, when the wooden wheels of my carriage are oiled, a journey of ten thousand miles will begin.

折倒得、望眼将穿，甚日脂车万里桥。¹⁵⁰

The style is also indicated in the list of four mid-Ming literati authors that Wang compares with Xu Yuan; these four writers' songs were all well-known for their boudoir lament theme, flowery language and sentimental feelings. Unlike the other two selected pieces by Xu Yuan that are written with extensive classic allusions, the language style of 'Writing Feeling on a Spring Day' is closer to *bense*, yet still filled with elegant expressions.

¹⁵⁰ Xu Yuan, *chunri shu huai* 春日抒懷 'Writing Feeling on a Spring Day', in Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance), 37.4a–37.5a. (trans.) Author.

Among the four songwriters that Wang lists, Shen Shi is the most representative among the four; his lyrics have a distinctive style of its own, known as ‘the style of Qingmen’ 青門體.¹⁵¹ Famous for their elegant, refined and feminine style of song-writing, these four mid-Ming writers – the aesthetic and style of their compositions collectively known *xianglian* 香奩 (hyper feminine) – became extremely popular during the late Ming.¹⁵² When the flowery and refined lyrics set to the elegant new Kunshan music fashion became the dominant elite performance-entertainment style, the late Ming trend of *qu* writing, as previous Chinese research has identified, went ‘towards the extreme of pursuing *xianglian*’.¹⁵³ This piece also frequents Ming songbooks, including *Poetry of Wu, Played Anew* and *New Formulary*, attesting to its popularity in late Ming. Ren Zhongmin regarded this piece as having lost the true flavour of the independent aria, he gave the credit for this deficiency in Xu’s song to this late-Ming song-writing fashion, which Ren argues that the lyrics are not suited for a song but rather as lyric-poetry.¹⁵⁴

5.5.3 Liang Mengzhao: Writing about subjectivity and gender discontentment

Wang Duanshu also compares Liang’s songs to Shen Shi for their extreme elegant style. Besides Shen Shi, Liang’s *qu* had also been compared to Liang Chenyu’s compositions. Liang Chenyu’s distinctive *qu* writing style is named after his independent aria collection, *White*

¹⁵¹ Yu Fang 喻芳, ‘bu tong xing bie shi jiao zhixia de yuan ge-Huang E yu Shen Shi gui yuan qu zhibijiao 不同性别视角之下的怨歌-黄娥与沈仕閨怨曲之比较’ (Boudoir Laments from Different Gender Gazes: A Comparison between Songs of Huang E and Shen Shi), *Shu xue 蜀学 Studies of Shu Philosophical School*, Vol.9 (2014), 92-97, at 92.

¹⁵² Xu Wei, ‘Nan ci xu lu’. Xu remarked that Zhu Zhishan 祝枝山 ‘had considerable interests in southern song. His art song collection was outstanding and matchless for a period of time’, in *LDQHBB*, vol.1, at 487; Wang Jide, writing about newly composed songs of his time, stated that ‘those who write lyrics for southern music, Shen Shi from Hangzhou, Tang Yin 唐寅, Zhu Zhishan 祝枝山, Liang Chenyu 梁辰魚 from Suzhou ... are well known. Tang and Shen’s independent arias are rich in gracefulness and sentiment; Zhu’s arias are also good’, *Prosody of Qu*, 122–123.

¹⁵³ Zou Qing 邹青, ‘Lun wan ming kunqu qing chang de xuanqu qing xiang- yi wu yin cui ya, nan yin san lai wei qie ru dian 论晚明昆曲清唱的选曲倾向-以《吴歙萃雅》、《南音三籁》为切入点’ (Discussion on the Editorial Trends of Selection of Songbooks for Kunqu Pure Singing: Case Studies of *Collection of Refined Songs of Suzhou* and *Three Sound of Southern Song*), *文化遗产 Cultural Legacy*, 1 (2014), 77-87, at 80–81.

¹⁵⁴ Ren Zhongmin, *Banters of Qu*, 1145–1146. 范夫人徐氏《春日抒懷》四首，措詞一味雅馴，反失曲中真意，蓋已深重南曲柔靡之習矣...夫類曲之詞非好詞，類詞之曲，又豈獨為好曲耶？

Ramie of the East River, known as the “style of White Ramie” (*bai mang ti* 白苧體). Liang’s *Huan sha ji* 浣紗記 (*Washing Silk* c.1573), the first southern song-drama performed in *kunshan* music style was extremely popular among the contemporary elite and marked the beginning of the late-Ming fashion and frenzy for ornamented, refined and elegant songs.¹⁵⁵ Wang’s comparison not only indicates Liang Mengzhao’s elegant style in *qu* writing but the very identity of Liang Chenyu as a composer of both song-drama and independent aria reminds the reader of Liang Mengzhao’s practice in *juqu* writing. Wang remarks on Liang’s *Love Inkstone* song-drama: ‘the emotions portrayed in her *Lovesick Inkstone* are deeply felt yet proper, the sentiments are genuine yet charming’.¹⁵⁶

Interestingly, as Liang’s poems are also collected in ‘Main Collection’, Wang commented on her poetic writing that they ‘surpass the previous generation of song writers’ and subsequently compare Liang and Shen. In ‘Collection of Elegance’ Wang praises Liang as the ‘Yuan Zhen and Bai Juyi amongst women’ – names of two Tang dynasty literati poets. Wang’s commentary she intentionally wishes to raise awareness of Liang as a poet and song-writer. Although Liang’s songs are written in a feminine voice, she did transform her boudoir thoughts into expressions of subjectivity and gender discontentment. Liang’s extant six sets of arias, which are all collected in ‘Collection of Elegance’, show Wang’s personal admiration for Liang’s artistry; Wang states, ‘she revealed exceptional perceptiveness in every drama she touched upon ... the vivid touch of her songs depicts a life-like portrayal ... how can I not applause such artistry’.¹⁵⁷

Wang demonstrates Liang’s discontentment expressed in her songs through her comment on the first set of songs, as they ‘reveal the Cowherd disappoints his wife the Weaving Girl’:

Rosy clouds separate the edges of the sky, yet the heart of the Cowherd is only fond of having a good time.

云霞阻隔天际头，更何心贪玩牵牛。

¹⁵⁵ Jin Xin, ‘Liang Chenyu sanqu shilun 梁辰鱼散曲试论’ (Discussion on *sanqu* of Liang Chenyu), 江西师范大学报 *Journal of Jiangxi Normal University*, 37/1 (2004), 65–69. On the facts of the music frenzy of Liang Chenyu’s songs, see Xu Shuo-fang 徐碩方, Wan Ming qujia nianpu 晚明曲家年谱 (*Chronicles of Late Ming Song Writers*) [hereafter: WMQJNP], vol. 1 ‘Suzhou juan 蘇州卷’ (Composers from Suzhou), ‘Liang Chenyu 梁辰鱼’, 151–200, at 122–123.

¹⁵⁶ Wang Duanshu, ‘Zheng ji’ (Main Collection), 12.1a. Laura Long (trans.), 241.

¹⁵⁷ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), 37.9a.

Unlike the Milky Way, the rivers and seas become a torrent. I look far, yet I cannot see the grassy delta.

银汉河殊江海溜，却教人目断芳洲。

Overwhelmed with joy and stirred by love, in the end, there is nothing but frowning eyebrows. It is difficult to forgive, only cursing the Stars will ease the sorrow.

魂消情逗，只落得两眉空皱。愁难宥，止有个对星低咒。

My heart is full: the distress of parting is beyond measure. Why set a boundary line for the Cowherd? the Moon Goddess ridiculing the affectionate Weaver Girl.

满怀离恨无限忧，何心为画牵牛？月里佳人能自守，笑多情织女偏愁。

...

What the Weaver Girl suffers tonight, is also my misery. Difficult to forgive, I can only curse quietly in the lamplight

今宵生受，却也是眼前消受。愁难宥，更有个对灯低咒。

He resorts to deception; the most shameful thing is that it is all fabrication. Heaven and Earth are both wrong.

对面弄虚头，鬼胡诌最可羞，人间天上皆差谬。

He is guessing while I am still worrying; when I have doubts you worry. Even the gods of happiness, wealth and longevity are not as thorough as the Cowherd and the Weaver Girl.

他猜我愁，依疑你忧，三星不及双星透。

With good cause, love will be everlasting and unchanging. It cannot be dimmed by time. 好因由，天长地久，难昧许多时。

...

(Coda) You cannot track down loving kindness, and a caring heart is hard to capture. In heaven, on earth, let us enjoy our freedom.

(尾声) 恩情总是休穷究，一点关心难透，天上人间各自由。¹⁵⁸

This popular folklore of Cowherd and Weaving Girl is a metaphor for a husband and wife who have to live in two different places. Wang's identification of the folklore for the emotion that Liang's lyrics attempt to deliver is based on Liang's implied complaints of her husband's absence. This expression, as Hua argues, 'breaks the boundaries of gendered behaviours that women [were] supposed to be passive and accept the sub-ordination'.¹⁵⁹ Hua argues that the genre of *qu* functioned as an 'endorser' of emotions, allowing Liang to subvert

¹⁵⁸ Liang Mengzhao, 'Qixi Day Reflection' to the tune 'Gathering of Virtuous Guests', in Wang Duanshu, 'Ya ji' (Collection of Elegance), 37.8b. (trans.) Author. The Cowherd and the Weaving Girl is a popular Chinese legend dating from the Han Dynasty. It is associated with the seventh evening of the seventh month of the lunar year, when the two stars, Altair and Vega, appear closest together in the sky. The Cowherd (Altair) and the Weaver Girl (Vega), doomed by the Emperor of Heaven to live apart on either side of the Milky Way, meet just once a year when a flock of magpies builds a bridge enabling the lovers to cross.

¹⁵⁹ Wei Hua, *Female Voices and Historical Memories*, 83 and 90.

the gender norm and express her subjectivity in the song.¹⁶⁰ Thus, the genre offers the writer a lyrical mask, or a medium of constructing persona through fictive characters. Yet, looking through the lens of the liberal late-Ming context brings a different understanding. It is not unusual for gentlewomen-writers of late Ming and early Qing to express gender discontentment;¹⁶¹ in a society in which the cult of *qing* was the hallmark of its culture, the songs written by a wife lamenting her loneliness in the boudoir and her complaint concerning the separation from her husband, as also seen in Wang Duanshu sister-in-law's aria, valorize a wife's sensuality and her *qing*, and reveals her companionate marriage.

Liang's epistolary writing shows her explicit gender discontentment. In a letter written to her younger brother, Liang speaks out about the unfairness that existed between literati and gentlewomen's writing practice, in which literati were clearly not restrained by gendered limitations so they could speak freely.¹⁶² On the contrary, gentlewomen's words had to be carefully conceived so that their writings did not harm their respectability.¹⁶³ Liang was not afraid to address one significant part of the difficulty of gentlewomen's writing practice: their limited physical mobility.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, as Liang summarizes, 'how dare gentlewomen try the masculine writing style of Li Bai and Du Fu?'¹⁶⁵ Liang's letter articulates 'a common dilemma that many learned gentlewomen faced in a patriarchal society',¹⁶⁶ where writings were tied to expected gender and social expectations. Yet, Liang's *sanqu* are mostly linked

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., 85. Hua uses the Chinese word 代言體.

¹⁶¹ Kang-I Sun Chang, 'Liu Shih and Hsü Ts'an: Feminine or Feminist?', in *Voices of the Song Lyrics in China*, ed. Pauline Yu (California, 1994), 169-187, at 179-180. Sun Chang argues that 'abandoned wives' as a lyrical and poetic theme narrative by a female voice often embodies a 'tone of protest and defiance'. This theme has been formulated and used since antiquity; one must ask whether the theme is original-personal or conventional. While in the literati-feminine voice the words tend to be read as political allegory, when female writers speak in their own voice, it is a true voice rather than an allegorical one.

¹⁶² Liang Mengzhao 梁孟昭, 'Ji di 寄弟' (Letter to My Younger Brother), in Wang Xiuqin 王秀琴 and Hu Wenkai 胡文楷 eds., *Li dai ming yuan wen yuan jian bian* 歷代名媛文苑簡編 (Abridged Edition of Prose by Notable Women from Imperial China) (Shanghai, 1947), 45.

¹⁶³ Ibid. 辭意放達，則傷大雅。

¹⁶⁴ Ibid. 詩人肆意山水，閱歷既多...至閨閣則不然，足不逾閭闔，見不出鄉邦

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. 詩家以李、杜為極，李之輕脫奔放，杜之奇鬱悲壯，是豈足閨閣所宜耶

¹⁶⁶ Paul Ropp, "'Now Cease Painting Eyebrows, Don a Scholar's Cap and Pin': The Frustrated Ambition of Wang Yun, Gentry Woman Poet and Dramatist", *Ming Studies*, 1 (1998), 86-110, at 88; full translation of Liang Mengzhao's letter at page 87.

with boudoir loneliness, a theme that mirrors the domestic sphere that is non-political and private.¹⁶⁷

Wang's comparison of Liang Mengzhao with Shen Shi and Liang Chenyu indicates Liang's feminine writing style. The detailed analysis of all of Liang's songs affirms that they are boudoir laments of loneliness.¹⁶⁸ Yet, these songs expressed Liang's *qing* and subjectivity, revealing how gentlewomen's songs were self-expressions grounded in the Ming cultural trend. When Wang Duanshu intentionally grouped and presented these gentlewomen-authored arias in her sub-collection, while also repackaging them with her editorial voice as an interpretive guide, she rewrote these expressions of the innermost feelings of gentlewomen as collective public performances of feminine subjectivity, artistry and the elevation of gentlewomen-writers among canonical literati writers.

This specific ways in which Wang commented on these gentlewomen-writers, however, raises another question on the nature of the sub-collection of 'Collection of Elegance'. Wang clearly indicates her editorial purpose of including genres other than poetry, to 'illustrate the comprehensiveness of women's writing'. If Wang's editorial comments relating to the aspect of performance (as seen in many cases of courtesans' songs) encourage non-musically literate readers to read tune titles, Wang's comments that are directly pointing to specific literati-writers reflect the collection's accessibility by an informed readership – those who have knowledge of literati's song-writing practices, lyrical styles and musical aesthetics.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ For a detailed literary analysis of Liang's six sets of songs, see Wei Hua, 'Gender, Identity, and the Writing of *Qing*', 120–132.

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

Wang Duanshu's selection of gentlewomen's arias conveyed a different picture from what late-Ming male critics saw as an absence of gentlewomen in the field of *qu*. Wang's comments suggest how to read gentlewomen's songs and, through her targeted comparison, show her clear editorial intention to elevate these songs. Wang's agency as the editor, whose critical voice speaks on behalf of gentlewomen-writers, transformed the songs that were written for self-expression, amusement or the passing of time into a publicized demonstration of the artistry of gentlewomen-authored songs. Furthermore, through situating gentlewomen's writing practice among established family traditions and distinguished literati predecessors, gentlewomen's songs entered the Ming music canon.

The Chinese music canon in this instance comprised song-writers such as Tang, Shen, Yuan and Liang, whose theories and writings defined contemporary practices of Ming music as well as later generations, especially for the representative performing art of *kunqu*. In comparison, the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Confucian canon exclusively refers to sacrificial music and treatises on Confucian music philosophy. The Ming canonical music treatise, *Yue lü quan shu* 樂律全書 (*Collected Works of Music Theory* 1595) by Prince Zhu Zaiyu 朱載堉 (1536–1611) was 'a monumental and crowning compendium of late imperial music Confucianism' but excluded *qu*, popular songs and women's music in the canon.¹⁶⁹ The imperial Chinese notion of a music canon, thus, only included those treatises that centred on music as a means of self-cultivation and moral governance. Thus, for contemporary literati writers, song-writing, or what they defined as a 'lesser path' (*xiaodao moji* 小道末技), however, was a vital means of power negotiation and public performance.

To a degree, Wang's inclusion of *qu* genres, apart from her all-inclusive editorial strategy to show a complete view of women's writing, also implies her intention of elevating, even legitimizing, this unorthodox, marginal performance genre into the canon. Wang's strategy is reflected in her editorial claim that *qu* is derived from *ci*, while *ci* is derived from *shi*.¹⁷⁰ Another close look at Wang's remarks on the informal genres in her preface to *Notable*

¹⁶⁹ Lam, 'Presence and Absence', 119.

¹⁷⁰ Wang Duanshu, 'Fan li' (Editorial Principles), 2.b.

Women suggests an identical pattern of previous attempts to elevate the marginality of *ci* lyric-poetry, as Wang claims:

This is to say, the ancients always enjoyed it when things came to an end and something new appeared. Poetry and Prose are the same, in that when one has finished with correctness (*zheng* 正), along comes elegance (*ya* 雅) to succeed it. This is why we have *shi* (poetry) first, then *ci* (lyric poetry), then *sanqu* (independent arias), then songs collected from the streets and alleyways.¹⁷¹

In this comment, Wang evaluates the genres through the notion of *bian* 變 – a succession of transformations of the poetic genres – a strategy which was used by literati editors during the Southern Song period (1127–1279) whose desire was to elevate the literary status of *ci*. In doing so, as Yu observed according to the extant surviving lyric poetry anthologies from the period, ‘one involves the concerted effort to situate the song lyric (*ci*) within a tradition that could be called *ya* “elegance” and subsequently to identify this quality as in fact the “correctness” *zheng* of *ci*’.¹⁷² Central to the elevation of *ci*, as Yu further argues, ‘were the terms being explored by many southern song writers of *ya* and *zheng*, with their association with notions of elegance, classicism, correctness, and orthodoxy’.¹⁷³

Central to this elevation was also the ‘heritage of the song lyric [that] goes back to the *Book of Odes*, thereby accommodating it to the established *shi* tradition’.¹⁷⁴ In his preface to the women’s anthology, *Nü sao* 女騷 (*Female Sao* 1618), the male literatus Zhao Shiyong 趙時用 (date unknown), as Sun Chang argues, ‘calls attention to the significance of *bian* in the evolution of literature, claim[ing] that the poetic forms have changed greatly from *Airs* and *Elegance* of the *Odes* ... with the implication that the poetic canon should be expanded to include a much wider spectrum of styles and works, including those by women’.¹⁷⁵ Wang Duanshu’s evaluation of the evolution of poetic forms echoes the southern song tradition in elevating the status of *ci*, by stating ‘elegance succeeds correctness’, thus legitimizing the sub-genres included in her anthology. Meanwhile, Wang’s editorial practice of including

¹⁷¹ Widmer (trans.), *Under the Confucian Eyes*, 190.

¹⁷² Pauline Yu, ‘Song Lyrics and the Canon: A look at Anthologies of *Tz’u*’, in *Voices of the Song Lyrics in China*, ed. Yu, 70–103, at 81.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 87.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁷⁵ Kang-I Sun Chang, ‘Gender and Canonicity: Ming-Qing Women Poets in the Eyes of the Male Literati’, in *Hsiang Lectures on Chinese Poetry*, ed. Fong, 1–18, at 2–3.

sanqu in a women's poetry anthology, for which she envisages 'these poems be said to be "of a feather"' with the antique *Odes*',¹⁷⁶ indirectly connects the songs to the established poetic tradition of *Book of Odes*, and thus makes women's writings in *sanqu* a part of that complementary canon that she wishes her *Notable Women* to form.

It is also worth noticing that the word *ya* 雅 – 'Elegance' – is in the title of the sub-collection of independent arias; the word is also used in southern song lyric poetry anthologies.¹⁷⁷ This strategy, as Yu argues, 'not only aims to valorise the song lyrics vis-à-vis the dominant *shi* form', but more importantly, 'to establish a distinctive and central tradition within the genre of *ci* itself': 'a canon within its own tradition'.¹⁷⁸ The two poetic forms of *ci* and *qu* have shared connections of music performance, the purpose of entertainment and banquet contexts. The title that Wang named the sub-collection of song can be interpreted in both of these directions: 'Elegance' emulates the 'Elegance' section of *Book of Odes*, in which court music-poetry of the antiquity is collected and thus makes the connection of the sub-collection and the poetic canon. The title *ya ji* 雅集 also can be interpreted as 'refined gatherings', a phrase that late-Ming literati used to term drinking parties, where writings were exchanged, music was performed and lavish banquets were held.¹⁷⁹

Poetry and music are both derived from the same origins; as Chinese literary historian classify, poems within *Book of Odes*, Han dynasty music bureau, Six dynasty ballads and Tang *shi* music are all subordinate to the poetry, while *ci* and *qu*, due to their pre-existing melodies, require writers to intentionally accommodate lyrics to the melodic patterns.¹⁸⁰ This is, as seventeenth-century critics argue, why *qu* is the most difficult genre to compose. Wang Duanshu's contemporary, loyalist literatus-critic Huang Zhouxing 黄周星 (1611–1680) emphasized the degree of difficulty in *qu* composition and summarized three major difficulties in *qu* composition: following metrical patterns, harmonious music-lyric fittings

¹⁷⁶ Wang Duanshu, 'Zi xu' (Preface to *MYSWCB*), 4.a.

¹⁷⁷ Yu, 'Song Lyrics and the Canon', 81 and 89.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 103.

¹⁷⁹ Lowry, *The Tapestry of Popular Songs*, 140.

¹⁸⁰ Yang Youshan and Yang Fan, 'Zhong guo gudai shiciqu yu yinyue zhi guanxi 中国古代诗词曲与音乐之关系' (The Relation Between Chinese Classic Poetic Forms of *shi*, *si*, *qu* and Music), 求索 *Seeker*, 5 (2009), 196–197.

and the naturalness of the language.¹⁸¹ Huang also argued that, although compared to poetry and lyric-poetry, songs are more informal, *qu* is the most difficult to compose due to its strict rules of metrical patterns and prosodic rules, which limit the freedom of the writers.¹⁸² Wang Duanshu, as mentioned in this chapter, also admits the difficulty of *qu* song-writing.

Wang Duanshu's multifaceted editorial voice which informed meanings between the witnessing of the sounding performance and the silent textual lyrical presentation of the song, constantly reminds the reader of the contemporary music fashions and traditions that these female-composed arias were situated. This strategy also reminds the reader of the distinctive nature of *qu* as performance/sung literature, in which the lyrics compromises to the music. This is not to say that lyrics are not important; lyricism was celebrated through the presentation of the artistic persona of courtesans' arias, the feminine voice and novelty of gentlewomen's songs, and the over-refined mid-Ming style that is revealed in Xu's arias with the employment of extensive classic allusions. Despite the absence of the female-composed music extant in the form of notated sources, the presence of women's lyrical voices provides a glimpse into the 'realities of historical, gendered, and music China'.¹⁸³ Yet, the voices and realities of Ming women's musiking, lyrical personas and voices cannot be understood without the information on women making music that is scattered in poetry, memoirs, biographies, miscellaneous jottings and notes, remarks and critiques on songs. Wang Duanshu's collection and her editorial interpretation is a vital piece in understanding the reality of the under-represented and incomplete music of Ming women from a gentlewoman's own perspective.

¹⁸¹ Huang Zhouxing 黃周星, *Zhi qu zhi yu* 製曲枝語 (A Branch of Remarks on Writing Qu), in Zhao dai cong shu 昭代叢書 (Collected Series from Bright Dynasties), vol.1, chapter 34, facsimile, 807. 故愚謂曲之難有三, 叶律一也, 合調二也, 字句天然三也。

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Lam, 'Presence and Absence', 116. On women's lyrical voice in imperial China, see Chang, 'Liu Shih and Hsü Ts'an: Feminine or Feminist?', 169–187; Fong, 'Engendering the Lyric: Her Image and Voice in Song', 107–144; Robertson, 'Voicing the Feminine', 63–101; Xiaorong Li, 'Engendering Heroism: Ming-Qing Women's Song Lyrics to the Tune Man jiang hong', *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China*, 7/1 (2005), 1–39. For feminine voice in late Ming singing repertoire, see Judith Zeitlin 'The Pleasure of Print', 41–65.

Conclusion

This thesis has interrogated the position and editorial work of Wang Duanshu in order to shed light on the relations of gender power in late-Ming China. Wang Duanshu's work, most notably her 'Collection of Elegance' and accompanying paratextual commentaries, is uniquely well-placed to enlighten scholarly discussion on this topic. The argument of this thesis goes beyond existing literature to situate Wang Duanshu as a key source for this period. Without engaging with her work, any investigation of this period which addresses a number of key themes will be inadequate to the task. This thesis identifies several of these themes and explores them in progressive thematic chapters which draw from and build upon each other. In doing so, this thesis is able to show several elements of the multi-faceted intersections and complex intrigues that dominated elite culture, artistic critiques and social status-performance in this era.

The methodological approach of the research conducted herein, that of close critical attention to paratextual commentaries of song collections to draw fresh insights, may offer a useful approach for other interdisciplinary researchers. The discussions and findings of these chapters are complemented by biographical information and existing scholarship on cultural life or other authors and composers of the time. However, this is not a work of literary history nor a work of musicology in the strictest sense. Rather, because many of the songs in the musical collections investigated most closely in this thesis are no longer performable, or at least not in the original style, because the notation has been lost, the methodological analysis is more interdisciplinary in using a mixture of textual commentary, cultural history and cultural-materialist analysis.

The argument, key original texts and principal scholarship of each chapter will be described in the following section. This description will encompass a discussion of how the methodology of the wider thesis was employed within each chapter, alongside a consideration of questions for further study that may bear fruit, but unfortunately lay outside the remit and design of this analysis. In this way, the limitations of the thesis are developed but the specific contribution of these research questions and the critical lens are better exemplified. In this

section, we will consider the research questions addressed by this thesis and demonstrate their complementarity and co-dependence as building blocks in the larger argument.

The focus of the research questions was narrowed to the gender elements of these issues. There are several other themes worthy of scholarly attention, and Wang Duanshu would be a valuable resource for any of them. It is not the purpose of this thesis to address all of them. The thesis begins by considering Wang herself, her biography and position within the commercial, social and literary interests throughout her life and in different socio-cultural contexts. The contribution chapter one lies in demonstrating the importance of her main work, *Notable Women*, as both a significant event in her own development as a person and as an emblematic work of scholarship. However, the first chapter also plays a vital role in providing contextual information which underpins the arguments of the later chapters. It is in these chapters that the relations of gender power become most prominent in the argument.

Chapter 2 builds upon our understanding of Wang's social position and the importance of *Notable Women* as developed by Chapter 1 to explore her contribution to discourses on feminine authorship in *qu*. This question is approached through an analysis of the materiality, the textual packaging, of her song collections. The focus of the thesis narrows from *Notable Women* to look closely at the structure of the 'Collection of Elegance'. By arguing that this sub-collection is a musical object suitable to examination for its materiality as much as its contents, this question allows us to explore wider print culture in the late-Ming era and gain insights into the fluid boundaries of social class and unique gender dynamics of the time. This fluidity raises themes which recur throughout the thesis and provide its main analytical thread; indeed, what we might perhaps view as the piece's refrain.

Chapter 2 also develops Tina Lu's observation that 'the late Ming seems to have been the only period in Chinese history when well-born ladies of the gentry and courtesans socialised with and befriended one another'.¹ This chapter explores this unusual textual socialization, not as a parity of cultural esteem at the time but as a distinct intimacy founded

¹ Tina Lu, 'The Literary Culture of the late Ming (1573–1644)', in eds. Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Owen, *Cambridge History of Chinese Literature* Vol. II (Cambridge, 2010), 63-151, at 147-148.

in their gendered position. While operative within class structures, this intimacy was able to transcend or operate independently from a strict interpretation of cultural norms and thus created this fluidity. This period is thus uniquely able to offer keen insights into gender power relations as distinct from the intersectional oppressions and behaviour-performances. This critical lens is the device through which the analyses of the following chapters are brought into focus. We see in Chapter 3 how Wang engages with female authorship and textual production to examine women's illusory absence in late-Ming song, a concept she explores by approaching women's experience through their commonalities of experience and not as a separate phenomenon based on class distinction. Wang finds similar commonalities of experience in her engagement with theatrical performance and space, which facilitates Chapter 4's discussion of women's 'performance self', persona and their navigation of gender performance in private and in public.

The discussion of Wang's textual organization in Chapter 2 also provides the premise for understanding the themes of these later chapters by detailing the importance of her paratextual materials in exhibiting her own agency. It is here that the analysis of Wang as 'reproductive authorship' – 'editor-as-author' – is theorized for examination later. It is through her biographical accounts and commentaries that the reader is guided through the 'Collection of Elegance' as Wang becomes our curator and chaperon to shape the meaning of texts. In claiming her own authorial voice, Wang appears to emerge from her own 'illusory absence' to take her position as an equal and authoritative critical voice in a dialogue of equivalent standing with male elite discourse.

Chapter 3 takes this argument forward and applies it to how Wang's compilation and editing contributed to a widened understanding of the *qu* genre. The understanding of her social position combines with her 'editor-as-author' status to enable the reader to view her editorial strategies as a social performance through the medium of print. Seizing the role of critic for herself, Wang claims authority over the curation and interpretation of these texts in an overt display and defiance of power designed to challenge the cultural space as an exclusively male literati preserve. Wang's contribution to the *qu* genre is under-examined in existing scholarship, and still fewer of these studies engage in a nuanced reading of her

editorship as the radical interposition into not just male space, but into *qu*, ‘literati’s operatic music *par excellence*’ in late Ming, and a significant component of the literati’s music sub-culture.² Chapter 3 fills this gap and engages directly with Wang’s editorial strategies and her use of elite male discourse in order to assert her own literary authority, and ‘assimilate into literati culture, making themes and tropes from literati discourse her own’.³

Thus, this chapter builds upon the examination of Wang’s use of textual space as discussed in Chapter 2 in order to engage with her musical aesthetics. Her song selections display her critical voice drawing upon Small’s approach to music making as social activity and performance of identities.⁴ This chapter answers the question of how Wang contributed to a wider understanding of the *qu* genre by demonstrating that she employed musicking as a process and strategy to inscribe a new voice as a gentlewoman editor-critic in that elite music discourse.

Wang Duanshu’s critical authority as an editor-critic, shown by her material organization and insightful song selection strategies, underpin her political programme in the ‘Collection of Elegance’. Chapter 4 argues that Wang’s deft employment of cultural nostalgia displayed an exercise of authority intending to advocate women’s greater recognition as cultural producers. Wang invokes cultural nostalgia for the late Imperial era to conjure an evocative and wistful image of courtesan culture, upon which she develops a subtle demonstration of the importance of women’s contribution to the art of this period. Chapter 4 not only builds upon the arguments of the previous chapters but offers the first half of an analytical discussion alongside Chapter 5. By first examining courtesans’ cultural production, Chapter 5 then applies a similar close analysis of gentlewomen’s songs.

Thus, Chapters 4 and 5 represent something of a departure from this thesis’ presentation of women as one group worthy of analysis through Wang’s editorship. However, it is in the late Ming era when courtesans and gentlewomen enjoyed their unusual socialization, although mostly textually. In advocating her political agenda, Wang is writing for her own time and

² Lam, ‘Imperial Agency in Ming Music Culture’, 301.

³ Berg, *Women and the Literary World*, 119.

⁴ Small, *Musicking: The Meaning of Performing and Listening* 8–13.

espousing the nostalgic view that the late Ming era offered a cultural purity, an artistic and literary ‘Chinese-ness’ which some felt to be lost from the time of her readership. Wang’s separate treatment of courtesans and gentlewomen in some of her critiques, reflected in these later chapters, takes place within a wider agenda of claiming cultural parity for women with men. In both these last chapters, it is made clear that Wang is seeking to elevate women’s status as cultural producers. Chapter 4 highlights Wang’s achievement in this through cultural nostalgia, while Chapter 5 describes how Wang is more explicit in adding gentlewomen to the literary canon that male critics have excluded them from. In both these chapters we see the thematic recurrence of illusory absence and gendered social performance in song.

Chapter 4 demonstrates that courtesans were able to challenge gendered behaviour expectations through elaborate androgynies that ‘erases male/female opposition in the cultural realm ... while keeping their feminine sexuality’,⁵ blurring previously existing gender boundaries and even defying and subverting social norms of power and identity. We view late Ming tastes, social customs and aesthetic preferences through Wang’s editorial gaze, and Chapter 4 uses this lens to perceive the strategies she employed through her selection of songs and paratextual commentaries to demonstrate the artistry in courtesans’ music productions. The playfulness, seductive and erotic themes, and careful display of androgyny through song in their lyrical reflections on behaviours and the thoughts behind their public and private performances reveal their skilled navigation of power norms, which move consideration of their work beyond the cultural and into the political sphere. This chapter engages most forcefully with Wang’s presentation of the courtesan’s various techniques. It is her sepia-tinted observations on the late-Ming world that reveal this world to the reader, and, by idealizing the time, Wang is subtly evoking nostalgia for not just the cultural aesthetics but also the socio-political climate which enabled such gender fluidity and inter-class textual socialization. Wang enters the political sphere both alongside and through her subjects, presenting a delicate but firm critique of the socio-political currents of her own time through her deft conjuration of cultural nostalgia.

⁵ Kang-I Sun Chang, ‘Ming-Qing Women Poets and Cultural Androgyny’, *Critical Studies*, 18 (2002), 21–31, at 15–16.

Wang Duanshu's intent in discussing gentlewomen's song is more focused on socio-cultural outcomes. Her focus is less on an evocation of nostalgia than on elevating gentlewomen's song to greater critical recognition; to have the gentlewoman-author represented in the canon of great works in the field of *qu*. However, Chapter 5 draws out the political intent alongside Wang's socio-cultural objectives. It is through this second, political lens that the scope is drawn wider from gentlewomen and their songs to include Wang's aims for challenging the gendered preconceptions of all women's roles in cultural production. This chapter demonstrates how Wang's editorial voice in 'Collection of Elegance', if not functioning as a challenge to the patriarchal order or as a 'counter-model to the dominant modes of authorisation',⁶ considers 'themselves – gentlewomen and their writing – intellectually as 'part of the literati culture',⁷ where superiority could be claimed.

The first critical lens employed in Chapter 5, however, also facilitates a drawing back from the close attention of the texts which had been the principal aim of the earlier four chapters. Using what we have learned through those arguments, this final chapter is able to draw the findings together to build a bigger picture. By doing so, Chapter 5 offers a new interpretation of Wang's cultural agenda. Her collection, *Notable Women*, through the various means examined in this thesis succeeds in not just elevating women's song to the position of great literati writers and critics. Wang's 'Collection of Elegance' has an even greater aim. Prior to Wang's *Notable Women*, the literati constantly apologized for *qu* as a lesser art compared to the highest cultural productions: poetry and prose. Meanwhile, the genre's absence in literati literary collections 'implies *qu* was not regarded as part of one's standard literary corpus'.⁸ While Chapter 4 showed the existence of 'Collection of Elegance' as part of the 'complete view' of Ming women's writing, Chapter 5 shows Wang used the narrative from pre-established tradition of canonizing lyric poetry, to define the evolution of genres, and thus proposes that popular writings be considered as a part of the mainstream in the development of Chinese literary and musical history.

⁶ Wall, *The Imprints of Gender*, 6.

⁷ Chang, 'Ming-Qing Women Poets', 21.

⁸ Tan, *Songs of Contentment*, 3.

This thesis interprets the songs and Wang's editorial strategies by placing them in the wider social, cultural and material contexts in which they been produced, presented, performed, heard and read. The interdisciplinary exploration of songs in the 'Collection of Elegance' has drawn evidence from not only contemporary musical critiques but also non-music literary sources of biographies and other women's literary writings. 'Collection of Elegance' provided multi-faceted dimensions in which music fashion, gender and literary concerns of the late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century China can be seen. In doing so, this thesis posits 'Collection of Elegance' as a cultural object for aesthetic appreciation embedded within the wider conversations of early modern Chinese elite culture, fashion and ideological concerns. This thesis does not attempt to define 'Collection of Elegance', as the only known Ming female-edited, all female-authored collection, as new in its editorial strategies and cultural concerns. Rather, it is a collection that is based on material recycling, recompilation and repackaging. Wang Duanshu's editorial strategies, aesthetics and scholarly concerns, as this thesis argues, engage with several aspects of on-going cultural dialogue of late-Ming legacy in early Qing. Therefore, this thesis demonstrates the ways in which earlier traditions of song-writing, anthologizing and critiquing were articulated in historical contexts.

The methodological perspectives of this thesis concern 'text' and their format, packaging and materiality. It interprets the 'Collection of Elegance' as a cultural artefact, focuses on the 'meaning-making' through paratexts. Since the physical position of commentaries in the collection, at least in the case of *Notable Women*, are placed ahead of the curated texts that interrupt the reading experience of moving from texts to texts, the make-up of the anthology shows the degrees in which the editor wanted the collection to be read and 'whereby interpretation could be guided'.⁹ This thesis also concerns the process of the recycling, repackaging and recompilation of texts, which were constantly conditioned in a series of socio-political, economic and cultural factors. Thus, this thesis comprehends texts and paratexts in their historically placed contexts and draws materials from other contemporary sources to further ground the interpretation in the wider cultural dialogue. This analytical angle has also been applied throughout the thesis in order to offer a culturally and historically

⁹ Carlitz, 'Printing as Performance', 290.

grounded interpretation of the multi-faceted editorial voices of Wang Duanshu and late-Ming women's song-writing practice, to view 'Collection of Elegance' as a complex whole.

This duplicating compilation style also appeared in other Ming produced women's poetry anthology. Previous research on late imperial Chinese female and literati anthologized women's poetry collections argues that these imprints lack a series of criteria of inclusion and exclusion in the process of editing.¹⁰ The inclusiveness of re-compilation that aimed at 'preserving' rather than 'naming', as Fong criticized, works against the formation of a female canon.¹¹ The existing scholarship focuses on feminine authorship and writing traditions in women's edited collections including Wang's *Notable Women* as a significant part of this editorial corpus. However, this thesis demonstrates the importance of Wang's editorship extends beyond the concerns of gendered agency, subjectivity and women's self-representation in writing, and offers insights into not only women's literary status, but the complex inter-dynamics between tradition and fashion, and canon and commerce of the printing enterprise in late Ming and early Qing.

Chapter 1 and 2 both deal with these same issues of the selection, categorizing and the ordering of the collection. Chapter 1 examines the corpus of prefatory materials in *Notable Women* as the principal basis for understanding Wang Duanshu's editorial interests, strategies and concerns.¹² Prefatory writings, which precede all other materials, provide significant space for the editor's self-promotion, editorial authority and publicizing of her celebrity social position with distinguished contributions from upper echelons of the Confucian elite.¹³ These prefatory writings, which not only include biographical detail to esteem the editor's distinguished family lineage and social connections, elevate her edited anthology to canonical status. Through prefatory and paratextual materials of the collection. this thesis hears the editorial voice from Wang Duanshu most clearly. This material also displays Wang Duanshu's editorial strategy and motivation behind this ambitious project, offering insight

¹⁰ Fong, 'Gender and the Failure', 129-149; Sufeng Xu, 'The Rhetoric of Legitimation', 255-289; Kang-I Sun Chang, 'Questions of Gender and Canon in the Ming-Qing Literature', 217-239.

¹¹ Fong, 'Gender and the Failure', 147.

¹² Ellen Widmer, 'The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Publishing', *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies*, 56/1 (1996), 77-122, at 110.

¹³ Patricia Sieber, 'Nobody's Genre, Everybody's Song: *Sanqu* Songs and the Expansion of the Literary Sphere in Yuan China', *Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture*, 1/12 (2014), 29-64, at 40.

into her editorial practice to elevate social status and fame. Chapter 1 and its findings underpin and contextualized the arguments and conclusions of the later chapters.

Chapter 2 builds on the analysis of the previous chapter and moves onto the more detailed analysis of the materiality of ‘Collection of Elegance’. It tries to decode the process of recycling and re-editing of the pre-existing music texts. This chapter firstly looks at how Wang Duanshu’s editorial voice is asserted in the opening comments and posits curated songs in the latest fashion of contemporary music making. A contextualized discussion of male elite practices addresses how the previous tradition of music appreciation and editing was not merely for entertainment and the passing of time but that the activity of editing music functioned as self-fashioning for the literati social cachet. This chapter also proposed the detailed list of source texts – mostly hypothesized but based on cross-referencing of late-Ming published songbooks and other previously printed materials – to seek to contextualize the ways in which female-authored songs were disseminated in the public domain. Secondly, this chapter focused on the materiality of songs, considering not only the physical feature of the printed page but also the social, cultural and historical contexts in which these songs were composed, created and circulated (and factors that could influence the creative process and activities), and the new ‘meaning-making’ during the process against the supposedly fixed texts. Finally, this chapter viewed musical texts as products of late-Ming fashion. While Chapter 1 argued Wang’s assortment and classification of female authors in *Notable Women* is a microcosm of contemporary Chinese society, gender and class, Chapter 2 interprets ‘Collection of Elegance’ as a material space which unfolds an archive of late-Ming music fashion in line with a growing market for women’s writing. The collection has a rich assortment of materials, ranging from fashionable courtesans’ gift songs, to intimate, private lyrics written by gentlewomen; the affect which the order creates unfolds a sequence of performing dynamics that is ‘passionate and delicate music bustling together’.¹⁴

Building upon the findings of Chapter 2, Chapter 3 provides a close reading of the surrounding paratextual materials of ‘Collection of Elegance’. This chapter sought to explore Wang’s editorial aesthetic by placing her editorial voice in a wider late-Ming music critique

¹⁴ Wang Duanshu, ‘Ya ji’ (Collection of Elegance), editor’s opening comment, 37.1a. 豔烈交喧

tradition. This chapter drew on materials from late Ming literati's music discourses and Wang's poetic and song-drama criticism, to offer a historically placed interpretation of Wang's editorial voice and music aesthetics. The findings demonstrate how Wang's use of the language of male literati critics placed her voice in the tradition of elite discourse. This editorial practice as part of the totality of 'musicking' that not only involves the composer and performer but also the editorial activity that transforms music into a physical book, fulfilled a personalized agenda of curating songs not only as textual but also social negotiation. The surrounding paratextual materials, as a significant part of the repackaging, form a discursive channel of conveying newly generated meanings. They also formed a space of social performance of the editor, who's 'becoming' a cultural elite was undertaken by speaking the language of the majority.¹⁵

Chapter 4 explored 'musicking' as a strategically negotiated process in transforming songs performed in various spaces other than the printed page. However, this process is two-layered on this occasion. This chapter firstly examined courtesans' musicking as a public performance of persona from meanings conveyed through surrounding paratextual materials. The interpretation in this chapter is also grounded in the historically concerned tradition and practice which draws sources from contemporary music discourse, biographies and courtesans' writings. This way of interpreting renders the musicking as operations of negotiation of personalized agenda, placed in a set of socio-cultural codes as shared cultural language that is identifiable in that specific era.

This chapter perceived the editorial voice as gaze, demonstrating the specific ways of articulation that constructs the interpretive guidance of reading courtesans' songs in coding and decoding the social negotiation process that has been drained by the passing of time and process of printing. Chapter 4 explored Wang's editing process as musicking that illustrates nuanced navigation of prevalent loyalist sensibilities in order to assert the validity and value of women's political voice. Such understanding is required to place the discursive meaning of paratexts in the political contexts in which they were produced. The writing of 'reliving the past' – through reprinting the late Ming texts as new early Qing texts facilitates examination

¹⁵ Robertson, 'Literary Authorship by Late Imperial Governing-Class Chinese Women' 382–385.

of how the editorial voice of Wang Duanshu offers a searching critique of contemporary norms, while lamenting a lost world.

Chapter 5 focused on the analysis of paratextual material to perceive the critical voice of Wang Duanshu as an elevation of gentlewomen's song. This intentional editorial strategy cannot be understood without the contemporary narratives of the absence of women in music, arguing that the editorial decision of Wang Duanshu regulated the ways in which the readers viewed gentlewomen's songs, and how this elevation also echoed an overarching editorial ploy to position the larger anthology of *Notable Women* as a 'complementary canon' in answering to the Confucian classics. Furthermore, through an analytical reading of the authors and songs presented within the collection within the wider social, cultural and historical contexts that they were produced, this chapter explored how the selection was also grounded in a series of Ming music fashions and the particular ideological influence of writing. This chapter also argued, during the process of reprinting, the ways in which Wang re-presented the texts as 're-writing' and new meaning-making. The songs of gentlewomen that express 'innermost feelings' in 'Collection of Elegance' became public performance through the print medium, and Wang Duanshu's re-formatting of the texts is a significant part of that dissemination.

This chapter also briefly raises the question of how the reader could engage with Wang's editorial comments as an integral part of the reading process, while the style of the comments 'demands a sophisticated kind of reading skill':¹⁶ the pre-obtained knowledge of music discourse, compositional styles and aesthetics of authors. This point leads to a re-visiting of the editorial principle of Wang Duanshu that remarks on the evolution of genres, suggesting another historically grounded interpretation of the editorial evaluation not only as linking the canonical genres and the vernacular ones, but the very strategy used as a pre-established tradition of canonization. This contextualized reading pieces together the socio-cultural and political negotiation that is not directly expressed in the paratextual materials, while these

¹⁶ Kathryn Lowery, 'Duplicating the Strength of Feeling', in *Writing and Materiality in China*, 242.

marginalized materials are key to our present-day understanding of Wang Duanshu's multi-faceted voices.

The methodology of this thesis is not original. However, the application of the existing analytical approach of analysing the informal, entertainment genres to Wang Duanshu's editing of poetry - the stricter, more formalized genres in a women's poetry anthology, is an original contribution. Wang's successful elevation of women's practice in song-writing and the *qu* genre to comparable canonical status with the formal genres, and as a multi-dimensional late-Ming and early-Qing cultural patchwork, establishes the collection as an apposite example and pilot application. It further shows the value and efficacy of this approach, by looking at the texts' format, packaging and materiality, to offer a lens through which readers look beyond the framework of textual analysis of literary artistry and gain insight into the understanding of the late-Ming anthologizing practice of women's poetry: the subtlety between bringing forth women's literary voices into a public and interpretive space alongside the pirating of the texts and a lack of genuine intention of canonizing conditioned by the growing market demand for women's writings and knowledge of their lives, and the very fashion and fascination for the early modern Chinese 'new femininity'.

Thus, it is hoped that the findings and themes that this methodology has revealed and examined in this thesis will encourage others to apply it to other comparable anthologies,¹⁷ and examples of the less formal, entertainment genres which have gone under-examined in Chinese musicology. An area of further study which may prove rich in findings and fresh insights could involve the use of a similar methodology while pursuing other themes than the gender-focus herein employed. This thesis demonstrated the contribution Wang Duanshu

¹⁷ I found women's literary collections anthologized by literati during the second wave (roughly covering the Wanli reign) of Ming anthologies of women's poetry, notably anthologies such as *Gujin nüshi* 古今女史 (*History of Women from Antiquity to Present Day*); *Ming yuan hui shi* 名媛彙詩 (*Classified Poetry of Women, Ancient and Modern*); and *Ming yuan shi gui* 名媛詩歸 (*Sources of Poems by Notable Women*); *Lü chuang nü shi* 綠窗女史 (*History of Women of Green Window*), are worth looking from this materialist approach. These collections often have traces of pirating and copying from the same limited pool of sources, while featuring authors from both respectable and debased backgrounds, and they await research on the strategies of their editors in the light of how 'conjunction of cultural, social, and economic forces, individual choices, connoisseurship of latest fashions increasingly shaped the Ming literary taste', Carlitz, 'The Social Uses of Female Virtue in Late Ming Editions of *Lienü Zhuan*', 117–148.

offered to our understanding of gender relations of power and the subtle and deft ways women artists experienced and navigated them. However, further questions of sexuality, class and celebrity were raised through engaging with her paratexts and the songs she selected. Thematic explorations of these areas offer a fecund and rewarding avenue for further study.

This thesis also offers a new understanding of musical activities of the late-Ming era. Through a female editor's perspective, this thesis tries to reawaken women's musical voices of the past, and answer that very question of the 'absence' of women in Chinese cultural and historical discourse. The findings of this thesis shed light on the growing body of scholarship in print, performance and gender of late imperial Chinese literary performativity. Through the study of music, this thesis offers another angle of knowing early modern Chinese lives, culture and history.

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Appendices

Appendix A

List of Wang Duanshu's female relatives whose works appear in *Notable Women*

a. Female writers from Wang's birth family

<i>Name of Author</i>	<i>Native Place</i>	<i>Relation to Wang Duanshu</i>	<i>Chapter number of entries in Notable Women</i>
Wang Jingshu	Shan Yin	Elder sister	15
Wang Zhenshu	Shan Yin	Younger sister	17
Chen Deqing	Shan Yin	Wife of Wang Duanshu's eldest brother Wang Huaiqi	13
Xu Anji	Shang Yu	Wife of Wang Duanshu's younger brother Wang Dingqi	16
Jiang Yanmei	Yu Yao	Wife of Wang Duanshu's younger brother Wang Xiaqi	17
Qi Dewan	Shan Yin	Wife of Wang Duanshu's younger brother Wang Yueqi	13

b. Female writers from Ding Shengzhao's family

<i>Name of Author</i>	<i>Native Place</i>	<i>Relation to Ding Shengzhao</i>	<i>Chapter number of entries in Notable Women</i>
Chen Suxia	Nanjing, Southeast China	Concubine of Ding Shengzhao, purchased by Wang Duanshu	17
Ding Junwang	Shan Yin, Southeast China	Daughter of Ding Shengzhao, by Chen Suxia brought up by Wang Duanshu after Chen Suxia's death	17
Ding Shengxiang		Eldest sister of Ding Shengzhao	32
Ding Junshu and Ding Junsu		Sisters, daughters of Ding Shengzhao's eldest brother	32
Ding Qiguang		cousin of Ding Shengzhao	17; editor of chapter 42
Ding Tang and Ding Liao sisters		Nieces: daughters of Ding Shengru, older brother of Ding Shengzhao, also pupils of Wang Duanshu	32
Hu Tikun		Ding Shengzhao's cousin	32
Zhang Siyin	Kuai Ji, Southeast China	Sister-in-law, wife of Ding Shengong, older brother of Ding Shengzhao, and friend of Wang Duanshu	15 and 37

Appendix B

Wang Duanshu's biographical accounts on women's musical talents recorded in the 'Collection of Omitted Writings' (chapters 32 and 33) and the 'Pictorial Collection' (chapter 40) in *Notable Women* (1667)

<i>Names of entry</i>	<i>Social status</i>	<i>Biographical account</i>	<i>English translation</i>
<i>Chapter 33 – second half of 'Collection of Omitted Writings'</i>			
Jia Kou 賈扣	Resident courtesan	王府妓女，以琵琶供王悅之	pleases His Grace with pipa-lute
Kou Bai 寇白 ¹	Courtesan	工詩，美麗傾時，兼擅才藝	good at poetry and is incredibly beautiful, also possess various talents
Jiang Shufang 蔣淑芳	Courtesan	音律書畫，殊絕一時	her music, calligraphy and painting skills are unmatched
Qi Shufang 齊淑芳	Courtesan	書畫，歌舞蕭管 ... 靡不擅長	painting and writing calligraphy, music, dancing, playing bamboo instruments ... none of them that Qi is not good at
Chen Shilan 陳士蘭	Courtesan	清歌婉轉，聞者為之消覓	whoever hear her delicate and sweet singing voice feel overwhelmed with sensation
Zhang Youzhen 張友真	Courtesan	善吟詠，琴棋，靡不通曉	good at poetry composing, also has good command of zither and chess
Wang Manrong 王曼容	Courtesan	年十六，詩字琴畫俱精絕	when she was sixteen, she had already mastered poetry composing, zither and painting
Fu Shou 傅壽	Courtesan	美豔異常，能弦索，喜登場演劇，見之皆狂	she is devastatingly beautiful, she can play string instruments, also likes performing dramatic roles on stage, audiences often go crazy for her
Wang Jie 王節	Courtesan	姿態娟娟，音律甚妙... 士大夫所賞鑒	her carriage is graceful, her music is fine and excellent ... and literati appreciate her

¹ Yu Huai remarks in his *Plank Bridge* that Kou composes and good at painting orchids, however, she only knows a little of poetry writing and can not master it. in *Miscellaneous Records of the Plank Bridge*, 板橋雜記/三吳遊覽志 (Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2000), 51. 能度曲，善畫蘭，粗知拈韻吟詩，然滑易不能盡學。

Yang Wansu 楊婉素	Courtesan	尤精音律	especially expert at music theory
Chen Yu 陳玉	Courtesan	其書畫音律，靡不精通	calligraphy, painting, and music, there is none that she could not master
Li Dansheng 李澹生	Courtesan	工詩，善奕碁，曉音律	expert at poetry composing, also good at chess, has knowledge of music
<hr/> <i>Chapter 40 – ‘Pictorial Collection’</i> <hr/>			
Zhang Yunxian 章韻仙	Courtesan	名妓，善禱曲	celebrated courtesan, good at popular songs
Gu Lanfang 谷蘭芳	Courtesan	用吳音度曲，人以嫋嫋稱之	she composes and sings music of Suzhou style; people praise her compositions as gentle and lingering
Feng Jingrong 馮靜容	Resident courtesan	善演劇	good at playing roles and singing operatic pieces

Appendix C

Detailed analysis of the extensive classical allusions employed in Xu Yuan's three entries in 'Collection of Elegance', in the original Chinese texts and detailed annotation (in brackets)

徐媛「绵搭絮·春日书怀」

薄寒（微寒）轻悄（形容声音轻细低微），红雨（比喻女子落泪）染春条（春节时贴的用红纸写着吉利话的字条儿）。翠衬香芸，一片烟丝软蝶娇。杏花梢，啼鴂（古代传说中的一种怪鸟）声高。闲杀秋千院落，睡损蛟绡（传说中蛟人所织的绡。亦借指薄绢、轻纱、毛帕、丝巾）。担害得、闷对芳辰（美好的时光，多指春季），结思（比喻心情烦闷，心里有结）空拈白玉毫（指佛眉间白毫）。

前腔

落英铺绣，景色艳河桥（桥梁）。帘影疏疏（稀疏朦胧），晓日（朝阳）瞳眈（指日初出渐明貌，也指代旭日）映柳梢。镜花（指菱花镜。常美称镜子）销（插上销子），翠黛慵描。盼杀蠨蛸（细腰蜂的俗称）塞远，离恨天遥。断送（葬送；毁灭）得、短叹长吁（人不如意时）、三度（虚指多次）瓜期（谓官吏就任或者谓女子出嫁之期）折大刀（借指思归之情）。

前腔

春归院小，风暖淡云飘。户外青山，缭绕吹丝送伯劳（小型雀鸟）。总无聊、都上眉梢。想杀曲江诗酒（指杜甫有《九日曲江》诗，云：“重阳独酌杯中酒，抱病起登江上台。”），锦字（锦字书喻华美的文辞）宫袍（古代官员的礼服）。抛闪（丢弃，舍弃）得、粉剩脂残，肠断东风（韶华易逝，青春难再）为玉箫（唐代名妓玉箫）。

前腔

栖迟（游息、滞留、漂泊失意）荒檄（古代官府用以征召或声讨的文书），落月（元稹五言悼亡诗《落月》）户梁高。露白中庭（庭院之中），风细云波（云状的波纹水波）竹影抛。听铜蕉、旅雁天遥。愁杀金鞭难拗，宝袜（古代女子束于腰间的彩带）烟消（事物消失无余）。折倒（摧残，折磨）得、望眼将穿（形容盼望殷切用于盼望人），甚日脂车（油涂车轴，以利运转。借指驾车出行）万里桥（成都历史上著名的古桥。三国时，蜀汉丞相诸葛亮曾在此设宴送费祎出使东吴，费祎叹曰：“万里之行，始于此桥。”）。

徐媛「桂枝香·寒夜书愁」

清霜（寒霜；白霜）点峤（泛指高而陡峭的山峰；特指五岳），元云（指冬官，北周·庾信

《同州刺史余绵永神道碑》：“夏官司武，待白露而治兵；冬官考工，记玄云而授职。”倪璠注：“服虔曰：‘黄帝以云名官，春官为青云氏，夏官为缙云氏，秋官为白云氏，冬官为黑云氏，中官为黄云氏。’冬官黑云，故云玄云矣。”）天老（黄帝辅臣），四野（四面八方；四周广阔的原野）来鹄管（指笙。因笙上之管状如鹅毛管，故称。明·高启《凤台曲》：“琼台夜寒闭 嬴女，鹄管参差隔烟语。”）声繁（指浮靡的音乐或繁杂的声音）。寒堞（城上如齿状的矮墙，墙上向外一侧所设墙垛，战时可抵挡敌人的矢石攻击。从孔隙中则可对敌人射箭发炮。城墙向内一侧则可设矮墙，防止人马下坠）上漏筹（宋·陈造《送严上舍并寄诸公十首·寄俞君任府判》：忆访俞夫子，频频挽袖留。酒边无俗物，尘外有高楼。未醉催歌扇，言归听漏筹。此欢谁与继，悵悵岁时遒。）频报（消息不断地传来），听帘铃逗风，听帘铃逗风，恍一似旧日笙歌（也可指吹笙唱歌或奏乐唱歌。）雅调（雅乐，高雅的韵调或格调）。更添我回肠（形容文章、乐曲十分婉转动人）萦绕（比喻声音在什么东西旁边旋转回复）。转眼总虚飘（虚浮，轻飘），池馆（池苑馆舍）人归后，朱门（指古代王侯贵族的府第大门漆成红色，以示尊贵，後泛指富贵人家）气寂寥（寂静空旷，没有声音）。

前腔

寒风料峭（形容微寒，亦形容风力寒冷、尖利，也指来回摆动的状貌），黄沙卷草，瑶天（天上的仙境）冻碎坠琼芳（雪花）。九微（唐九微火灯，见王维诗）烬博炉烟（旧时宫殿前丹墀设焚香炉，后因以指代宫廷、朝官）渺，正严威势（威力和气势）侵，正严威势侵，耽（迟延）沉痾（意指久治不愈的病。如“客豁然意解，沈痾顿愈。”出自《晋书·乐广传》）倩（央求、请人做某事）谁相告？着（觉得）冷暖有谁相劳（用言语或实物慰问），空自旅魂销，泣尽灯前泪，家园已棘蒿（蒿目时艰：形容对时局忧虑不安）。

前腔

俗情（世俗的情感；尘世的情思，与脱悟的情思相对）已扫（结束，了结），生缘（佛教语。尘世的缘分；受生转世的因缘）未了（指没有了却、结束；犹无穷尽等。见《乐府诗集·清商曲辞一·子夜四时歌秋歌十三》：“寒衣尚未了，郎唤依底为？”因：佛教谓此生没有了却的因缘。宋 苏轼《狱中寄子由》诗之一：“与君世世为兄弟，更结人间未了因。”明·高启《和逊庵效香奁体》：“扬州 梦断十三年，底事犹存未了缘？”）。没来由（没有理由和原因）两字功名（功名两个字，见马致远《蟾宫曲·叹世》两字功名，几阵干戈：因为功名两个字，曾发动过多少次战乱干戈。），绊（束缚）我一生潦倒（颓废失意，反常颠倒）。看澄月印潭，看澄月印潭。恰一似重昏（谓思绪非常昏乱。《楚辞·九章·涉江》：“余将董道而不豫兮，固将重昏而终身！”王逸注：“昏，乱也。言己不逢明君，思虑交错，心将重乱，以终年命。”唐·王维《宋进马哀辞》：“忽思瘞兮城南，心替乱兮重昏。”明·归有光《赵汝渊墓志铭》：“宋 失维城，宗沦于 朔。哀哉重昏，鼎折覆餗。”）夜晓（白天黑夜）。何

化、移动或发展）。载愁端了无归计（回家乡的打算、办法。），我呵！如今好息机（息灭机心《楞严经》卷六：“息机归寂然诸幻成无性。”）莫疑。怎得向丛桂山头，相邀佳趣。

南江儿水

休问君平（不愿出仕，官方也不授予其官职）技，休吟泽畔诗（屈原《离骚》），算来五行已注生前事。勤王的（意思是君主制国家中君王有难，而臣下起兵救援君王。出自于《晋书·谢安传》：“夏禹勤王，手足胼胝。”）不把黄金铸（用黄金铸造人像。表示对某人的敬仰或纪念。），负薪的（指贫困的生活处境指地位低微的人）何处投知己？总是一场儿戏，到不如去饮炭吞冰（漆身吞炭，典故名，豫让为报知遇之恩，漆身为厉，吞炭为哑，改变声音形貌，矢志复仇，事败而死。比喻舍身酬报知己或雪耻复仇；饮冰，语本《庄子·人间世》：“今吾朝受命而夕饮冰，我其内热欤？”成玄英疏：“诸梁晨朝受诏，暮夕饮冰，足明怖惧忧愁，内心熏灼。”主要形容十分惶恐焦灼，指受命从政，为国忧心，后也指清苦廉洁。）跣足佯狂尘市。（出自《史记·宋世家》：被发佯狂，意思是披头散发，赤着脚，假做颠狂。多指古时避世超俗的狂士。）

北雁儿落带得胜令

回首事，总乖离（抵触，背离；离别，分离。出自《荀子·天论》：“父子相疑，上下乖离，寇难并至。”）；千年调，（千年调，词牌名，曹组词名《相思会》，因词有“刚作千年调”句，辛弃疾改名《千年调》。《千年调·左手把青霓》创作于辛弃疾闲居瓢泉之时，时间大约在公元1200年（宋庆元六年）之后，此时的作者壮志难酬，怀才不遇，心灰意冷，长时间闲居家中，年过六旬，体力不济因而，逃避现实，隐居生活的消极思想应运而出。这首词不仅表现手法象屈原的《离骚》，而且多处融进了《离骚》的句意，因此它在思想和艺术方面都同《离骚》有许多共同点。）已倾欹。（倾覆。明·梁辰鱼《浣纱记·寄子》：“堪悲，家国渐倾欹，我身无葬地，汝尚何依？”明·张四维《双烈记·乞休》：“他见前车既覆，后载还来，定尔倾欹。”）想当日个绣户（亦作“綉户”。雕绘华美的门户。多指妇女居室。指富户。）文楣（有花纹的房梁屋檐），列着锦围（鲜艳华美有花纹色彩的丝织品围起来作拦阻或遮挡的东西），青玉案（青玉所制的短脚盘子。名贵的食用器具。）张着莼（莼菜羹：与鲈鱼脍并称为吴中名菜）鲙。紫葡萄泛着琼卮（酒的美称。）宝雕阑（雕花或彩绘的栏杆）栽（栽）着兰蕙（香草），百和香（各种香料制成的香，室内焚烧）烧着兽灰（香炉）。怨青辉（幽暗惨淡的光线。）忽随秋去，把从前事猛追再思。往劳我神呆意痴。呀！一重提，一重心醉。

南饶饶令

鹄印（张颢得山鹄所化的金印，官至太尉，后遂以“鹄印”指得官的喜兆。）流尘暗，貂冠

（古代侍中、常侍之冠。因以貂尾为饰）总汗泥。便有那层台花坞蛙声滞，怎得个环佩（古人所系的佩玉。后多指女子所佩的玉饰。多配于膝部以下，女子配其用来压裙脚）归来月下迟（慢慢走）。

北望江南

呀！我只道画堂（泛指华丽的堂舍）春画暖，乐庭帙（指妇女居住的内室）又谁知人去会无期？经不惯别离况味（境况和情味），事与心违。按歌喉（击节唱曲），送不到愁人（心怀忧愁的人）枕际。我呵！泪洒洒痛伊，泪洒洒痛伊，这都是断肠深处岭猿悲。（唐·常建：杳杳袅袅清且切，鹧鸪飞处又斜阳。相思岭上相思泪，不到三声合断肠。这首诗是纯粹的描写景物的诗，而且写的还是无形的猿啼，虽然题目叫岭猿。猿啼时而隐约延长，时而清切，听到的人不禁断肠流泪，写出了猿啼给人的悲伤凄切之感。）

南园林好

住幽居伴山人斗鸡，挈五老篱畔弈棋。径（狭窄的道路）卧着干松蓬杞，吸石髓、饵元芝，邛杖（竹杖）举、竹龙飞。

北沽美酒带太平令

看王乔凫舄归，看王乔凫舄归。（王乔为叶县县令，用神术将尚方赐给郎官的鞋子变为两只野鸭，每月初一、十五都飞到京城朝见皇帝。看他来得很快，但未见到他的车马，很觉奇怪，便秘密叫太史侦察伺望他的行踪。太史报告说，王乔到来时，常有两只水鸟从东南飞来。于是皇上叫人张开罗网，捕捉水鸟，只得到一只鞋。检查那鞋，是四年中赐给尚书官属的鞋。每当王乔上朝时，叶县门下的鼓不击却自己响着，京师可听得见。后来，从天上降下一口玉棺到堂前，吏人上前推抬，没法子摇得动。王乔说：“上帝单独召我吗？”于是洗干净身子，穿好衣服睡进棺中，盖子马上罩住了。过了两夜，把棺埋在城东，泥土自然成了坟堆。当晚，县中的牛都流着汗，喘着气，而人们不知是怎么回事。百姓替他立庙，叫叶君祠。地方官吏每次到任，首先得拜见它。吏人有事祈祷，很有灵验。如有违犯神意，也立即降灾。皇帝于是将叶县的鼓取来放在都亭下面，从此再也没有响声。有人说这就是古代仙人王子乔。）仙掌上白云栖。访故友山阴载酒回，唤秦娥（歌女）采珠拾翠（曹植《洛神赋》：“或采明珠，或拾翠羽。”拾取翠鸟羽毛以为首饰。后多指妇女游春。）听青童演（少年；仙童；道士？）出新词，茶烹着武夷雀嘴。松棚（用松树枝叶搭的棚舍）上挂着军持（一种盛水器），矮茅檐（茅屋的房檐）牵着薜荔（茎蔓），池塘内觑着游鱼。我呵！笑劳名的朝东暮西（早晨在东，晚上在西。指行踪不定。比喻变来变去，不专一），白眼看趋跄（指入朝做官，出仕）路歧（行路的人，喻不相干的人）。呀！乱黄尘（指的是尘世）再不上俺缁衣（黑色的衣服，当时卿大夫到官署所穿的衣服。是《郑风》的第一篇。关于此诗主旨历来有很大争议，大致可以分为两种说法：一种认为此诗所要表达的是好

贤、礼贤，反映出一种极强的矢志不回的精神；一种认为这是写家庭亲情的诗，用的是夫妻之间日常所说的话语，体现的是抒情主人公对丈夫无微不至的体贴之情）双袂（衣袖）。

尾声

蝇头蜗角（比喻微小的名利。诚虚器谓有其器而无其位。言空有帝王的名位而无其实，意谓形同虚设），瓦枕（陶制的枕头）上黄粱睡起（比喻虚幻的梦想，根本不能实现的企图和愿望。用来比喻根本不能实现的企图和愿望，或是那些虚幻、一场空的事物。“黄粱”是小米，“黄粱一梦”，意思就是煮一锅小米饭的时间，做了一场甜蜜的美梦），（从今后）门锁苍苔（深青色的苔藓）护紫泥。（古人以泥封书信，泥上盖印。皇帝诏书则用紫泥。后即以指诏书。明·顾大典《青衫记·乐天蒙召》：“感吾皇宠召，趋命还朝，绛节朱轮，紫泥丹诏，履舄重登廊庙。”）