Re-versing the Eighth Genius:
Invoking Partnerships and Poetics to Translate the Huajian ji 《花箋記》

Thesis

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Abstract

The *Huajian ji* (Story of the Flowery Notepaper, also known as *Di ba caizi shu*, the Eighth Book of Genius) is a Cantonese narrative poem of sixty chapters dating to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). Belonging to the “scholar-beauty” romance genre, it chronicles the love between a young scholar and two talented maidens. This project—a translation of five chapters of the *Huajian ji*—aims to reproduce the poetry, visual descriptions, and sentimentality of the source text for a non-specialist, English-speaking audience. With translator Eugene Nida’s concept of “dynamic equivalence” as a guiding principle, the translation employs English ballad meter, invoking the literary ballad’s oral-derived history, generic constraints, and prosody, all of which bear striking resemblance to the poetics of the *Huajian ji*. Situated within the genealogy of Chinese-English translation practice and grounded in translation theory, the project explores the boundaries and possibilities of a domesticating, dynamic equivalence approach to literary translation while introducing one of the finest examples of early Cantonese vernacular literature to modern, English-speaking audiences.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................ ii

Acknowledgements....................................................................................................................... iii

Vita............................................................................................................................................... v

1. Introduction...............................................................................................................................1

   1.1 Collaborators: Translation Practitioners and Theorists.......................................................5

   1.2 The Translation: Dynamic Equivalence in Practice...............................................................21

2. Translation of Chapters 11 to 15 of the *Huajian ji* ..............................................................45

   2.1 List of Characters................................................................................................................. 46

   2.2 Summary of the First Ten Chapters..................................................................................... 47

   2.3 Chapter 11: On Inquiring and Purchasing a Studio .............................................................. 48

   2.4 Chapter 12: On Visiting and Composing Poetry ................................................................. 54

   2.5 Chapter 13: The Lovelorn Youth Broods in his Study ......................................................... 64

   2.6 Chapter 14: Mistress and Maids View the Ode ................................................................. 67

   2.7 Chapter 15: General Yang Returns the Visit ..................................................................... 72

Bibliography................................................................................................................................. 76

Appendix: Chinese Source Text of Chapters 11 to 15 of the *Huajian ji* ...............................81
1. Introduction

In his keynote address at the 1990 International Conference on Translation of Chinese Literature, Cyril Birch, one of the leading translators of classical Chinese plays, called for translators of Chinese to produce accessible, enjoyable texts for the general public, particularly in the genres of poetry and drama.¹ Toward this end, he offered a plea and a prayer: a plea “for the elucidation of texts from scholars across the entire field of humanistic studies” and a prayer “that future translators from Chinese will be blessed not just with linguistic skill but with a passion for literature.”² Birch recognized that the work of translation had largely shifted to academics in the mid- to late-twentieth century, and that an increasing number of translations from Chinese were being produced. Amidst this modest surge, he exhorted translators to prioritize literary quality in their work. It is to this lofty goal that this project—a partial verse translation of the *Huajian ji* 花箋記 (“The Story of the Flowery Notepaper”)—aspire.

The *Huajian ji* is a narrative poem of sixty chapters grouped into five *juan* 卷 (“scrolls” or “volumes”) that originated in the Pearl River Delta region of Southern China during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). An example of the *caizi jiaren* 才子佳人 (“gifted

² Ibid., 8.
scholars and talented beauties”) genre, it relates the story of Liang Yicang 梁亦倉 and his love for the maidens Yang Yaoxian 楊瑤仙 and Liu Yuqing 劉玉卿. As in many of the caizi jiaren stories, the young lovers face a number of obstacles (betrothals to other individuals; geographical distance; defamatory rumors); only after Student Liang achieves scholarly success and military recognition are the lovers finally reunited in matrimony. But as is often the case, there is more to the Huajian ji than the story itself. Its aural and visual features, as well as its prosody and evocative descriptions are a central component of the work’s appeal. Consequently, my aim for the following translation is to replicate these attributes for English speakers who are unfamiliar with Chinese language or culture.

As scholars of translation studies have observed, different source texts, intended audiences, and purposes of translation call for particular translation strategies; such diversity of approaches is reflected in Chinese-European language translation practices during the last few centuries. Many of the early translators, that is, European missionaries, British travelers, and French Sinologists, were primarily concerned with extracting ethnographic information about Chinese culture from literary works. A few

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notable translators from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, such as Herbert Giles, Arthur Waley, and Ezra Pound, produced literary translations seeking to appeal to their target readerships of laypeople. More recently, the task of translation has fallen to academics, whose pedagogical orientation has led to lexically accurate, but stylistically deficient translations. In other words, their translations, though useful to students of Chinese language, are unlikely to appeal to a general, English-speaking public. As Eva Hung notes, this trend has hit poetry especially hard, for “[i]n reducing the importance of poetic elements in translation—be it by design or because of limited talent—we run the risk of completely marginalizing Chinese poetry in its host culture.” Simultaneously, translators of pre-modern Chinese fiction have customarily translated the embedded poetry, so integral to the great novels, in free verse or deleted the poems entirely. A few exceptions are noteworthy: The Story of the Stone (Shitou ji 石頭記; alternately titled Dream of the Red Chamber, Honglou meng 紅樓夢), translated by David Hawkes and John Minford, and The Marshes of Mount Liang (Shuihu zhuan 水滸傳, more commonly known in English as The Water Margin), translated by John and Alex Dent-
Young. Not only do these works present two of the most beloved Chinese novels in modern, idiomatic English, but they also render verse passages in metrical, rhyming poetry. The achievements of Hawkes, Minford, and the Dent-Youngs reveal the possibilities for new translations of Chinese poetry that favor prosody as well as content. The relatively short poems translated in their novels have paved the way for a similar treatment of lengthier verse, such as the Huajian ji. Situated within this genealogy of Chinese-English translation, my project is both inspired and informed by the work of not only the practitioners themselves, but also the theoretical frameworks that underpin their translations.

In the sections that follow, I first describe my imagined collaboration with the two previous English translators of the Huajian ji and discuss the ways in which I have self-consciously drawn upon the work of translation theorists. Next, I explain my choice to adopt the English literary ballad form, providing examples to illustrate the practical results of my theoretical considerations and stylistic priorities. The translation of five chapters of the Huajian ji follow, preceded by a brief list of characters appearing in the selection and a summary of the story up to the beginning of the excerpt. The Chinese source text has been placed in an Appendix.

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1.1 Collaborators: Translation Practitioners and Theorists

Birch’s entreaty for more academics to explore the language and historical and cultural contexts of Chinese literary works speaks to the collaboration, direct or indirect, inherent in the work of translation. The plea implies that the research of linguists, historians, literary critics, and comparatists, as well as compilations of annotations, dictionaries, and other reference materials, is not only beneficial but essential to producing an accurate (however one wishes to define the term) and enjoyable text for the general reader. In this light, translation can be conceptualized as a kind of partnership between the translator and scholars from many disciplines and active in different periods of history. If, as novelist and semiotician Umberto Eco suggests, the ideal translator should be familiar with the entire literary and cultural histories of both source and target cultures and that “translating is not only connected with linguistic competence, but with intertextual, psychological, and narrative competence,” then dependence on the work of others, at least to some degree, is essential. To Birch’s list of academic disciplines, one might also add the works of prior translators, both of the text with which one is concerned and of other Chinese-language materials, as well as translation studies theorists. Imagined as entering a partnership with our predecessors and equipped with conceptual frameworks, translators can thus evaluate and appreciate the aims and strategies the translators of the past employed, using such analyses to inform our own projects.

In the nineteenth century, European translators produced two English-language editions of the *Huajian ji*, as well as a German and a Dutch translation.\(^{11}\) Both English translators state an intention to generate a text that provides an enjoyable reading experience, yet the final products differ considerably. A comparison of these versions illuminates two fundamentally antithetical approaches to translation, namely, source-oriented and target-oriented translations. In the former, the translator prioritizes the cultural and historical context, literary genres, and linguistic structures of the source culture, often deliberately employing foreignizing and archaizing techniques to create distance between the translation and the target audience. In contrast, a target-oriented translation strategy aims to introduce the source text to the receiving audience so as to reduce unfamiliar features and downplay cultural differences; foreign elements, including literary systems, allusions, and so-called untranslatable terms, are domesticated and sometimes modernized so that the translation reads as if written within the target culture.

Eco succinctly explains the source- versus target-oriented dichotomy thusly:

> [S]hould a translation lead the reader to understand the linguistic and cultural universe of the source text, or transform the original by adapting it to the reader’s cultural and linguistic universe? In other words, given a translation from Homer, should the translation transform its readers into Greek readers of Homeric times, or should it make Homer write as if he were writing today in our language?\(^{12}\)

Although the orientations are presented as distinct approaches, in practice every translator integrates source-targeted features (such as foreignizing and archaizing) and target-

\(^{11}\) The German and Dutch translations appeared, respectively, as Heinrich Kurz, trans., *Das Blumenblatt, eine epische Dichtung der Chinesen* [The petal, an epic poem of the Chinese] (St. Gallen: Wartmann n. Scheitlin, 1836) and Gustav Schlegel, trans., *Hoa tsien ki, of, Geschiedenis van het gebloemde briefpapier* [History of the floral notepaper] (Batavia: Lange & Co., 1865).

oriented elements (such as domesticating and modernizing) into his translations; they are
perhaps best imagined as offering an array of options from which translators can draw in
infinite combination. Such conceptual tools are useful for evaluating the practices and
priorities that have guided previous translators.

The first English version of the *Huajian ji*, titled *Chinese Courtship in Verse*
(1824),\(^{13}\) was produced by Peter Perring Thoms (1790-1855), a printer employed by the
East India Company, who was based in Macao. *Chinese Courtship* is more accurately
categorized as a bilingual edition, as parallel Chinese and English text appears on each
page. In his preface, Thoms states his intention to reproduce “the spirit of the original”\(^ {14}\)
so that the translation may “be perused with pleasure” by “those who feel interested in
Chinese literature.”\(^ {15}\) Part of the *Huajian ji*’s achievement, in Thoms’ opinion, is the
intricacy of its poetry, which he describes in some detail in the preface. Although he
acknowledges that his translation does not attempt to reproduce the poetic complexity, he
ostensibly tries to recreate at least some of the poetic components by rendering the story
“in verse.” Thoms’ English text is presented in four-line stanzas, with each line
corresponding to one line of Chinese. The Chinese text appears at the top of each page,
aligned in columns of seven characters, which further emphasizes its poetic structure.

Beyond the visual layout of *Chinese Courtship*, however, its verse leaves much to be
desired. The translation contains no rhyme or meter; indeed, if not presented in stanzaic

\(^{13}\) Peter Perring Thoms, *花箋 Chinese Courtship in Verse, to which is Added an Appendix Treating of the
Revenue of China Etc* (London: Parbury, Allen, and Kingsbury, 1824),

\(^{14}\) Ibid., xiii.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., vi.
form, it would have no resemblance to poetry at all. Further, although the Chinese characters appear to be printed in careful detail, the English was evidently not so thoroughly proofread, for it contains occasional spelling errors and phrasing that reads unnaturally in the target language.\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Chinese Courtship} received mixed responses in Europe; most notably it is said to have directly influenced Goethe’s collection of nature poems, \textit{Chinesisch-Deutsche Jahres-und Tageszeiten (Chinese-German Book of Seasons and Hours)} (1827).\textsuperscript{17} In his analysis of Thoms’ translation of the \textit{Huajian ji}, K. C. Leung concludes that, “[d]espite its faults, Thoms’ \textit{Chinese Courtship} successfully captures the poetic romance of the young lovers, with all its twists and turns, tears, sentimentality, and laughter, against the flowery backdrop of an empathetic Nature. This, as it turns out, is the spirit of the original \textit{Huajian ji}.”\textsuperscript{18} In addition to employing groundbreaking printing techniques, Thoms created a relatively reader-friendly translation that featured the story for its own sake, rather than using it as a pretext for conveying ethnographic information about China, as so many of his contemporaries were doing. While the source text’s complex poetry is not preserved in Thoms’ translation, nevertheless, he produced a remarkable bilingual text that made the \textit{Huajian ji} available to European readers.

\textsuperscript{16} One reviewer of \textit{Chinese Courtship} scathingly wrote, “Mr. Thoms’ language is not English; the rules of grammar are wholly disregarded, words are mispelt \textit{sic}; the phraseology is mean, vulgar, distorted; and terms and ideas are continually introduced which no Chinese author could ever have imagined or intended.” The anonymous review appeared in “Chinese Novels and Poetry,” review of \textit{The Affectionate Pair and Chinese Courtship, in Verse}, by Peter Perring Thoms. \textit{Quarterly Review} 36 (June 1827): 504, \url{http://books.google.com/books?id=xlQAAAAAAYAAJ}. For a more recent assessment of Thoms’ translation, see K.C. Leung, \textit{“Chinese Courtship: The Huajian ji 花箋記 in English Translation,” CHINOPERL Papers}, no. 20-22 (1997-99): 269-88.

\textsuperscript{17} Liang Peichi 梁培熾 [Leung Pui-Chee], \textit{Xianggang daxue suo cang muyu shu xulu yu yanjiu 香港大學所藏木魚書敍錄與研究 [Wooden-Fish Books: Critical Essays and an Annotated Catalogue based on the Collections in the University of Hong Kong]} (Hong Kong: Centre for Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1978), 229-32.

\textsuperscript{18} Leung, \textit{“Chinese Courtship: The Huajian ji in English Translation,”} 288.
Thoms’ translation is source-oriented in that he includes elements unfamiliar to the receiving audience, which signals to readers that they have encountered a text from another culture. For example, printing Chinese characters alongside the English immediately marks the story as foreign and exotic to a British audience presumably unable to read Chinese. Literary and historical allusions appearing in the Huajian ji are either briefly elucidated in footnotes or simply Romanized in the English text without explanation, providing little guidance for understanding the source culture. Moreover, deliberate or not, Thoms' somewhat inelegant English draws attention to the linguistic distance between the source and target languages. This is not to say that Thoms disregarded his target audience; rather, by foreignizing portions of his translation, he highlighted aspects of the source text and culture that he believed would appeal to his audience.

Chinese Courtship was certainly known to the second translator of the Huajian ji into English, Sir John Bowring (1792-1872). In the preface to his Hwa Tsien Ki: The Flowery Scroll, a Chinese Novel (1868), Bowring presents his translation in opposition to Thoms’: whereas Chinese Courtship was a “lineal rendering” useful “to the students of the Chinese language,” Bowring, the fourth governor of Hong Kong, aspired to produce a “more free flowing version” with ample footnotes explaining not only literary allusions, but also ethnographic and historical information about China. The footnotes are often longer than the source text itself of a given chapter. For example, in the chapter “Liang

20 Ibid., v.
Pays a Visit and Writes Verses” (*baifang he shi* 拜訪和詩, translated in this project), the notes range from brief glosses for Chinese terms and proverbs that only marginally relate to the story, to longer entries on the history and poetics of the *Shijing* (including Bowring’s English translation of one of its odes) and a two-page explication on Chinese tea: its varieties, production, steeping methods, and functions in social gatherings.21 These supplemental materials become part of the reading experience; the English-speaking audience is meant to enjoy not only the story itself, but also details about Chinese traditions, history, and contemporary culture of southern China.

As indicated by the title, *The Flowery Scroll* is a prose edition, and Bowring’s choice to label the work as a novel both informs his translation strategies and obscures the original’s prosodic form.22 The translation itself is certainly smoother and less cumbersome for an English audience than Thoms’; however, Bowring takes a number of liberties in translation and employs Greek and Roman mythological references as replacements for similar, but certainly not identical, Chinese allusions; the latter is one of the most notable results of his domestication of the source text. Bowring’s translation strategies can thus be characterized as primarily target-oriented. By labeling the *Huajian ji* as a novel and prioritizing the novel’s generic features and refined language over strict adherence to the content of the source text, Bowring employs a literary form familiar to his audience. His decision to replace many Chinese allusions and cultural references with functional.

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21 Ibid., 59-67.
22 Further, while Thoms details the internal rhyme scheme and parallelism of the *Huajian ji* in his preface, Bowring makes only a passing reference to the fact that it was composed in a “metrical form.” See Bowring, *The Flowery Scroll*, vi.
Greek stand-ins further domesticates the text. At the same time, the copious footnotes mark the text—and the source culture—as foreign and exotic to European readers. Thus, Bowring’s translation proper draws primarily upon domesticating strategies, but the volume in its entirety incorporates significant foreignization as well.

Both *Chinese Courtship* and *The Flowery Scroll* are readily available online in digitized editions. Why, then, produce yet another English-language version? First, translations age, and although readers separated by temporal distance may speak the same language, in essence they become members of different target cultures with the passage of time. The translator of Cantonese *yue’ou* 粵謳 (Cantonese “love songs”) even calls for retranslations every twenty years so that the source text might continue to appeal to contemporary readers. Frequent retranslating may not be feasible, particularly for lengthy texts; however, since the most recent English version of the *Huajian ji* was published nearly a century and a half ago, an updated translation is long overdue.

Second, retranslations offer alternative interpretations of the source text that can augment, complement, or even contradict previous versions. Indeed, retranslations, as Lawrence Venuti suggests, “are designed to make an appreciable difference. The retranslator’s intention is to select and interpret the foreign text according to a different set of values [than previous translators] so as to bring about a new and different reception for that text in the translating culture.” Although Thoms’ and Bowrings’ translations

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are admirable in their own ways, neither attempts to capture the prosody of the ballad; as a result, English readers have not had access to one of the most enjoyable features of the *Huajian ji*. Further, my general priorities in translating differ from those of the two previous translators. Thoms’ work closely corresponds to the lexical content of the source text, but it does not read naturally in English. On the other hand, Bowring’s literary style flows well, but the translation’s content occasionally ventures quite far from the original. A primary objective of my own project falls somewhere between these two: I aim to employ literary language and poetic forms while maintaining semantic fidelity, an approach I detail in the next section. Thus, *Chinese Courtship* and *The Flowery Scroll* are important progenitors of my own project, and the deliberation on the approaches of Thoms and Bowring is a manifestation of the self-consciousness inherent in the act of retranslating; a high level of reflexivity is a central ethical consideration of my translation approach. By positioning my project within the history of the *Huajian ji*’s circulation in English translation, as well as Chinese-English literary translation more generally, I hope to indicate the ways in which I have depended upon and diverged from the translators of the past.

In addition, I have envisioned my project in partnership not only with these translator forebears, but with translation theorists as well. In conceptualizing my translation, I have found the work of translation theorist and Bible translator Eugene Nida particularly instructive. In “Principles of Correspondence,” Nida outlines three factors that shape a translation: (1) the nature of the text’s message, (2) the characteristics of the
target audience, and (3) the intentions of the author and translator. Message, he argues, comprises both content (i.e., what is said) and form (i.e., how it is said), and the translator must determine to what extent she will prioritize one over the other. In the case of the *Huajian ji*, much of its charm lies in its visual imagery, narration style, and poetic form, in addition to the love story itself. As a result, I have chosen to prioritize form over content in cases where the two conflict, opting for “dynamic equivalence.” This contrasts with “formal equivalence,” which emphasizes lexical correspondence or gloss translation, often to the detriment to of the translation’s readability and accessibility. Rather, dynamic equivalence “aims at complete naturalness of expression, and tries to relate the receptor to modes of behavior relevant within the context of his own culture; it does not insist that he understand the cultural patterns of the source-language context in order to comprehend the message.” In other words, by incorporating extra-lexical content, such a target culture-oriented translation aspires to recreate the overall effect of the original text upon lay readers.

For this verse translation of the *Huajian ji*, my imagined audience is interested in non-English literatures, but not necessarily knowledgeable about the Chinese tradition—perhaps what Friedrich Schleiermacher would call a “cosmopolitan reader.” Drawn to foreign languages and literatures, such readers, “as they occupy themselves entirely with a foreign world, […] allow their native world and their native tongue to become quite

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26 Ibid., 144. Eco, too, argues for this approach to translation in *Experiences in Translation*, 44-45.
27 Nida, “Principles of Correspondence,” 144.
foreign to them.” It should be noted that Schleiermacher envisions amateur-connoisseurs who have some knowledge of the source text’s language; however, it is not familiarity with Chinese language but rather the attitude of openness and inquisitiveness described by Schleiermacher that best characterizes my imagined audience. In other words, my ideal reader acknowledges the temporal, geographic, and linguistic distance separating him from the “original” *Huajian ji* and embraces his encounter with the translated text as a potential site of fruitful interrogation of not only the foreign, but also his own culture’s traditions and values.

For such a reader, I envision a translation that is accessible, enjoyable, and relatively literary (that is, employing refined English). Because this is not a scholarly audience, I have minimized the use of footnotes and placed the Chinese text in an appendix rather than parallel to the English translation. The project, then, is necessarily one of domestication: I employ an established, literary structure in the target language that corresponds in some way to the structure of the original—the English literary ballad. Considering my audience’s potential interest in and ability to decode the translation, the ballad’s familiar form serves as a vehicle for presenting a story that deviates from the conventional notion of romance in English language literature (as the happy ending sees Liang marrying not only Yaoxian but also Liu Yuqing, while additionally taking two of Yaoxian’s maids as concubines). Still, I have generally retained Chinese names of people and places and have not gone so far as to replace Chinese allusions with English

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29 Nida, “Principles of Correspondence,” 143.
literary references, as Bowring’s translation does; in this sense, I have slightly
foreignized the translation. While I have not fully embraced Schleiermacher’s call for a
foreignizing approach to translation, I appreciate his discussion of the pedagogical role a
text can serve.30 Particularly when audiences are predisposed to explore foreign works,
translations have the potential not just to communicate a source-culture idea in the target
language, but to introduce the customs, histories, and values of the source culture to the
target audience, influencing the latter in the process. Indeed, I hope my readers will not
only enjoy reading the Huajian ji, but also learn about Chinese literature and culture as well.

Although I have not explained cultural references and allusions in footnotes like
Bowring, I have aimed to identify them as culturally specific items (for example, by
adding phrases like “fabled” to indicate mythological references or “of old” to signal
historical events) so that readers may glean information about the source culture without
interrupting their reading. Additionally, I have tried to communicate the experience of
reading the Huajian ji, not just the story itself, through the use of descriptive language
and poetic form. A metrical and rhymed verse translation has the potential to expand
English readers’ conception of the boundaries of traditional Chinese literature beyond the
better-known genres of relatively short, lyrical poems and lengthy, multi-volume works
of prose fiction. In terms of pedagogical orientation, then, the source-culture information
is conveyed more subtly in my translation than in Thoms’ and Bowring’s, though I am

just as committed to sharing information about China with my target audience as were the
two Englishmen.

Both Nida and Eco advocate for dynamic equivalence translation practices with
the goal of reproducing the source text’s effect on the source culture.31 This brings us to
Nida’s third factor in translation: the author’s intention. However, the uncertain
provenance and complex literary history of the Huajian ji not only cloud the usefulness
of such terms as “source text” and “source culture,” but also render the ability to discern
a single authorial intent impossible. Although the tale almost certainly originated in
Guangdong province, southern China’s center of industry, scholarship, and trade during
the period when the Huajian ji began circulating, its provenance is otherwise unclear.
The earliest extant version, the so-called “Genius” edition (Di ba caizi huajian ji 第八才
子花箋記), dates to 1713; in its preface, a certain Zhu Guangzeng 朱光曾 (fl. 1713)
suggests that the story was originally composed during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).
Peter Perring Thoms agrees that the text appeared during the Ming and adds that it was
thought to be “the production of two person of Canton [Guangdong], who had acquired
high literary honors.”32

Furthermore, the Huajian ji appears to have circulated in both oral and written
forms; my translation aims to account for the dual performative and reading traditions.
The Huajian ji is the earliest example of a muyu shu 木魚書 (“wooden-fish book”), a

31 Nida, “Principles of Correspondence,” 148; Eco, 44-45.
32 Thoms, Chinese Courtship, v. It should be noted, however, that Thoms was almost certainly familiar
with the 1713 edition and the historical claims contained in its preface.
type of song- or prompt-book printed with woodblock technology in southern China.\textsuperscript{33}
The books were undoubtedly circulating by the late Ming and possibly earlier;\textsuperscript{34}
originally, they recorded the lyrics of folk songs already popular in the Pearl Delta region. Oral performers used these books to build and memorize their repertoire, which could be sung or chanted, with or without accompaniment. The singers could choose from several tunes, adding improvisation and vocal characterization, one of the most appealing aspects of the recitals.\textsuperscript{35} The text of the \textit{Huajian ji} simulates this performance tradition: each chapter opens with the narrator-singer enjoining his audience to turn its attention from the events of the previous section to the portion of the story he will develop during the current segment.\textsuperscript{36}

Like most \textit{muyu shu}, the \textit{Huajian ji} is written in seven-character lines, with an occasional line containing a few additional characters. Each character corresponds to one

\begin{footnotes}
\item[33] The following overview is based on the work of Don Snow, \textit{Cantonese as Written Language: The Growth of a Written Chinese Vernacular} (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 67-100, and “A Short History of Published Cantonese: What is a Dialect Literature?” \textit{Journal of Asian Pacific Communication} 4, no. 3 (1994): 127-48; May-bo Ching, “Literary, Ethnic or Territorial? Definitions of Guangdong Culture in the Late Qing and the Early Republic” in \textit{Unity and Diversity: Local Cultures and Identities in China}, ed. Tao Tao Liu and David Faure (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1996), 51-66; and Liang, Xianggang daxue suo cang muyu shu xulu yu yanjiu.
\item[34] Snow, \textit{Cantonese as Written Language}, 79.
\item[36] Such “storyteller’s rhetoric” is a common feature of early Chinese vernacular fiction (\textit{huaben} 話本) beginning in the late-Ming period. The genre gained literary legitimacy and popularity following the publication of three collections of short stories, collectively known as \textit{Sanyan} 三言, edited by literatus and author Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646). Feng’s editing/rewriting of the \textit{Sanyan} to include storytelling rhetoric, among other features, profoundly impacted the poetics of vernacular fiction. Because writers of fiction were integrating oral-simulated elements into their short stories around the same time that the \textit{Huajian ji} began to circulate, the oral/written origins of the ballad are even less clear. Given the close relationship between folk and written vernacular literature of this period, determining the \textit{Huajian ji}’s precise provenance is perhaps not as important as recognizing that the text contains characteristics of both genres. For more detail about Feng Menglong’s contribution to Chinese vernacular fiction, see Shuhui Yang, introduction to \textit{Stories Old and New: A Ming Dynasty Collection}, compl. Feng Menglong, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), xv-xxvi.
\end{footnotes}
syllable, although depending upon the chosen tune and the singer’s particular style and use of padding words, the lines were not necessarily uniform in length when sung.37 Every other line ends in monorhyme; in other words, the same rhyme is used throughout large portions (that is, multiple chapters) of the text. The rhyme scheme also incorporates the tonal system of Chinese, with the first lines of couplets typically ending with oblique tone syllables and the second lines ending with even tone syllables.38 Section divisions are labeled with four-character titles that provide a snapshot of the content that follows. The cumulative effect of these metrical and rhyming features is paramount to the oral character of the text.

At the same time, the Huajian ji has been valued as a written literary work. Despite their links to oral practice, muyu shu of all types were being printed and read in the Pearl River Delta in the mid-Qing (1644-1911).39 Many of these texts were considered low-brow literature, but the Huajian ji was widely recognized for its literary merit. The 1713 edition contains extensive prefatory material, critical essays, and interlinear commentary attributed to one Zhong Daicang 鍾戴蒼 (fl. 1713). Zhong extols the literary value of the Huajian ji, including its subtlety of themes, expression of sentiment, use of literary allusions, and so on. In fact, by appending the label Di ba caizi—“The Eighth [Book of] Genius”—to the title, Zhong ranks the Huajian ji among

38 For a metrical and musical analysis of a portion of the Huajian ji, see Appendices 3.1 and 3.2 in Su De San Zheng, “From Toison to New York: Muk’yu Songs in Folk Tradition,” CHINOPERL Papers, no. 16 (1992): 165-205.
39 For a comprehensive bibliography of extant muyu shu, see Liang, Xianggang daxue suo cang muyu shu xulu yu yanjiu.
China’s most famous pieces of literature, an argument he develops throughout his commentary.

The *caizi shu* (“book of genius”) tradition began with Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608-1661), a literatus, writer, and critic, who advocated for an alternative canon to the traditional Confucian corpus based on literary worth rather than orthodox Confucian morality. Specifically, he named six Books of Genius: the writings of Zhuangzi 庄子 (ca. 3rd-4th century BCE), *Li sao* 離騷 (“Encountering Sorrow”) (ca. 3rd century BCE), *Shiji* 史記 (“Records of the Grand Historian”) (ca. 85 BCE), the poems of Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770), *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (“The Story of the Western Wing”) attributed to Wang Shifu 王實甫 (ca. 1250-1300), and *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (“The Water Margin”) attributed to Shi Nai’an 施耐庵 (1296-1372). For the latter two works, he produced edited texts with extensive commentaries (*pingdian* 評點) intended not only to elevate the status of the books, but to be read in conjunction with them. Indeed, commentaries on vernacular works became part of the reading experience, and the *pingdian* editions of a given work of fiction often supplanted previous versions.40 Zhong Daicang overtly inserted himself into this tradition with his own commentary; that many of the *Huajian jii*’s reprinted editions retained the *caizi* moniker is testament to the public’s esteem of the work’s literary merit. Indeed, Wilt Idema, a specialist in early Chinese vernacular fiction and popular narrative ballads, attributes the *Huajian jii*’s enduring reputation to its “literary quality of verse” and “delicate fusion of mood and scene,” rather than the story

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itself. More recently, three modern reprinted editions of the *Huajian ji* have been published in the twentieth century; as late as the 1990s, it was among the best-selling *muyu shu* in Chinatown bookstores in New York City.

These parallel, yet overlapping lives of the *Huajian ji* make it difficult to identify not only a source text and authorial intent, but also a singular source culture. Consequently, one cannot reproduce the effect of the original text on its original audience, as Nida and Eco advocate. Rather than limiting the translator, the *Huajian ji*’s complex literary and folk history creates opportunities for competing interpretations and, therefore, for a number of alternative translation strategies. In the following project, I have loosely aimed to reproduce the elements for which the source text has been praised—its refined poetry and expression of sentiment—by employing a dynamic equivalence approach. The link between theory and practice is not always clear, however, and my application of dynamic equivalence to the source text warrants further explanation.

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1.2 The Translation: Dynamic Equivalence in Practice

This partial translation of the Huajian ji is primarily based upon the 1998 variorum edition, edited by Liang Peichi 梁培熾; the Chinese text is reproduced in the Appendix. Although other editions have enjoyed a wider, popular readership, Liang’s publication compiles the variations among extant texts and includes Zhong Daicang’s commentary and essays, making it an invaluable resource for tracing the Huajian ji’s development over time. Further, the interlinear commentary, although not included here, provided insight into potential interpretations and features of the text that Zhong found particularly worthy of praise.\(^44\) I also consulted the Xue Shan 薛汕 edition (1985) for its alternate punctuation. Upon encountering a particularly difficult reference, allusion, or grammatical construction, I often perused the Thoms and Bowring translations to examine their solutions to such challenges. Finally, reference materials and, of course, the input of advisors and literature experts proved essential to my understanding of the story, context, and poetics.

The five chapters translated in this project, from the second juan of the Huajian ji, take place after Student Liang has observed Yaoxian for the first time. Determined to be near her, Liang purchases and renovates the vacant abode adjacent to the Yang mansion. While visiting with Yaoxian’s father in the mansion’s rear garden, his attention is drawn to a piece of poetry, written by Yaoxian herself, affixed to the wall of a pavilion. At Sir

\(^{44}\) Given the importance of the commentary tradition in China, Zhong’s explanations were integral to the Huajian ji’s introduction to and popularity among elite audiences; a translation of the ballad with his commentary would be a valuable contribution to Chinese literary studies. I have decided not to include it in my translation because English-speaking audiences are likely to view commentary as distinct from, rather than part of, the Huajian ji reading experience. As such, its inclusion would be a departure from my domesticating strategy.
Yang’s prompting, he composes verses of his own that mirror hers. Before leaving, he purloins a few sheets of the floral notepaper that a servant had brought from the young lady’s boudoir. (The pair would later record their oaths to each other on these sheets.) Later, Yaoxian and her maids observe the poems, which alert Yaoxian to Liang’s feelings for her. Impressed by the young man, Sir Yang secretly desires the young man for a son-in-law and suggests that they create a gated passage in the wall that separates their rear gardens. It is this passage that enables the youths to encounter and declare their love to each other.

Because the translation is targeted at general readers rather than a scholarly audience, I have not included footnotes or annotations in order to minimize distractions from the reading experience. The effort of the act of translation is, I hope, masked in the final version. Without annotations, however, there is no way to address the many translation decisions such a complex text necessitates, particularly in regard to my interpretation of and commitment to dynamic equivalence. In the discussion that follows, I explain my strategies of translating the *Huajian ji* in more detail to illuminate some of these choices. Specifically, I lay out my decision to model my translation on the English literary ballad form and discuss issues of rhyme, poetic devices, and source culture-specific terms and literary allusions. Providing concrete examples will better show the application of theory to practice.

I adopted the English ballad meter for this English translation of the *Huajian ji* because of its similarity to the source text in terms of literary poetics, generic features, and prosodic form. As defined by translation studies theorist André Lefevere, poetics
refers not only to styles, devices, and motifs of a literary tradition, but more broadly to the [conception of the] role of literature in a given social system, encompassing expectations, value judgments, reading habits, scholarly criticism, and publication practices.\textsuperscript{45} The English literary ballad appeared in the early eighteenth century; however, the “origins” of the \textit{Huajian ji} are unclear, as noted in the previous section. Consequently, for this comparison of literary poetics, I have selected the 1713 “Genius” edition and its subsequent circulation as the source (con)text, both because little is known about the work prior to this date and because, with Zhong Daicang’s commentary, the “Genius” edition became the standard version of the text. The two literary contexts, then, occurred at similar historical moments. Both drew upon oral traditions to create more “literary” versions, thereby simultaneously elevating the folk and arguing, implicitly or explicitly, for an alternative literature that challenged the literary conventions of elites.

British literature scholar Susan Stewart identifies the English literary ballad as one of several “distressed genres,” in which learned authors simulate oral, folkloric forms in their written texts. By appropriating these traditions, writers simultaneously invoke the imagined authenticity of an oral past while declaring their separation from it, often doing so for ideological reasons. The division between the folk and literary is murky, however, as the performance and literary traditions coexisted and influenced one another. Stewart attributes the emergence of simulating oral literature in the late seventeenth century to a number of factors: the decline of patronage and a subsequent nostalgia for a feudal past;

the rise of industrialization, urbanization, and, especially, commercial publishing; and the
development of the concept of individual “genius” among poets and literary critics. For
the upper classes in the midst of this shifting social context, oral traditions came to
represent the idealized primitive, rural, and local in the face of the modern, urban, and
dispersed. Hence, these genres were dually “distressed” in that contemporary writers
aged their compositions (sometimes even presenting them as artifacts that the writer had
unearthed) and the gentry consumed [simulated] folk tradition out of a longing for the
past, thereby co-opting cultural ownership of oral literature from the rural commoners.⁴⁶

In England, the literary ballad developed out of and in reaction to the
performance-based traditional ballad, which originated in the Middle Ages and was
particularly prominent from the mid-sixteenth through the end of the seventeenth century,
as well as the mass-produced, single-page broadside ballads, popular among the lower
classes in urban centers from 1750 to 1850.⁴⁷ The first notable collection of traditional
ballads, Thomas Percy’s (1729-1811) Reliques of Ancient English Poetry published in
1765,⁴⁸ illustrates the uneasy relationship between elites’ elevation of “pristine” folk
poetry and their simultaneous desire to (re)define and formalize its characteristics
according to literary norms. Percy undertook the project in order to reveal an oral-based,

⁴⁶Susan Stewart, Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation (New York: Oxford
⁴⁷Stewart, Crimes of Writing, 108. The distinctions between these genres are more complex than can be
discussed here. See Mary Ellen Brown, “Placed, Replaced, or Misplaced?: The Ballads’ Progress,” The
Eighteenth Century 47, no. 2/3, Ballads and Songs in the Eighteenth Century (Summer/Fall 2006): 115-29.
A basic overview of the ballad’s history appears in “Ballad,” in The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and
Poetics, ed. Roland Green, Stephen Cushman, and Clare Cavanagh (Princeton: Princeton University Press,
2012), 114-18.
⁴⁸Thomas Percy, Reliques of Ancient English Poetry: Consisting of Old Heroic Ballads, Songs, and
other Pieces of our Earlier Poets (Chiefly of the Lyric Kind), Together with some few of later Date (London:
J. Dodsley, 1765).
national literature that would rival the famous epics of the Greeks and Romans. Yet he apparently found the great artifacts of English oral literature lacking, for he significantly altered many of the ballads and included contemporary forgeries written to appear older. The publication nevertheless sparked a craze among the wealthy for collecting and studying traditional ballads. It also had an enormous influence on two giants of Romanticism, William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge.

Although poets had been imitating oral elements of traditional ballads for nearly a century, the most well-known examples of these literary ballads appeared in joint publication by Wordsworth and Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* (1798). The pair intended to adopt form and features of the traditional ballad, drawing primarily from the examples in Percy’s *Reliques*, while infusing their own poetic sensibilities. According to Wordsworth’s preface to the 1800 reprint of *Lyrical Ballads*, their aim was to experiment with folk poetry popular among the lower classes to challenge existing literary values of the high-brow poetry of the day. Wordsworth and Coleridge experimented with the meter and rhyme, as well as the rural and commonplace topics of the traditional ballad,

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49 Stewart, *Crimes of Writing*, 114.
50 Ibid., 87.
52 William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads: With a Few Other Poems* (London: J. & A. Arch, 1978). In the second edition (1800), Wordsworth added more poems and a preface, in which he laid out the authors’ poetic aims; a third edition (1802) included an appendix by Wordsworth entitled *Poetic Diction*, which further explained the principles discussed in the preface.
but they were especially drawn to its simple, vernacular language; in fact, Wordsworth claimed in his preface that the best poetry only differs from colloquial speech in that it contains meter and rhyme.\textsuperscript{54} Further, the simple language of the traditional ballad provided an antidote to what Wordsworth saw as the overwrought poetic diction dominating the literary output at the time. Broadside ballads, considered an inferior form of balladry, had even begun to adopt this affected diction.\textsuperscript{55} Thus, \textit{Lyrical Ballads} represents an attempt to elevate the humble yet “authentic” genre of traditional balladry, while setting it against both the literary norms of the upper classes and the mass-produced, “inauthentic” folk songs circulating in urban areas. Such a project, of course, would require poets of considerable sentiment and talent, and Wordsworth and Coleridge, the preface suggests, were just the men for the task.

The \textit{Huajian ji} in the eighteenth century parallels the English context in notable ways. \textit{Muyu shu} have strong links to oral culture; like many of the transcribed English traditional ballads, they both recorded existing songs and provided material for performers’ repertoires. Marked as localist productions, \textit{muyu shu} were cheaply mass-produced and circulated within the region and the majority were disregarded as substandard poetry by elites, not unlike the English broadsides. Yet men of letters, such as the author(s) of the \textit{Huajian ji}, saw \textit{muyu} tradition as a potential vehicle for their own

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 162.
\item Scholars have generally assumed that Wordsworth was positively influenced by broadside ballads, in addition to traditional ballads, given his esteem of the language of the lower classes. However, Linda Venis convincingly contends that little evidence supports this claim. In her survey of broadsides circulating in the late eighteenth century, she found that few songs displayed the “humble daily life” and simple language that Wordsworth praised; on the contrary, many used the “stale diction” that he rejected. See Venis, “The Problem of Broadside Balladry’s Influence on the \textit{Lyrical Ballads},” \textit{Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900} 24, no.4 (Autumn 1984): 617-32.
\end{enumerate}
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poetic endeavors, simulating the formal components of the performance context. The handful of muyu shu composed by literati appear to have gained a reputation as impressive works of vernacular art. Further, the historical context in which both folk and literary muyu shu developed resembles the one in which the English literary ballad evolved. For example, by the mid-1800s, Guangdong had become the intellectual and commercial center of southern China as the population migrated to cities in greater numbers. Print culture enabled the regional distribution of muyu texts, perhaps supporting the idea of a Cantonese vernacular identity contrasted with the seat of imperial power in the north.56 Given this situation, could literary productions of muyu shu be considered a “distressed genre”? Only a more exhaustive investigation could confirm this proposition, a task I will leave for other scholars; suffice to say, there are compelling parallels between the English and southern Chinese literary histories that have informed my use of the English literary ballad for this translation of the Huajian ji.

Moreover, there are additional correlates between the projects of Zhong Daicang and Wordsworth and Coleridge. Just as Wordsworth praised the traditional ballad’s straightforward language, so too did the commentary and essays of the Huajian ji’s “Genius” edition call for a return to the colloquial guwen 古文 (“classical prose”) style of writing promoted by Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) and Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773-819), two scholars of the Tang Dynasty (618-907). The direct and simple style of guwen, the Tang writers argued, was a superior conduit for literary topics, whereas the reigning piantiwen 駢體文 (“parallel prose”) style masked content beneath a shroud of rigid rules and overly

56 Snow, Cantonese as Written Language, 72-82.
ornate diction. The *Huajian ji*, according to one of the critical essays included in the “Genius” edition, is an excellent example of how *guwen* style could be applied to poetry.\(^{57}\) Further, by ranking the *Huajian ji* among the other Books of Genius, Zhong implicitly champions the introduction of a border region text into the national literature and explicitly contends that narrative song has the same literary value as more established, vernacular genres.\(^{58}\) In this way, the *Huajian ji* was “part of a general movement from the late sixteenth to the seventeenth century to bring chantefable literature [i.e., “ballad-narratives”] within the ambit of the literati in the wake of drama and vernacular fiction, which, sustained by the publishing boom of this period, had succeeded in becoming minor forms of literati art.”\(^{59}\) We do not know whether the author(s) of the *Huajian ji* composed and published the story with this radical aim in mind, or if they purposely simulated the performance context of the *muyu shu* genre in order to challenge the florid *piantiwen* style of literary elites. We do know, however, that Zhong undertook a mission to explicate these arguments through his commentary. And just as Wordsworth’s preface to *Lyrical Ballads* inherently lauded the authors’ poetic “genius” as a prerequisite for reinvigorating the English ballad, so too did Zhong display his literary sensibilities through his commentary, for surely only a man of tremendous talent and perception, his writings seem to suggest, could explicate the subtleties of the *Huajian ji*. Beyond the work’s historical context, then, its ideological function within the

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\(^{57}\) Liang, ed., *Huajian ji hui jiao hui ping ben*, 131.

\(^{58}\) In fact, Zhong argues that the *Huajian ji* is valuable precisely because it is a songbook: when sung, the narrative poem causes readers/listeners to appreciate refined writing in ways that non-musical works of vernacular literature cannot. See Liang, ed., *Huajian ji hui jiao hui ping ben*, 66-67.

\(^{59}\) Idema, “Prosimetric and Verse Narrative,” 357.
early eighteenth-century literary system mirrors that of the Romantic literary balladists, offering further support for the English literary ballad’s use in this translation project.

In addition to poetics, a second reason for adopting the literary ballad is its generic features, such as typical topics and modes of storytelling. Definitions of the ballad as a genre—in England or elsewhere—are often deliberately broad; perhaps the most useful is folklorist Gordon Hall Gerould’s characterization of the ballad as “a folksong that tells a story with stress on the crucial situation, tells it by letting the action unfold itself in event and speech, and tells it objectively with little comment or intrusion of personal bias.”

Although Gerould was primarily concerned with European ballad traditions, his description can easily be applied to the Huajian ji as well. In England, favored topics changed over the centuries, but by the seventeenth century, the most popular songs of both the traditional and literary ballad focused on marriage, courtship, and sexuality. Still, there are noticeable differences between English ballads and literary muyu shu. For one, English literary ballads varied in length but were generally shorter than the Huajian ji, sometimes only focusing on a single scene. Moreover, literary ballad writers tended to take as their subjects [idealized] pastoral scenes and the lives of the lower class citizens, whereas the Huajian ji tells the story of accomplished sons and daughters of nobility. Finally, the Huajian ji’s exploration of characters’ psychology more resembles the Romantic treatment of the literary ballad form, rather than compositions appearing earlier in the eighteenth century, which prioritized

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61 Ibid., 19.
objectivity in narration. In these ways, the Huajian ji fits within some of the narrative and topical boundaries of the English ballad genre, while differing in important ways. Nevertheless, the overarching features of the ballad form—the telling of a story, episode by episode, by a [simulated] performer-narrator—make the literary ballad a preferable form compared to others within the English poetic canon.

General English-speaking readers are likely unfamiliar with the history of balladry in the Western world; they are more apt to recognize ballad-like poems included in collections of well-known poets, such as Coleridge’s “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner” (1798) (Coleridge’s primary contribution to Lyrical Ballads), or Ernest Thayler’s “Casey at the Bat: A Ballad of the Republic Sung in the Year 1888” (1888). Still, the aural features of the English ballad are not entirely absent from modern American and British culture; its meter and rhyme appear in popular songs, as well as traditional Christian hymns. By adopting the English ballad meter for this translation of the Huajian ji and retaining many of its orally derived narrative features, I hope to invoke the written literary tradition of English-language poetry, while simultaneously echoing the performance traditions in which it developed.

In terms of form, the English ballad corresponds nicely to the rhythm of the Huajian ji. The Chinese source text, as has been mentioned, is made of seven-character lines; therefore, each line contains seven syllables and each couplet fourteen. Conveniently, English ballad meter, occasionally called the “fourteener,” is composed of the same number of units. A standard line consists of seven iambis (an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable); commonly, the line is broken into one iambic tetrameter
line and one iambic trimeter line ending with a caesura. In practice, however, most ballads include some variation, such as substituting an occasional iamb with a trochee (stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable) or anapest (two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable). The degree to which such variation is permitted has long been debated by scholars of poetry, and there is still disagreement over whether the “true” English ballad is defined by the number of feet or the number of emphasized syllables. 62 Suffice it to say, for my translation, I have aimed for the iambic ideal, although I admit the deviations from this model are plentiful.

In practice, then, each seven-character line of Chinese corresponds to an English phrase containing seven emphasized syllables, regardless of the type of metrical foot employed. Following the most common presentation of ballad verse, I have rendered each of these phrases as two lines, a tetrameter and trimeter. Consequently, each single line of the Chinese is represented by two lines in English. The following excerpt illustrates my use of ballad meter, with emphasized syllables in boldface:

“Their neCel, has it been decided whom you are to wed,
and when to your distinguished house
the fair lass shall be led?”

“賢侄婚姻曾定否？
何時金屋貯嬋娟？”

The resulting rhythm of the translation is remarkably similar to the Huajian ji: each phrase is punctuated by seven beats followed by a brief caesura. Only in a few cases

have I replaced the caesura with an eighth emphasized syllable, which appears on a separate, indented line.

With dynamic equivalence as a guiding principle, I have privileged the ballad form over lexical content at times when it was impossible to accommodate both. For the most part, the changes to the text consist of little more than selecting one synonym over another, based on which fit the metrical scheme best in a particular line (for example, *celestial* versus *heavenly*). Although this metrical form seems to work well in terms of accommodating roughly the same amount of content as in the original, on occasion I encountered a significant discrepancy in the correspondence of meaning; sometimes what takes ten words in one language takes only three in another. In these cases, I opted to change the story by adding or omitting words, rather than disrupt the prosody. For example, in the section “On Visiting and Composing Poetry” (*baifang he shi* 拜訪和詩), a literal translation of lines three and four would read something like, “When the two youths arrived at the new study, Yicang spoke to his cousin.” The first line was easily restated to fit the seven-foot metrical scheme, but the second contained few words that could be expanded to match. My solution (though it is admittedly clunky) was to add a phrase to the line:

When the two young men arrived at the newly constructed abode, Yicang addressed his younger cousin; this is what followed:

二生同到新書館，
亦倉同弟啓言章；
Here, then, I have appended an explanatory phrase that elucidated what was implicit in the Chinese: that the following lines would contain Yicang’s remarks to his cousin. While this changes the text, it does not necessarily add content to the story. In the most extreme cases, I have occasionally included an extra content word or two to fill out the meter of the line that does not correspond to any word in the line. In these cases, I have been guided by Umberto Eco’s principle of textual abduction, or translating the part in terms of the whole, meaning that if the story must change in order to adhere to verse conventions, additions should be consistent with the overall narrative.63 For example, if a character feels despondent in a particular scene, it would be acceptable to insert an adverb such as “morosely” to a line that contains no such modifier in Chinese if its addition preserves prosody.

Of course, rhythm and meter are just one aural aspect of both the Huajian ji and the English ballad; rhyme is also an essential component. One of the most striking features of the Huajian ji—at least to an English-speaking audience—is the monorhyme that caps each couplet. There is no ready equivalent in English. Even if there existed enough discreet words in English to carry a monorhyme for hundreds of lines, to do so would undoubtedly sound unnatural and inelegant to an English reader. One intriguing solution to this dilemma, suggested to me by Dick Davis, the preeminent translator of medieval Persian literature, would be to employ monorhyme not at the end of every couplet, but rather at set intervals, say, capping every fifth couplet. The rest of the verse

63 Eco, *Experiences in Translation*, 16-17. In this section, Eco is specifically writing about textual abduction in terms of source-specific allusions; however, the concept works well for other challenges of translation too.
would necessarily need to be unrhymed so that the occasional monorhyme would be
apparent to readers without being intrusive. Ultimately, I decided to abandon the rhyme
scheme of the *Huajian ji*. To preserve it in every couplet is too cumbersome; to insert it
at regular intervals would relegate all rhyme to the background, when, in my opinion, it
should be featured. As a result, I decided to rely upon the rhyme scheme of the ballad, in
which the two lines composing each couplet rhyme with one another. Given that each
Chinese line becomes two in my translation, the rhyme falls on lines 2 and 4 of the
English version (that is, on the final word in each trimeter line). Although this pattern
does not strictly correspond to the Chinese, it nevertheless alerts readers that abundant
end rhyme is a major acoustic element of the *Huajian ji*. Furthermore, because ballad
meter and rhyme appear in well-known English-language songs (from “Amazing Grace”
to “The House of the Rising Sun”), employing the scheme here may subtly convey a
sense of the *Huajian ji*’s links to oral tradition. This case of rhyming strategy highlights
some of the challenges a translator committed to functional equivalence must navigate
when the poetics of the source and target cultures necessitate compromise.

As in many poetic traditions, the poetry of the *Huajian ji* exhibits considerable
complexity within each line or couplet in terms of internal rhyme, parallelism, and
repetition of words or sounds (assonance or consonance). Only some of these features can
be accommodated in an English translation. For instance, parallelism in an English
couplet may incorporate words’ meanings in functions; as an example, the two lines
could each begin with an adjective indicating color followed by a noun related to nature
(The blue sky… / The green grass…). Because Chinese is a tonal language, its poetry
often employs an intricate system of tonal correspondence and contrast, in addition to semantic and grammatical parallelism. Although I could not replicate the tonal qualities of the *Huajian ji*’s poetry, nevertheless, I have attempted to preserve the other types of parallelism in my translation. A representative example appears in “On Inquiring and Purchasing a Studio” (*fang mai shufang* 訪買書房). The couplet reads, “During the day, he holds worry within while looking at the blue-green sky / when night arrives, he sheds tears while facing the silver lamp.” Noting the opening temporal phrases, the verbs describing Liang’s anguished actions, and the final color-noun combinations, I translated these lines like so:

> By day, he harbored unspeakable worry while gazing at the azure expanse; 
> at night, he wept afore flickering flames of silver adorned lamps.

日裏含愁瞻碧落,  
夜來垂淚對銀缸.

To convey the parallelism, I employed a half-rhyme in lines two and four (expanse – lamps) and added some additional modifiers to fill out the ballad meter. These slight modifications seemed justified, given that these lines are among the more obvious instances of semantic and grammatical parallelism in the five sections I translated.

Another intra-line device employed in the *Huajian ji* is the repetition of characters. For example, in “On Inquiring and Purchasing a Studio,” Liang is said to *qu qu lailai* 去去來來 in front of Yaoxian’s home. Word for word, this could be rendered as “going, going, coming, coming,” but the meaning is something closer to “he paced back and forth.” In this instance, the English lexicon offers a felicitous word combination that
incorporates both the action of the pacing, as well as an approximation of sound repetition: “hither, thither.” Not all repeated characters can be accommodated with such serendipitous solutions, however. In the section titled “The Lovelorn Youth Broods in his Study” (gui guan xiangsi 歸舘相思), one couplet reads in Chinese, 種種相思唔覺久 / 陣陣寒風冷背肩 (“With the seed [of love] planted [zhongzhong], he yearned [for her] without realizing that a long time had passed. / A burst of [zhenzhen] cold wind touched his shoulder” [thus alerting him that the hour had grown late]). Clearly, the couplet employs parallelism in addition to character repetition. But unlike the previous example, the first pair is not a mere repetition of the same grammatical category; zhong 種 can function as both a noun (“seed”) and a verb (“to plant” or “to be planted”). As a result, the two characters could not be represented by a single word or concept in English; the entire phrase needed to be included. For this couplet, I felt the most important components in terms of dynamic equivalence were the repetition of some kind of sound and the parallelism of the repetition at the beginning of each line. Once again, my solution required a slight change to the meaning:

\[
\text{Sown, now grown, love’s seeds concealed} \\
\text{that hours had passed him by} \\
\text{until a chill morn wind announced} \\
\text{that break of day drew nigh.}
\]

種種相思唔覺久, 
陣陣寒風冷背肩.

Thus, internal rhyme (sown – grown; until – chill) are substituted for the repeated characters. In addition, the seeds of love, instead of only being planted, have matured in
my rendition. Thus, through “moderate rewriting,” to use Eco’s term, I changed the story in order to mimic part of the parallelism that would otherwise be lost.

The above examples illustrate some of the ways in which I navigated the challenges of translating between two poetic systems. In other words, they highlight the decisions made when one must choose between formal structure and content. Very often, however, meaning is carried not only in the words of the text themselves, but in the feeling or impression the words collectively invoke. The last third of “On Inquiring and Purchasing a Studio” is devoted to describing in detail Student Liang’s renovation plans for the garden he has just purchased with his new abode. The section begins by stating that the property would be refurbished in order to display an abundance of natural beauty (後園要整多華麗), and the elaborate description that follows provides a stunning, visual impression for the Chinese reader. I interpret this sensory experience to be just as important to communicate in translation as the garden’s particular components themselves. In order to convey a sense of immediacy and recreate the overall effect a Chinese reader might experience, I employed lively, gerundive verbal phrase in English. I also strung many of the phrases together with semicolons or other punctuation, which provides the feeling of never-ending splendor. Because the tense of Chinese verbs can be ambiguous, using present continuous gerunds is not necessarily a mistranslation of the original. Still, it is a tense shift that readers will notice. Therefore, to smooth this transition, I have added the word imagine to the beginning of the section,

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64 I am grateful to my advisor, Professor Patricia Sieber, for her suggestion of using the present progressive tense in this section.
which subsequently reintroduces the narrator. I do not believe the intrusion is problematic, as the narrator overtly addresses the audience at the beginning of nearly every chapter, including this one; in this way, the imagine reminds the readers of the work’s songbook origins. Further, it directly compels the reader to envision the elaborate description that follows. My approach to this section was heavily influenced by Umberto Eco’s instructions to the translator of one of his novels, in which he suggested the translator use whatever synonyms for colors he felt necessary to convey the multicolored nature of a coral reef, the “meaning” of this section of the Huajian ji is not what is in the garden as much as the sensory experience the description creates.

Finally, culture-specific allusions and idioms present challenges for translators of any literary text, and the Huajian ji is no exception. Translators have a number of options for accommodating these elements: they can provide an explanatory footnote, explain the allusion within the text itself, replace the allusion with a similar reference from the target-language culture, or provide no explanation for the reader at all. Because allusions add literary depth to the story, I did not want to replace them with English-language references or ignore them altogether. At the same time, adherence to the ballad form limited the opportunity to explain them in detail within the text itself, while footnotes were not ideal, given my audience of general readers. Within these constraints, my strategy has been, firstly, to alert readers to the fact that they have encountered a cultural reference (by adding modifiers such as legendary, for example) and, secondly, to word the allusion in such a way relative to the main storyline that readers can understand.

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65 Eco, Experiences in Translation, 32.
the main idea behind the allusion. In this approach, a lay reader will likely not learn much about the allusions themselves, but at least the appearance of unfamiliar information will not distract them. For readers who are knowledgeable about China’s literary and cultural history, their understanding of the references will only deepen their experience of reading the English translation of the *Huajian ji*. In sum, my strategy does not suppose that knowledge of allusions is a prerequisite to enjoying the text, but if one is familiar with them, then he or she can appreciate the story even more.

An example of an allusion appears in “On Visiting and Composing Poetry” (*baifang he shi* 拜訪和詩). In this section, Student Liang is visiting the Yang household with his cousin. General Yang, Yaoxian’s father, invites Liang to write a poem extolling the beauty of the surrounding willow trees; upon completion it will be tacked to the wall of the pavilion next to a poem on the same topic that Yaoxian herself has composed. Liang sees this opportunity not only to display his literary talent, but also to secretly communicate his affection for the young lady, a furtive missive that he compares to the mythical magpie bridge that enables two lovers to reunite in the legend of the Cowherd and Weaving Maid (*Niulang yu Zhinü* 牛郎與織女). One of the most cited stories in folk literature, the tale chronicles the love between a human man and an immortal goddess. The two marry and begin a family, but when the girl’s parents realize she is missing, they offer her the choice to return to her celestial home or witness the destruction of her mortal husband and children. The cowherd follows her to the heavens, only to be stopped by a great river (the Milky Way) that the girl’s mother has drawn

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66 Idema, “Prosimetric and Verse Narrative,” 401-3.
across the sky to assure their separation. Taking pity on the heartbroken couple, the magpies of the world gather once a year to form a bridge over the Milky Way so that the lovers may briefly reunite. The story is commemorated during the Qixi festival, similar to Valentine’s Day in the U.S., which falls on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month each year. By invoking the Cowherd and Weaving Maid legend, Student Liang not only ranks his love for Yaoxian among the great love stories of Chinese tradition, but also elevates his beloved to the status of a goddess, a common motif throughout the *Huajian ji*.

Given that the entire allusion appears in a single seven-character line, there was little space for explanation. This was my solution:

“So by means of this ode, I must tell of my love, both secluded and unrequited, that through such expression, my delicate maiden’s ardor may be ignited. Perhaps, upon grasping the affairs of my heart, my Sequestered One shall be stirred, as was the legendary Weaving Girl, to unite with her mortal Cowherd.”

等我詩中就把裏情訴
將情打動女嬌娘。
或者深閨識透人心事
鵲橋有意渡牛郎。

A straightforward translation might read, “When I write this poem, it will communicate my passion, which shall affect the delicate maiden’s sympathies. Perhaps the affairs of my heart will thus be known within the lady’s boudoir, and she will want to cross the magpie bridge to meet the Cowherd.” Without explanation or context, this final phrase
would confuse English readers. Therefore, I changed the lexical references and mentioned the Weaving Girl, rather than the magpie bridge; this allowed me to make the comparison between the pairs of lovers more explicit. Further, I phrased the latter half of the above excerpt as a kind of restatement or elaboration of the previous lines. Finally, I signaled the mythical status of the reference by inserting *legendary* and changed “within the women’s boudoir” to “the Sequestered One,” partly to set up the end rhyme, but also to further intimate that the beloved (Weaving Girl/Yaoxian) is kept away from her lover.67

A second, common allusion appearing throughout the *Huajian ji* is an allusion to Chang’e (嫦娥 or 嫦娥), the Chinese goddess of the moon. Although there are several versions of the Chang’e story, the most common elements include the immortal Chang’e’s transformation into a human; her marriage to the archer Houyi, who shoots down all but one sun to prevent the earth from being scorched; and Houyi’s pursuit of an elixir/pill of immortality. Chang’e swallows the pill, becomes immortal, and immediately begins to float toward the sky, finally taking up residence in the moon. The Chang’e legend is yet another story of separation and unrequited love still celebrated as a symbol of romance today. Residing in her cold, lunar palace, she is often invoked or compared to Yaoxian by Student Liang, particularly in regard of her celestial perfection, chastity, and seclusion. Chang’e shares many similarities with the moon goddess Diana from the Western mythical tradition. John Bowring noticed this similarity too; however,

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67 The characters comprising “lady’s boudoir” *shengui* 深闺 literally mean “far-away quarters,” making the idea of sequestration not entirely incongruous.
whereas he replaces “Chang’e” with “Diana” and explicitly references Greek and Roman mythology in his translation, I have opted to retain the Chinese name, making only passing references to Western myth (e.g., using adjectives like sylphic or echoing lines from the European canon that refer to Diana, such as “in her orb,” a line from Shakespeare’s *Much Ado About Nothing*, in which Claudio laments that his beloved Hero seems as far away from him as the moon goddess). These minute and indirect allusions will go unnoticed by the majority of English readers, but will ideally enhance the enjoyment of readers who are more familiar with the European literary tradition.

This brief discussion provides examples of the ways in which I have applied the concept of dynamic equivalence to my interpretation and subsequent translation of five chapters of the *Huajian ji*. Theory, Venuti has argued, always informs the practice of translation.\(^{68}\) By explaining my rationale for adopting the English ballad form and describing some of my translation choices, I have foregrounded his call for self-reflexive approach to translation and, hopefully, shown that, although certain elements will always be lost, translation can also lead to “exorbitant gain.”\(^{69}\)

As a pedagogical tool, the translation of poetry has the potential to challenge assumptions about the nature of translation. Because the experience of reading poetry is generated by a combination of word choice, themes, emotional content, imagery, rhythm, rhyme, and other poetic devices and conventions, the translator’s priorities are often more apparent in a verse translation than in other genres. As a result, translating a poem is

\(^{69}\) Ibid., 181.
“likely to encourage experimental strategies that can reveal what is unique about translation as a linguistic and cultural practice” This is particularly true when a translation is read in conjunction with previous versions in the target language. Rather than offering competing interpretations, then, Thoms’ *Chinese Courtship* and Bowring’s *The Flowery Scroll* provide complementary readings; examining all three translations together calls attention to areas of divergence and, consequently, to the individual translators’ interpretive practices. As Schleiermacher has suggested,

> when different translations of the same work made from different points of view will be able to coexist, […] it would be difficult to say that any one of them is as a whole more perfect than the others or falls short in merit; rather, certain passages will prove more successful in one version, and other passages in another version, and only the sum of all these taken together and in relation to each other—the way one places particular value on approximating the original language, while the other rather insists that no violence be done to its own—will fulfill the task [of translation] completely.  

In other words, while each translation of the *Huajian ji* offers a distinct view of the Chinese work, a collective reading of all translated versions in the target culture provides the most complete understanding of the source text.

My project has two additional, somewhat lofty goals. I wish to contribute to the small body of literature translated into English and help create a “community of readers” (to borrow Lawrence Venuti’s term), not just of Chinese literature in translation, but of non-Western literature in general. In such a community, one not only seeks to understand an unfamiliar culture through open and collaborative communication, but also is receptive to the possibility that the foreign culture’s value systems, customs, and

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70 Ibid., 174.
institutions may influence and “revise” his own.\textsuperscript{72} Further, poetry is the least translated genre of literature around the world; beyond the works of a few Chinese poets (Du Fu, Li Bo, and Han Shan), most native English speakers are unfamiliar with China’s poetic tradition. An English translation of the \textit{Huajian ji} would be an implicit bid to include the ballad among the most well-known works of the Chinese canon.

\textsuperscript{72} Venuti, \textit{Translation Changes Everything}, 12.
2. Translation of Chapters 11 to 15 of the *Huajian ji*
## 2.1 List of Characters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Liang Yicang / Student Liang</td>
<td>A sentimental youth studying for the imperial exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yang Yaoxian</td>
<td>A talented maiden, object of Liang’s affections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Yao</td>
<td>Cousin of both Liang and Yaoxian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Yang / Gentleman Yang</td>
<td>Yaoxian’s father, a military general</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biyue</td>
<td>Yaoxian’s maidservant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yunxiang</td>
<td>Yaoxian’s maidservant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2.2 Summary of the First Ten Chapters

Student Liang departs from his family to visit his aunt Yao in Changzhou, ostensibly to focus on his studies; secretly, he wishes to encounter and fall in love with a talented maiden, just like the scholar and beauty in the Xixiang ji. After arriving, he pays his respects to his aunt and is reunited with her son, Student Yao. While wandering the residence’s rear garden alone, he comes across two beautiful, young ladies and their maids playing chess. The ladies see him and withdraw to their quarters; he is immediately smitten when one of them, Yaoxian, briefly smiles. Biyue returns to the garden to clean up the chessboard and his accosted by Student Liang, who begs her to communicate his love to her mistress; she refuses. He spends a sleepless night thinking of the maiden. The next day, his aunt reveals that the ladies are her nieces; one has been betrothed to Student Yao, and the other, Yaoxian, is the talented daughter of her brother, General Yang. Under the light of the moon, he ruminates on his growing lovesickness. After a few days, Yaoxian and her maids return to the Yang home, as they had been visiting Aunt Yao to celebrate her birthday. Biyue tells Yaoxian about her encounter with Liang in the garden, that she had chided the youth, and that she feared he would grow ill with lovesickness. Yaoxian laughs at his folly and determines not to be swayed by sentiment, as is fitting for a young noblewoman. The following excerpt begins here, when Liang learns that Yaoxian has departed from the Yao residence.
2.3 Chapter 11: On Inquiring and Purchasing a Studio

What intimacies passed 'twixt mistress and maids
let us not to our story add,
but turn the recitation to
our broken-hearted lad.

When he heard the jade-faced lady had returned to her estate,
crushing pain of separation produced an agitated state.
"Having risen above the mortal realm,
she's completely out of reach.
Now what to do? The way to heaven grows ever indistinct.
Should my love ne’er be requited,
there is but one causation:
I must’ve offered cracked incense sticks in a former incarnation!"

By day, he harbored unspeakable worry
while gazing at the azure expanse;

At night, he wept afore flickering flames
of silver adornèd lamps.

His jade-like face grew withered, gaunt--
such was the girl’s effect!--

while verdant lamp and yellowed scrolls
lay idle from neglect.

With slumber plagued by fits and starts--
his waking thoughts as well--
the poor young man put on his clothes
inverted, haphazard, pell-mell.

He wracked his brain but saw no way
to attain his heart's desire
except to seek the woman out
wherever she may retire.

When asked, a servant stated that
Sir Yang’s estate was toward
the place
where writers often congregated,
called the Juxian Ward.

Adjusting his clothes, he left at once
to track the lady down,
but her house receded like a deep pool;

his love was not around.

So shadowed was the courtyard that

he saw no one to whom

he could

entrust a message announcing himself

to the lady's florid room.

Now what place was there for him to discharge

his consuming infatuation?

Hither, thither 'fore the home

he paced in agitation.

Then, noting beside the mansion sat

an unoccupied abode,

whose wall

adjoined the crimson quarters where

the ladies were bestowed,

he at once dispatched his servant to

inquire after the estate.

"Its owner right now seeks a buyer,"

the servant did relate.

"The home is as expansive as

the Yang mansion is grand,
and a garden with a modest pond
is also installed on the land."

When Student Liang heard these words,
his heart, with joy, ballooned,
for surely this place was near the goddess Chang'e's home within the moon!

“Perhaps now I’ll chance ‘pon that fabled lady,

the goddess of Mount Wu.

Come,
sweet dreams! I’ll climb to Gaotang for

a clandestine rendezvous.”

Back in his quarters, he ordered his boy to
quickly ask after its cost,
for here was a path by which the fragrant realm's threshold might be crossed.

A thousand gold pieces he'd not begrudge
to acquire the title's deed.

A workman was hired, that construction of his studio could proceed.

The rear garden, too, was renovated
to showcase opulence:

Imagine, to the west, there rises
the Hall of Evening Scents;
a labyrinthine balustrade
flanking multicolored blooms;
the currents of the East Wind bearing
their manifold perfumes;
the Secluded Spring Pavilion nestled
to the garden's North
with famous buds, too many to count,
on all sides bursting forth;
the winding waters of a creek
to a fish pond are connecting;
the Bank of Brightly Colored Fish at
its anterior projecting;
with drooping willows, hunching, on its
left and on its right,
and in between are lotuses, alter-
nating red and white.
A pavilion for admiring clouds
in the eastern part attends,
their kaleidoscopic glow reflected
as the golden orb descends;
with black bamboo and peach blossom trees
on corresponding sides.

Crimson handrails leading to Gathered Fragrance Hall as guides,

while to its front, exquisite flowerets and foliage abound,

and installations of artful stones and blooms sidewise surround;

in the garden's south see Apricot Blossom Pavilion rising,

the Pentad Pigments its painted rails and threshold are comprising.

Fantastic, bizarrely twisting stones, piled high, o’erlook a glade

in which effigies of rare birds and unusual beasts shall be displayed.

Such a natural garden is not inferior to the residence of the immortals;

it shall rival the landscape enclosed behind Chang’e’s lunar portals.
2.4 Chapter 12: On Visiting and Composing Poetry

Student Liang bade adieu to his aunt,
gathered up his personal effects,
then, accompanied by his cousin, advanced
to his new living complex.
When the two young men arrived at
the newly-constructed abode,
Yicang addressed his younger cousin;
this is what followed:
"Seeing as all that separates my uncle--
the honorable General Yang--
from my quarters is a thin partition, stretching
as far as the property is long,
I ought to pay him a visit, in order
to foster a friendly relation.
I hope that you, my brother, will accompany me
to his refined inhabitation."
To the proposal, Yao readily agreed
with delighted acclamation.

Once there, Liang bowed and proffered his card to signal their visitation.

'Por receiving the caller's card, Sir Yang exchanged it with his own and invited the two young gentlemen to enter into his home.

The two students advanced inside and offered a how-do-you-do.

They together drank fine tea, while their host continued the civil interview.

Student Yao, with clasped hands, began to address their host:

"Dear uncle, may I humbly request that we discuss a topic foremost?

Student Liang is a direct relation of my father's beloved sister; his father lived in Wujiang, holding the title of Senior Minister.

He's here desiring to hit the books and in search of some tranquility.

Now, as you know, this wall separates you
from a renovated study.
The residence, in fact, will house your nephew
for the entirety of his stay.
To kow-tow and pay his respect to you
is why we came today."
Student Liang, his spirits high,
then spoke with ingratiating:
"Your lowly neighbor, in building a study,
basked in your radiant emanation.
The benefit of your superior guidance
I desire to obtain.
Through generations my indebtedness shall
in my memory remain."
The gentleman chuckled softly to himself
as he gave his reply:
"In the past, we once were schoolmates,
your honorable father and I.
From youth, our relationship was as between
a brother and a brother,
and
we registered our names as candidates for
the Exam with one another.
In the xinmao year, your father was among
the successful examinees,
whereas I, having fallen short,
ceased writing entirely.
Volumes of poetry I cast to the wind,
to analyze nevermore,
then mounted a horse, took up my bow,
and studied the art of war.
By a stroke of luck, I received the military's
highest recognition,
and in
the region of Zhejiang, took up the
Assistant Commander position.
How lucky that to the East Cabinet
your father had ascended,

because,
by him, for the Southern Commandant
was I then recommended.
Now, what a delight it is to see
before me his noble son,
as our families are linked by camaraderie
long ago begun."
Then ord'ring a feast in the Hall for Gazing at Waves to be prepared,
he said: "Let us together converse,
that inner thoughts may be shared."
The two youths entered the garden, taking in its vast tableaus;
all they could see were lush bamboo,
bright flowers and graceful willows.
The pavilion by the pond was resplendent with colorful displays,
and in Gazing-Waves Hall, a hanging poem drew their gaze.
Penned on floral parchment, the verses must have been recently set:
having been pasted upon the wall,
their ink was still dripping wet!
Their author wrote of pond and willows in a decidedly feminine hand.
To examine it closer, the two youths together approached the poem and scanned:
The poem:

*Who was it planted the drooping poplar*

'midst the garden pond?

*Surface ripples carved by Spring's breath*

*Wielding catkin frond;*

*Such vivid viridian! 'Tis no common tree*

*Aside the stream has spawn'd;*

*Why deign to enter this mortal realm or*

*From its celestial home abscond?*

Gentleman Yang chuckled softly to himself

as he nearby strode.

"Who can keep from laughing at such

an awkwardly-worded ode?

These lines were composed by my daughter in moments

of amusement and idle leisure.

She has yet to master presenting impressions

through elegant cadence and measure.

But how fortunate that you young men of talent

have entered our garden today,

for its orchards and blooms, flowers and trees

are thriving in full display.
May I ask that you pen pleasing lines of you own, as a souvenir? For a worthy poet is needed to make the flora's ethereality clear."

With a modest smile, Young Liang expressed his opposition: "I'm afraid I've not had the leisure to study poetic composition."

"Please make no excuses," replied the gentleman to his guest. "I've long heard that your verses' beauty, compared to your peers', is best!"

With that, he summoned the attending maid, instructing her, without delay--because his study from the garden was some distance away, whereas his daughter's quarters, in comparison, were not quite so far--to hastily fetch some flowered sheets from the young lady's boudoir. So ink and brush were neatly arranged before Liang, and then,
taking the brush, he considered the subject of the poem he was to pen.

"My spirits are dashed, my lungs contract yet my hidden anguish is swelling,

        for

there’s no one to carry my sentiments to

my lady's perfumèd dwelling.

So by means of this ode, I must tell of my love, both secluded and unrequited,

        that

through such expression, my delicate maiden's ardor may be ignited.

Perhaps, upon grasping the affairs of my heart, my Sequestered One shall be stirred, as was the legendary Weaving Girl, to unite with her mortal Cowherd."

And so he copied the meter and rhyme of the lady's poetic phrases while drafting his own composition, through which he sang the willow's praises.
His response:

*It's said that Spring's breath cloaks, hovers

    O'er the viridian pond:

Temperate ripples indent its surface,

    Compelled by delicate frond;

Rumors that, within this domicile,

    This selfsame tree had spawn'd;

Who knew that to the mortal realm

    Such a creature would deign to abscond?

When the ode was complete, the gentleman Yang praised its poetic achievement.

He affixed it on the wall next to his daughter's antecedent.

On the desk, two sheets of floral stationery still lay;

before he stepped into the garden,

Liang tucked them away.

But the youths, observing the landscape as they followed a winding fence,

hadn't imagined that their host would invite them to partake of fine refreshments!
In Gazing-Spring Pavilion, they passed
around a winecup small,

drinking until the sun's red orb
departed, heralding nightfall.
The tipsy youths took their leave,
since the hour was growing late;
the gentleman Yang accompanied them
as far as the outer gate.
Student Yao departed, too,
for quarters of his own,
while Student Liang meandered about,
wand’ring his garden, alone.
Chapter 13: The Lovelorn Youth Broods in his Study

Return'd to his room, he drew back a shade
to observe the silv'ry moon,
but seeing Chang'e a-rest in her orb,
full--not yet, but soon--
lamenting, he sighed, "this blushing girl's
the sole cause of my distress.
My mind and spirit are scattered and dazed:
in short, I am a mess!
Estrangement from my maiden’s lasted
half a year so far.
From earth to heaven's an easier trek
than reaching her boudoir.
Behind the locked, red gate her form
is hard to ascertain.
Oh! My heart is breaking, eyes
inflamed from heavy strain.
Could I have prophesied the fated
misery that's etched

in this

affair, wouldn't I have avoided chancing
'pon this darling wretch?

If we hadn't met, there'd be no endless
ache to reunite;

but

we have! So o'er and o'er I now

feel longing's bitter bite.

Before, when I'd composed the rhymes
hung on the pavilion's wall,

I snuck two flowered sheets inside
my sleeve, then left the hall."

He brought them forth, took in their form,

before the window sill, bent.

The parchment's fragrance lingered still,
its colors just as brilliant.

"The women's wing holds a Talent not seen

since Daoyun of the Xie clan--

not in vain is she called a Precious Jade
(her "Yao") and Goddess ("xian").

When 'pon her I first gazed, I felt
I'd entered a sylphic space.
How cruel the heavy clouds that now
eclipse her heav'nly grace.
These flowered sheets here in my hand,
I'll never let them go!
I've no one in the world to whom
to bare my doleful woe."
His heart was grieving, his eyes a-weeping.
"Oh! Yaoxian," he cried,
"because of you, I'm destined to
meet death by flowers' side."
Sown, now grown, love's seeds concealed
that hours had passed him by
until a chill morn wind announced
that break of day drew nigh.
And so to bed. But restiveness
prolonged the endless night,
e'en though the window had been shut
to block the moonbeams' light.
2.6 Chapter 14: Mistress and Maids View the Ode

In chronicling Liang’s abject sorrow,
we shall no longer persist,
but rather tell of Yaoxian
ambling in the flowers' midst.
Their morning promenade took mistress and
maids to Gazing-Waves Hall,
where the companions took note of floral parchment
affixed to the pavilion's wall.
The lady approached for a closer look and
recited the verse once through.
Puzzled, Yunxiang and Biyue
nearer to her drew:
"Sister, who do you think could've written
a poem such as this?
And then,
not long ago, come and hung it on
the pavilion's walled surface?"
The handwriting here does not at all
look like Master Yang's,
And yet the flowered stationery
to none but you belongs."
With a kindly smile, Yaoxian
to Yunxiang professed:
"Yesterday, one of our servant girls approached
me with this request:
apparently, our neighbor, from across the way
has completed his renovation.
He was welcomed into our reception hall
and expressed his veneration.
She continued to say that he was joined
by Yao, the cousin of mine,

and that

my father led them to the rear garden
where they partook of wine.
Presumably, he asked them to commemorate
the garden's vistas in verse,
and consequently sent a servant for paper, that
a few sheets I might disburse.
Today, with these lines before me, as I
peruse this written song,

I perceive that to its side is signed

the author's surname: Liang.

Each and every phrase of the ode

proclaims his love for me,

and while mirroring mine, he sings

of the drooping willow tree.

He says

that I, within my rooms, ignore

the anguish of estrangement.

The student’s sentiment, I think, will

surely lead to derangement.

He's tried every crafty, rascally ruse

by which he might make my acquaintance,

so now he's resorted to obtaining the lodging

next door and taking up residence."

Biyue then stepped before the Mistress

Yaoxian and spoke:

"Could it be that fate's decreed that you

and he be yoked?

Just looking at this pair of verses,

surely one could not contest
that the poems are like handsome scholar
and genteel beauty standing abreast."

Miss Yaoxian at once reprimanded
the maid, her voice a growl:
"Who was it came and filled your head
with a fabrication so foul?
If secluded ladies do not bestir
the visiting gods that roam,
then who is able to behold the goddess
who calls the moon her home?
Doesn’t he know that anyone who
to crooked romances adheres
is said
to sow the seeds of ruin, its yield
then reaped for myriad years?
You and I know refinement and virtue,
for in women's rooms we abide.
Therefore, let our hearts not dwell
upon the young man outside.
Nor should we be moved by transient
clouds that shroud the moon;
best to keep our gaze to steadfast
mountains and streams attuned."

With that, she and her maids together to
the ladies' chambers returned.

For as the ancients have said, adjacent walls
are oft lined with ears upturned.
Our account of the maiden, back in her room,
let's temporarily forsake.
Liang before his window stood,
having risen at daybreak.
Convinced a call from General Yang
was likely (though unsaid),
he ordered his servants to prepare
an elaborate banquet spread.
A runner was sent to Master Yao,
bearing a social request;
the garden was swept ‘til fresh and bright
at Student Liang’s behest.
When their distinguished guest arrived
as expected at midday,
the youths extended greetings as
they showed him to the foyer.
The three took tea and then moved to
the rear of the domicile,

where

in the Pavilion of Dusk's Perfumes they enjoyed
fine food and drink for awhile.
The longer they together conversed,
the more their bond was strong.
Master Yang soon turned and, smiling,
inquired of Student Liang:
"Dear nephew, has it been decided
whom you are to wed,
and when to your distinguished house
your fair lass shall be led?
The young man thereupon replied,
"I am as yet unmatched,

because
to seeking lettered fame alone
I've 'til now been attached."
Sir Yang began to envision this youth
and his child a wedded pair,
but he determined not to broach
the subject right then and there.
Addressing Student Liang again,
he changed his tack a bit:

"In truth, our adjacent gardens are
but by a thin wall split.
Now since our families are quite close,
and you're like my young relation,
why keep our two abodes detached
by a backyard demarcation?
So let us breach this dividing wall;
let a thoroughfare be hewn.
Then as it please you, wander freely
'round my rear lagoon.
The door could still be shut and locked
when occasion necessitates.
And thus combined, we'll share a patch
of heav'n within our gates."
Liang, internally ecstatic,
dared not express elation,
fearing
that Sir Yang's mind might change by dawn
and lead to the plan's negation.
"My Southern Hall's yet incomplete--
what opportunity!
I'll swift enjoin my mason to hasten
the gardens' unity."
Communion with the Yang House did
the passageway bespeak;
Spring's vernal wind henceforth shall brush
the jade-white peach's cheek.
http://books.google.com/books?id=xIQAAAAAYAAJ.


http://books.google.com/books?id=rCINAAAAYAAJ.


Appendix:

Chinese Source Text of Chapters 11 to 15 of the *Huajian ji*
莫言主婢私談論，
再誦芸窗客斷腸。
聞道玉容歸去了，
分明攪碎別離腸。
隔斷紅塵難入手，
天上人間路渺茫。
今生不遂多情願，
緒係前生燒了斷頭香，
日裏含愁瞻碧落，
夜來垂淚對銀缸。
玉貌為嬌駝累瘦，
青燈黃卷盡拋荒。
夢想眠思成蹭蹬，
時時顛倒着衣裳，
思量無計酬心願，
衹着跟尋此女在何方。
細問姚家僮與僕，
盡道楊爺府在聚賢坊。
整衣且去尋蹤跡，
衹見相府潭潭冇乜女娘，
院宇深沉人不見，
音書誰為報蘭房，
滿腹相思何處散，
去去來來在府旁。  
看見府邊一所空閒屋，  
深鎖朱門靠隔墙。  
速命安童前訪問，  
話係人家賣此房，  
內中闊大如楊府，  
花園一所有池塘。  
梁生聽罷多歡喜，  
此處分明近廣寒，  
巫山有路逢神女，  
安排好夢赴高唐。  
歸舘命童忙訪實，  
買條仙路到香房。  
不惜千金酬賣主，  
就請良工修整做書房。  
後園要整多華麗，  
西邊起所晚香堂，  
花邊一帶欄杆曲，  
東風傳送異花香。  
北邊一所藏春閣，  
萬種名花種兩旁，  
一溪曲水通漁沼，  
面前就係錦鱗塘，  
兩旁盡種垂絲柳，  
紅蓮相間白蓮香。  
看雲亭在東方起，  
金輪掩映彩雲光，  
紫竹桃花栽兩便，
朱欄轉入集馨堂。堂前多少奇花草，美石盆花擺兩旁。南便杏花亭一座，畫檻雕欄五彩裝，怪石疊成山上景，珍禽異獸列成行。風光不讓神仙府，景致分明賽廣寒。
梁生別妗搬行李，
就攜表弟到書房。
二生同到新書館，
亦倉同弟啓言章：
“隔籬令舅楊都督，
與我芸窗隔粉墻，
理當拜訪通名姓，
望弟相陪過畫堂。”
姚生歡喜皆承應，
梁生拜帖遞入中堂。
楊爺看罷通名帖，
傳言請入兩賢郎。
二生舉步來相會，
名茶飲罷問言章。
姚生恭揖將言啓：
“伏惟舅父聽知詳。
梁兄正係吾姑表，
父為學士住吳江。
攻書意愛圖清靜，
隔墻新整一書房，
甥亦忝同書館住，
特來叩拜到中堂。”
梁生乘興恭身啓：
“下鄰為館賴餘光。卑未得蒙尊教益，恩垂没世敢相忘。”相公吟笑將言答：
“尊君曾共我同窗。少年相處如兄弟，同案聯名共進庠。辛卯尊君登虎榜，我因無中棄文章，盡把詩書丟落水，走馬開弓習武場。僥幸狀元叨武職，參將蒙陞守浙江，湊遇令尊榮耀為東閣，薦吾都督到南方，今朝幸覩賢公子，通家情誼未嘗忘。”就叫望波亭上排佳宴，“與生聊作話衷腸。”
二生擧步來園內，祇見花明竹秀柳絲長。池亭樓閣多華彩，又見望波亭上有詩章。新詩寫在花箋上，墨跡淋漓貼粉墻。原來彩筆題池柳，二生行近細觀看。
詩曰：
誰把垂楊植內池，
春來飛絮點漣漪。
青青不是溪前種，
肯向人間管別離。
相公旁立微微笑：
“拙作何堪笑大方，
此詩小女閒中筆，
無成詞調不成章。
幸遇才人臨小圃，
園林花木盡生光。
敢求妙句留佳筆，
花神生色賴賢郎。”
梁生帶著笑道答：
“愚人未暇學詩章。”
相公回道：“休推故，
久聞麗句壓群芳。”
又呼侍婢前吩咐：
園林路遠隔書房，
小姐閨中還尚近，
忙取花箋紙數張，
筆墨取齊亭上擺，
梁生把筆細思量：
“我有衷情沾肺腑，
無人傳遞到香房，
等我詩中就把離情訴，
將情打動女嬌娘。
或者深閨識透人心事，

87
鵲橋有意渡牛郎。”
就依小姐前詩韻，
咏柳新詞寫幾行：

詩曰：
聞道春風遍綠池，
柔條嬝嬝動清漪；
遙知種向朱門裏，
哪識人間有別離！

詩罷相公稱讚好，
兩張齊貼粉牆邊。
檯上花箋餘兩片，
梁生籠起出花前，
祇話繞欄觀景致，
唔想相公傳請入華筵。
望波亭上傳杯盞，
飲到紅輪弄晚天。
二生沉醉相辭別，
相公送出大門邊。
姚生亦別歸家去，
梁生獨自轉花園。
Chapter 13. 歸館相思

歸館開窗觀朗月，
祇見姮娥將近要團圓，
小生祇為一個紅顏女，
弄得心神顛倒顛。
共姐別來將半載，
閨闈遠過一重天，
朱門深鎖人難見，
條腸想斷眼將穿。
早知命薄前緣少，
唔遇寃家免掛牽，
為姐相思何日了，
時時想起骨頭酸，
早先亭上頭詩句，
袖中籠起兩張箋。
窗前取出花箋看，
滿紙餘香彩色鮮。
深閨有咗高才女，
芳名唔枉叫瑤仙。
小生好似逢仙女，
重雲何苦隔嬋娟，
揸住花箋唔放手，
一天愁緒向誰言？
傷心哭叫一聲瑤仙姐，
為娘殘命喪花邊。
種種相思唔覺久，
陣陣寒風冷背肩，
只着歸床捱夜永，
推窗唔管月中天。
Chapter 14. 主婢看詩

莫道梁生淒惨極，
瑤仙早起出花邊，
主婢望波亭上過，
粉墻上有一花箋。
小姐近前吟一遍，
芸香、碧月就開言：
“姐呀，啱首新詩誰所作，
將來貼上粉墻邊，
字跡又非公相筆，
因何又係姐花箋？”
瑤仙笑對芸香語：
“昨日丫鬟對我言：
隔籬整起一所新書舘，
其人拜訪到廳前；
又話共同姚表弟，
父親留飲後花園。
想必請他題景色，
因此差鬟問我取花箋。
今日見佢詩一首，
梁生名姓寫旁邊。
詩中句句關情我，
和我當時咏柳篇，
話我深閨不管離人苦，
我想梁生情緒日成顛，
用盡幾多奸狡計，
方纔得到我墙邊。”

碧月行前稱小姐：
“莫非同佢係前緣？
粉墻一對題佳句，
才子佳人好並肩。”

瑤仙小姐低聲罵：
“誰來共你講長篇？
深閨不惹游仙客，
有誰能見月中仙？
自古流傳多少斜風月，
敗壞綱常播萬年。
你我共為閨閣女，
切莫留心想嘅邊。
莫被浮雲掩住當空月，
好留清影照山川。”

移步共鬟歸去罷，
隔墻有耳古人傳。
Chapter 15. 楊爺回拜

謾言淑女歸香閣，
梁生曉起在窗前，
細想楊君必定來回拜，
就叫家童開玳筵，
差人去請姚公子，
園林打掃甚光鮮。
日午果然佳客到，
二生迎接入廳前，
茶罷相邀歸後苑，
晚香亭上擺瓊筵，
講論一場情愈密，
相公微笑對生言：
“賢侄婚姻曾定否？
何時金屋貯嬋娟？”
生乃答言：“猶未聘，
祇為功名日掛牽。”
楊君已有招婚意，
此時心愛就開言。
轉聲又答梁公子：
“隔墻貼實我花園，
既係通家如子姪，
何妨後苑兩相連，
開個橫門通小徑，
或者闊游過我園。
無事大家同鎖閂，
亦見人間小洞天。”
梁生喜在心頭上，
又怕明朝有乜變遷。
趁我南廳修未起，
速叫工人入後園，
横門通入楊爺府，
從此春風能到碧桃邊。