

Passion, Romance, and *Qing*

The World of Emotions and States of Mind in
Peony Pavilion

By

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Preface

Tang Xianzu explored the place of emotions in human experience in many of his writings. This is especially the case in his *Peony Pavilion* (*Mudan ting*) where we find a protracted meditation on love (*qing*). In our project, we attempt to adopt a multidisciplinary approach in analysing Tang's *Peony Pavilion* through a systematic and detailed textual research based on 'emotion words' in the play. The research builds on the pioneering theoretical framework established by Santangelo (2003). Our collaboration has resulted in a database of 5,451 entries of 'emotion words' in *Peony Pavilion*, which is published as an extensive "Glossary" in this book. Further enquiries regarding the full electronic database (in simplified characters) with all entries can be made to the editors.

The aim of the authors is to use *Peony Pavilion* as a case study to offer some material and broader reflections on the evolution and permanence of 'emotions' in Chinese culture focusing on but not restricted to this specific theatrical work. This volume intends to offer a contribution for scholars and readers who are interested in the legacy and vitality of this famous Ming dynasty drama by Tang Xianzu. *Peony Pavilion* reflects the new trends in the 'cult of passions' developed at the end of the Ming dynasty. Its language is an attempt to express the new sensibility of the times, to improve the sentimental education, and to reflect the changing values of the society. However, as this drama inherits the legacy of previous literary compositions, it is also in itself an influential foundation for the rich corpus of later literature that appeared after it. Thus we intend to complement the already existing translations and the important studies done in the past on *Mudan ting* with four contributions that accompany the Glossary: The opening chapter by Isabella Falaschi provides a comprehensive introduction to the play, including discussions on the *chuanqi* form, the *kunqu* theatrical style, its author Tang Xianzu, and the major theme of love, death, and resurrection. Paolo Santangelo's chapter presents the criteria and methods of the textual analysis which inspired the Glossary, and comments on the occurrence of some terms and the emotional lexicon of this drama. Tian Yuan Tan's study focuses on the words and language of romance and explores how such words and allusions of love in *Mudan ting* function as windows into broader literary worlds of Chinese amatory writings invoked in the play. We conclude with Rossella Ferrari's chapter which takes the performance and relevance of this dramatic masterpiece into the contemporary era.

The centre and main body of the book is the Glossary of the specific terms and expressions related to the representation of emotions and states of mind, and collective imagery of the masterpiece of Chinese drama. In the preparation

of the Glossary, we use the modern critical edition annotated by Xu Shuofang and Yang Xiaomei (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1963 full-form character edition, reprinted 1982) as our base text and also consulted Shao Haiqing's critical edition (Taipei: Sanmin shuju, 2009 revised edition). Unlike earlier volumes in this "Emotions and States of Mind in East Asia" book series, which offer a complete translation of a significant text or an essay on a specific topic related to mentality and imagery, we do not provide a full English translation of the entire text of *Mudan ting* since we are already blessed with some excellent published translations of this drama. We consulted the following translations, making amendments where necessary not to improve the literary quality of the translation, but to make the meanings of the lines more literal to fit the specific purpose of the current volume:

1. Cyril Birch's complete translation (1980),
2. Zhang Guangqian's complete translation (2001),
3. Stephen Owen's partial translation (Chapter 7, 9, 10, 26, 28) in *Anthology of Chinese Literature* (1996).

The work of analysis focuses on terms and expressions concerning the representation of emotions, states of mind, sensorial feelings, the inner world, taboo words and swear words. This approach takes advantage of the anthropological studies already done, and on the researches on the *Peony Pavilion*. It is a new attempt at understanding the 'world of mind and body' in Tang Xianzu's creation. Basic criteria and methods will be shortly presented in Santangelo's article.

For a dramatic text like *Peony Pavilion*, the use of emotion words in stage directions is sometimes denoted by X介 (e.g. 惱介), and at other times, represented by 作+X介 (e.g. 作惱介). To our knowledge, the difference, if any, between such terms has hitherto not been studied carefully. We do not yet have the answer as to whether the playwright Tang Xianzu consciously differentiated between his usage of X介 and 作X介. In order to do so, one must first study comprehensively the usages of such terms in other plays of similar periods. Nonetheless, by highlighting all the 作/做+X as separate entries, we hope our glossary may contribute towards the awareness of such expressions and the possible implication on the different states of mind implied. This example can also illustrate the aim and nature of our volume. We are certain that we are not solving all the issues here, but it is our aim and hope that this volume can raise questions and researchers will find some use in it for their respective research purposes.

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The editors presented their preliminary research findings at an international conference on “Reconstruction of the Representation of Emotions, States of Mind and Imagery in Imperial China” (Villa Vigoni Third International Meeting, 25-28th May 2011, Lovenò di Menaggio) which was attended by a group of scholars working on East Asian history, psychology, medicine, and literature. We are grateful to all the participants for their feedback and responses which contributed immensely to our revision of the database. It also helped to affirm our belief that this book can be of some interest and use to scholars in other fields of East Asian studies and can contribute towards possibilities of future comparative studies.

We thank Alastair Ewan Macdonald, a PhD candidate at SOAS, whose careful work and research assistance helped us immensely in the final stages of checking and revising the Glossary. We would also like to thank Zuni Icosahedron for allowing the copyright of the use of images and videos of their production for Rossella’s paper, which will also be exhibited on the Publisher’s webpage dedicated to the *Peony Pavilion*.

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