

Passion, Romance, and *Qing*

The World of Emotions and States of Mind in
Peony Pavilion

By

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BRILL

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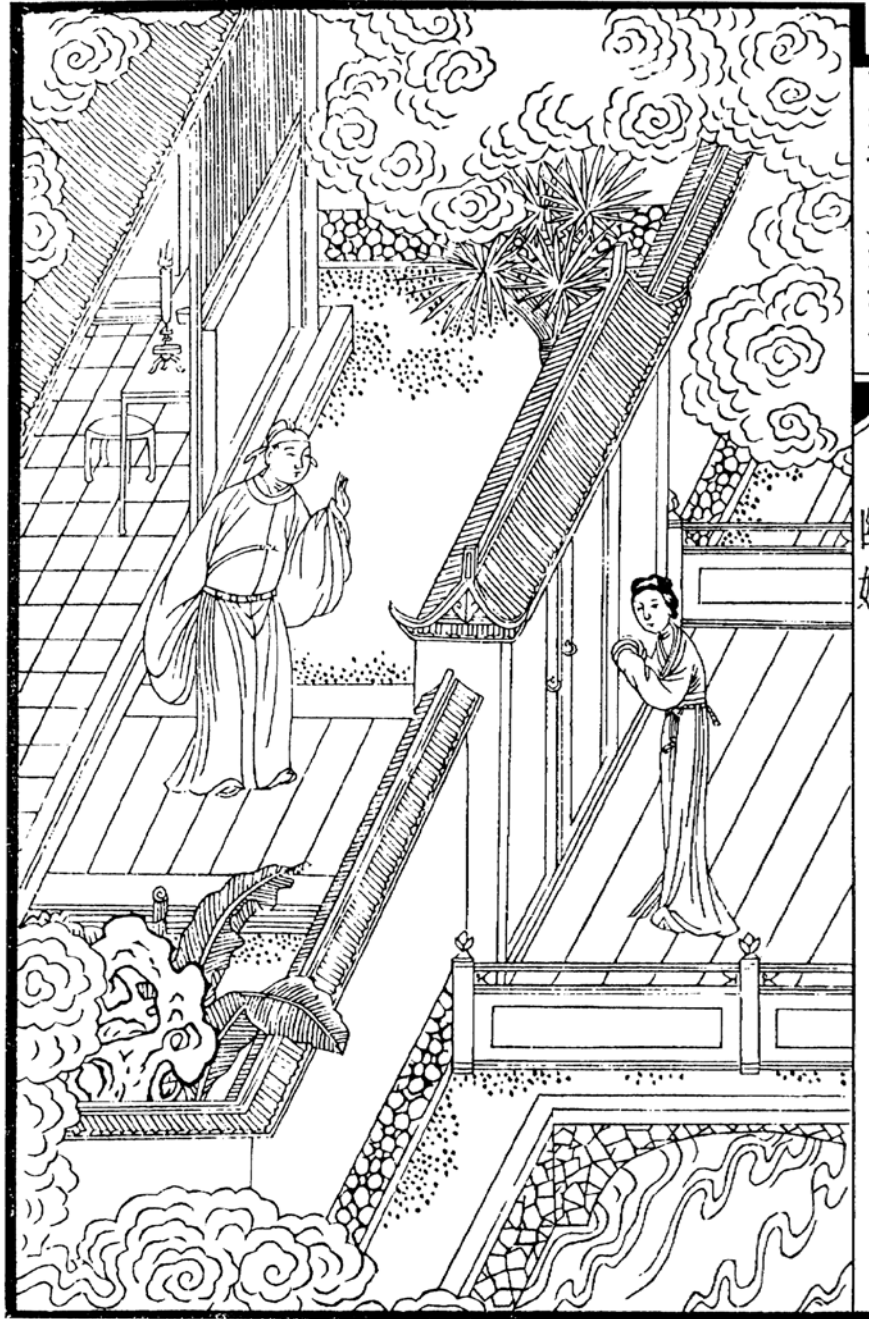


FIGURE 4.1 Illustration for Scene 28 "Secret Union" (Yougou 幽媾) of *Mudan ting*

Shared Words and Worlds of Love in *Peony Pavilion*

Tian Yuan Tan

Shared Discourse of Love

(Liu): May I venture to ask, young lady, where you are from and what brings you here so deep in the night?

(Liniang): Young scholar, you must make a guess.

[To the tune of *Hongna'ao*]

(Liu):

Is it because that reckless Zhang Qian has intruded your River of Stars in his raft?

Or, are you the little Liang Qing who escaped from Heaven's punishment at this night?

(Liniang): These are immortals in heaven. How can they arrive here?

(Liu):

Maybe you are a beautiful phoenix that secretly follows the crow?

(Liniang shakes her head)

(Liu):

Perhaps in some former time and place I once tie my horse to the green poplar for your sake?

(Liniang): We've never met.

(Liu):

If it was not because you have mistaken me for Tao Qian in your blurry vision,
then perhaps you have lost your way eloping down the Linqiong Road?

(生)小娘子到來，敢問尊前何處，因何夤夜至此？

(旦)秀才，你猜來。

【紅衲襖】(生)莫不是莽張騫犯了你星漢槎，莫不是小梁清夜走天曹罰？

(旦)這都是天上仙人，怎得到此。

(生)是人家彩鳳暗隨鴉？

(旦搖頭介)

(生)敢甚處裏綠楊曾繫馬？

(旦)不曾一面。

(生)若不是認陶潛眼挫的花，敢則是走臨邛道數兒差？¹

(*MDT*, Scene 28 “Secret Union” *Yougou* 幽媾)

“Would the late Ming readers and audiences have found the lines in *Mudan ting* more comprehensible than us?” One student in my *Mudan ting* (*Peony Pavilion*, hereafter *MDT*) class asked as she and other classmates constantly manoeuvred back and forth between the main text and the extensive annotations in the modern critical edition. They were intrigued by the language used in the play: Could late Ming readers have recognized this allusion or understood that joke more readily than modern readers? Would they have needed the annotations upon which we now rely?

Many would agree that *Mudan ting* is not the easiest play to read. Replete with allusions and topoi and best known for its depiction of *qing* 情 (emotion, passion), *MDT* can be seen as a discursive site of cultural symbols of romance. Shortly after it was written, the play was already widely regarded as a text about *qing* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Tang Xianzu was well known for upholding the power of love which led to an upsurge in the emphasis on *qing* in Ming and Qing dramatic criticism.² Together with *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (*The Story of the Western Wing*), *MDT* has been regarded as a major text of love and emotion for readers in late imperial China, as Baoyu and Daiyu have testified in Chapter 23 of *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (*Dream of the Red Chamber*). It was also especially popular and influential among female readers and audiences.³

The passage cited above from Scene 28 “*Yougou* 幽媾” (*Secret Union*) of *MDT* presents an interesting case to consider some of the questions raised. Scene 28 presents a significant moment in the play. Structurally, it marks the mid-point of the play and the climax of the ‘union’ of the two protagonists. This is also the scene that stages the first formal meeting between Du Liniang (albeit as a ghost) and Liu Mengmei, given that their previous encounters only took place in their respective dreams in Scene 2 and Scene 10.⁴

Meeting Liniang for the first time and not knowing that she was a ghost (this was only revealed later in Scene 32), Liu Mengmei comes up with various

1 *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (1982 full-form character edition, hereafter *MDT*), 28:141. Translation adapted, with modifications, from Birch 1980, pp. 161–162 and Owen 1996, pp. 902–903.

2 See Zhou Yude 2008, p. 167.

3 See Ko 1994, Chapter 2 “The Enchantment of Love in The Peony Pavilion” and Xie 2008. See also the discussion by Isabella Falaschi in the present book, vol.1, esp. p. 24.

4 As Tina Lu argues, the play never ties the two dreams together and thus we do not know the temporal sequence of these two dreams. See Lu 2001, pp. 69–70.

conjectures about her identity. This initial meeting of the two lovers in Scene 28 therefore presents a very useful case for us to start exploring the discourse between the destined lovers and the words and worlds of love employed in *MDT*. In his quest to identify his midnight visitor, Liu Mengmei's guessing game engages a form of language heavily encoded with Chinese allegories of love. For instance, why, or in what contexts, did Liu Mengmei mention Zhang Qian or Tao Qian? What is the significance of the place named Linqiong in this context?

The readiness by which these terms and words were used would suggest that the playwright expected his reader and audience to be familiar with them and to possess the knowledge of these "shared words" of love. Commentated editions of *MDT* during the Ming and Qing dynasties rarely explain the use of such allusions and expressions, further affirming that this was shared knowledge and language. The 'distance' a modern reader may find between himself and *MDT* appears to have been non-existent to its contemporary readers in late imperial China. These expressions in *MDT*, once commonplace in the late Ming, have now become a kind of 'coded' language for modern readers to decipher through footnotes and annotations.

How essential is this shared knowledge to our understanding and appreciation of the play? What happens if one does not share that knowledge and language? It is not just about understanding specific lines or words in *MDT*. More importantly, it is about appreciating the 'shared language of romance' and the topoi of love as used in *MDT* and also in other Chinese romance plays, and more broadly, the worlds of love in Chinese literature which they invoke or make references to.

In their translation of *Xixiangji*, Stephen H. West and Wilt L. Idema prepare a list of symbols of love to "help the reader understand some of the images and symbols at work in the allegory of love."⁵ Commenting on a later romance drama *Jiaohongji* 嬌紅記 (Mistress and maid), Cyril Birch points out that the play "exploits the usual allusions to classical model lovers and other poetic tropes to a degree that risks trying the reader's patience"⁶ and that this is indeed a convention in the *chuanqi* genre to which both *MDT* and *Jiaohongji* both belong. Birch's translation of the play is therefore prefaced by a list of "Signposts of Romance" with the aim of helping his non-native readers to grasp these common allusions.

Such aids are necessary not just for foreign readers who read these plays in English translation, but also to native readers in contemporary China as well.

5 West and Idema 1995, esp. pp. 96–97.

6 Birch 2001, p. xvii.

The need for extensive notes in a good modern critical edition of *MDT*, such as the widely used edition prepared by Xu Shuofang 徐朔方 and Yang Xiaomei 楊笑梅⁷, well testifies the ‘distance’ that stands between a modern Chinese reader and the text, and that between a modern reader and a late Ming reader.

Through a study of the language and discourse of love in *MDT*, I would like to explore these larger shared words and worlds of romance and the cultural resonance among various works. This kind of language of love was already noted in the Ming dynasty commentary on *MDT* which notes that “one can find such words and utterances of love as soon as one opens the book” 開卷便見情語.⁸ How may we account for these shared words of love and romance in *MDT*? What worlds of love do these specific referents point us towards? To aid readers in understanding these culturally coded language and words of love, modern editions often aim at explaining the allusion by providing the earliest source of the allusion. Yet, is identifying the earliest occurrence necessarily an adequate reading for a vernacular dramatic text like *MDT*? In this chapter, I will first look at three cases of allusions which work on different levels. Next, I will attempt to move from specific words to a more amplified level of type-scenes to explore the broader worlds of love with which *MDT* is engaged.

Interpreting Words of Love: Three Cases

The use of allusions, topoi, and words of love is ubiquitous in *MDT*. Some are direct allusions drawn directly from earlier models of love in Chinese literature. Others, however, represent interesting use and misuse of earlier literary models, some of which became widely accepted in later literary works. Some allusions seem only understandable when read alongside texts belonging to the same genre or literary style.

Case A: Direct Allusions to the Goddess of Wu Mountain

One of the most direct and frequently used allusions in the play is that of the Goddess of Wu Mountain (*Wushan* 巫山, or Shaman Mount). There are multiple references to the romance encounter between a Chu King and the goddess of Wu Mountain as told in the introductory section of Song Yu’s 宋玉

7 The edition by Xu and Yang is widely used in the Chinese classroom and printed multiple times. A recent reprint was marketed as a “must read for undergraduates” 大學生必讀 following the list of 100 books to be read by Chinese Studies undergraduates assigned by the Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Education in PRC in 2000. See *Mudan ting* (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 2002).

8 See commentary in *MDT*, *Guben xiju congkang* 古本戲曲叢刊 edition, Scene 3, p. 4b. On the complex meanings and conceptual history of *qing* 情 in pre-modern China, see Eifring 2004.

(ca. 290 BCE – ca. 223 BCE) “Gaotang fu” 高唐賦 (Rhapsody on the Gaotang Shrine):

Once King Xiang of Chu and Song Yu were strolling about the terrace of Yunmeng, and they sighted the Gaotang shrine. Above it there was only a cloudy vapor:

Abruptly it rose straight up,
Then suddenly changed appearance.
In the space of a brief moment,
It made countless changes and transformations.
The king asked Song Yu, “What manner of vapor is this?”
Song Yu replied, “It is what is called Dawn Cloud.”
The king said, “What is meant by Dawn Cloud?”

Song Yu replied, “Once when a former king was visiting Gaotang, he became tired and took a daytime nap. He dreamed that he saw a woman who said to him, ‘I am the maiden of Shaman Mount, and I am a guest at Gaotang. Having heard that my lord is visiting this place, I wish to offer him pillow and mat.’ The king then favored her with his bed. When she left, she bade farewell saying:

‘I live on the sunny side of Shaman Mount,
Among the defiles of a lofty hill.
Mornings I am Dawn Cloud,
Evenings I am Pouring Rain.
Dawn after dawn, dusk after dusk,
Below the Sun Terrace.’

“The next morning the king looked there, and it was just as she had said. Thus, he established a temple in her honour, which he named Dawn Cloud.”

昔者楚襄王與宋玉游於雲夢之臺，望高唐之觀，其上獨有雲氣，崒兮直上，忽兮改容，須臾之間，變化無窮。王問玉曰：“此何氣也？”玉對曰：“所謂朝雲者也。”王曰：“何謂朝雲？”玉曰：“昔者先王嘗游高唐，怠而晝寢，夢見一婦人曰：‘妾，巫山之女也。為高唐之客。聞君游高唐，願薦枕席。’王因幸之。去而辭曰：‘妾在巫山之陽，高丘之阻，旦為朝雲，暮為行雨。’

朝朝暮暮，陽臺之下。’旦朝視之，如言。故爲立廟，號曰‘朝雲’。”⁹

Let us begin with a catalogue of the various terms used in *MDT* associated with this allusion:

Terms	Number of Occurrence	Scene(s) in which the term appears
Gāotáng 高唐 (Gaotang Shrine)	5 ¹⁰	<i>MDT</i> 1, 14, 28, 35, 36
Wūshān 巫山 (Wu Mountain)	1	<i>MDT</i> 10
Wūshānmào 巫山廟 (Temple of Wu Mountain)	1	<i>MDT</i> 14
Wūxiá 巫峽 (Wu Gorge)	2	<i>MDT</i> 17, 28
Wūyánghuì 巫陽會 (The meeting in the south of the Wu Mountain)	1	<i>MDT</i> 18;
Yángtái 陽臺 (Yang Terrace)	3	<i>MDT</i> 12, 17, 36
Chǔtái 楚臺 (The Terrace of the Prince of Chu)	1	<i>MDT</i> 23
Chǔyángtái 楚陽臺 (Yang Terrace of the King of Chu)	1	<i>MDT</i> 33
Yún 雲 (Cloud)	1	<i>MDT</i> 32
Yǔ 雨 (Rain)	1	<i>MDT</i> 35
Yúnyǔ 雲雨 (Cloud and rain)	2	<i>MDT</i> 10, 35
Yúyún 雨雲 (Rain and Cloud)	2	<i>MDT</i> 30, 36
Yúnyǔ zhīhuān 雲雨之歡 (Joy of cloud and rain)	1	<i>MDT</i> 10
Wéiyǔ wéiyún 為雨為雲 (As rain and as cloud)	1	<i>MDT</i> 14
Xiéyún wòyǔ 攜雲握雨 ¹¹ (To carry cloud and hold rain)	1	<i>MDT</i> 18
Yúnténg zhìyǔ 雲騰致雨 ¹² (To deploy clouds to make rain)	1	<i>MDT</i> 17
Yǔjì yúnzōng 雨跡雲蹤 (Trace of Rain and Cloud)	1	<i>MDT</i> 12
Yǔxiāng yúnpiàn 雨香雲片 (Fragrance of the rain and a puff of cloud)	1	<i>MDT</i> 10
Total Occurrences:	27	

9 *Wenxuan* 文選, 19: 264–265. Translation by Knechtges 1996, pp. 325–327.

10 For this and other terms, see the “Glossary of Terms related to Emotions and States of Mind” in the present book for fuller explanations and the contexts in which they appear in *MDT*.

11 Cf. the use of the expressions 攜雲握雨 and 握雨攜雲 in *Xixiangji*, Vol. III, Act 4, p. 129, and Vol. IV, Act 2, p. 142 respectively.

12 The expression *Yúnténg zhìyǔ* 雲騰致雨 is originally from the *Qianziwen* 千字文 but employed as an erotic euphemism in *MDT*.

The main terms are the Gaotang shrine (*gaotang*), Wu Mountian (*wushan*), Yang terrace (*yangtai*), and cloud and rain (*yunyu*). Very often, *MDT* refers to these terms directly. For instance, the term *Gāotáng* 高唐 was cited most frequently for a total of 5 occurrences, including the following one from Scene 28:

I fear when powder becomes cold, scent vanishes and tears start by the
crimson gauze pane,
This meeting could turn out to be another empty dream of enjoying
moonlight splendour in Gaotang Shrine.

怕的是粉冷香銷泣絳紗，
又到的高唐館玩月華。¹³

Others are variants and expansions based on these main terms, most clearly in the cases of *Yúnyǔ* 雲雨 and *Yúyún* 雨雲, which take the form of expanded expressions such as *Wéiyǔ wéiyún* 為雨為雲 and *Xiéyún wòyǔ* 攜雲握雨.

At times, allusions are also spoken through the voice of literary precedents. For example, at the end of Scene 32, the line “Waking from dream, where now the clouds that wrapped my love?” 夢來何處更爲雲 is a direct quotation from a poem by the Tang poet Li Shangyin 李商隱 (813–858) that alludes to the same romance encounter.¹⁴

In total there are no fewer than 27 occurrences of terms related to this allusion in *MDT*. There is no doubt that the allusion of the *Rhapsody of Gaotang* is equally prevalent in many other Chinese romantic plays and has become the archetypal trope in such plays.¹⁵ It is noteworthy that in the Chinese discourse of love, a young man’s first meeting with his lover is frequently compared to that of an encounter with a goddess figure, or what Wai-ye Li has described as an “ambiguous divine woman” in early Chinese literature.¹⁶ The association of Liniang with a goddess is one that is played upon so significantly in the discourse of courtship and exchange of words between the lovers in *MDT*.

Another example of a direct allusion is that of Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君. When Liu Mengmei refers to Du Liniang as possibly a girl who “lost your way eloping

¹³ *MDT* 1982, p. 140.

¹⁴ See “Culou” 促漏, in *Li Shangyin shige jijie* 李商隱詩歌集解, p. 1832. The use of a pastiche of lines from Tang poems as exit verse is a common feature in *MDT*.

¹⁵ For example, in *Xixiang ji*, see West and Idema 1995, p. 96, and also listed in Birch’s “Signposts of Romance” for *Jiaohong ji*.

¹⁶ See Li 1993, Chapter 1. For other discussions on the theme of the goddess figure in pre-modern Chinese literature, see also Hawkes 1967; Schafer 1973; Rouzer 2001, Chapter 2. See also Paolo Santangelo’s discussion on the celestial attribute to the beauty in the present book, vol.1, p.80.

down the Linqiong Road” in the cited passage from Scene 28, he alludes to the well-known love story and elopement of the Han dynasty poet Sima Xiangru (179–117 BCE) and the young widow Zhuo Wenjun from Linqiong (present-day Qionglai, Sichuan).¹⁷ Such a comparison highlights Du Liniang’s active pursuit of love, just like Zhuo who chose to elope with the man she loved.

Case B: Conflated Allusions and Mistaken Identity of Tao Qian

Not all the allusions are as clear cut and direct to every reader as the Gaotang shrine or that of the story of Zhuo Wenjun. We would remember the following closing lines of the opening passage:

(Liu): If it was not because you have mistaken me for Tao Qian in your blurry vision, then perhaps you have lost your way eloping down the Linqiong Road?

What did Liu Mengmei mean when he said that Liniang might have mistaken him for Tao Qian? Why did Tao Qian appear in the middle of the lovers’ discourse?

Tao Qian 陶潛 (365?–427, also known as Tao Yuanming 陶淵明), the best-known pre-Tang poet especially renowned for his poetry on fields and gardens (*tianyuan shi* 田園詩), is often regarded as the icon and model of a writer in reclusion.¹⁸ This is the image of Tao Qian that one would most often come across in later Chinese literature such as Yuan *sanqu* songs and drama.¹⁹ For example, Zhang Kejiu’s 張可久 (ca.1280–1354) song advises one: “If you fear incurring the disgust of others, quit your official post emulating Tao Qian” 怕人嫌，休官歸去效陶潛.²⁰ Similarly, in Act 3 of the play *Ma Danyang sandu Ren fengzi* 馬丹陽三度任風子 (Ma Danyang Thrice Converts Crazy Ren), the protagonist Ren Tu 任屠 explicitly claims that he is following Tao Qian’s model of “returning” to the way of the Dao (我待學陶淵明歸去來兮).²¹ The expression “Returning” 歸去來兮, originally the title of a famous piece by Tao, is referred to frequently, sometimes quoted verbatim, in Yuan *sanqu* suggesting a

17 For a discussion of literary representations of this love tale in Chinese vernacular literature, see Idema 1984.

18 For a recent study on the posthumous reputation and reception of Tao in later ages, see Swartz 2008.

19 For an overview of the image of Tao Qian in Yuan dynasty *sanqu* songs, see Huang Hui 2006.

20 Zhang Kejiu, “Guishan” 歸山, in *Quan Yuan sanqu* 全元散曲, p. 882.

21 *Ma Danyang sandu Ren fengzi*, in *Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu* 元曲選校註, p. 4233.

strong withdrawal convention.²² Interestingly, Zhang Kejiu even adapted Tao's masterpiece into a suite of songs²³, clearly showing how Yuan writers actively engaged with not just Tao's works, but also his image as a recluse poet.

Tao Qian's association with drinking was also widely celebrated in Chinese literature, no doubt linked with his set of poems of "Drinking Wine" and also because of the strong link between drinking and reclusion. One Tang poem poses the question: "Let's ask Tao Yuanming, what is it that is named 'forget one's sorrow'" 借問陶淵明，何物號忘憂。²⁴ The Yuan poet Zhang Kejiu also describes Tao Qian as a "joyous drunken guest" 樂陶陶醉客陶潛。²⁵

However, these direct allusions to Tao Qian discussed above do not explain his presence in the cited *MDT* scene, which neither refers to Tao as a recluse or a drunken poet. Why did Liu Mengmei suspect that Du Liniang might have mistaken him for Tao Qian? Who or what does Tao Qian represent in this case?

To better understand this, we need to look at another group of texts associated with some form of mistaken identity of Tao Qian. In at least two other Chinese plays, we can find the expressions "mistaken Tao Qian" (錯認陶潛) or "mistaken [Tao] Yuanming" (錯認淵明).²⁶ We may speculate that this was a fairly common usage since it seems adequate to simply say "mistaken Tao Qian" in these texts without the need to identify for whom he was mistaken.

In another play *Jingchai ji* 荊釵記 (The Thorn Hairpin), however, we find a fuller expression, "mistaken Tao Qian for Lover Ruan" 錯認陶潛作阮郎, which explains that the person who had been mistaken for is Ruan Zhao 阮肇.²⁷ It was said that Ruan Zhao and his companion Liu Cheng once encountered two goddesses when they were collecting herbs in the Tiantai Mountains.²⁸ The same expression is also found earlier in a *ci* lyric by Zhang Xiaoxiang 張孝祥 (1132–1170) and later as part of a verse in the third story of the vernacular fiction collection *Zuixing shi* 醉醒石 (The Sobering Stone).²⁹

How did Tao Qian get mixed up with Ruan Zhao and become associated with romance? The answer may be found in the equally puzzling reference to the Peach Blossom Spring in *MDT*. A reader of Chinese literature will quite

22 See Crump 1983, p. 43, and Crump 1993, pp. 94–96.

23 Zhang Kejiu, "Fan Guiqu laixi" 翻歸去來兮, *Quan Yuan sanqu*, pp. 988–989.

24 Li Qunyu 李羣玉, "Yuye cheng zhangguan" 雨夜呈長官, in *Quan Tang shi (zengding ben)* 全唐詩 (增訂本), 568:6628.

25 See his song suite titled "Qiu jing" 秋景, *Quan Yuan sanqu*, p. 993.

26 For example, see *Yougui ji* 幽閨記 attributed to Shi Hui 施惠, 37:106, and *Tuanhua feng* 團花鳳 by the Ming dramatist Ye Xianzu 葉憲祖, 1:5.

27 *Jingchai ji*, 46:132.

28 The tale is recorded in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, 61:383, "Tiantai ernü" 天台二女.

29 *Quan Song ci* 全宋詞, p. 1717, and *Zuixingshi*, p. 20.

naturally associate Peach Blossom Spring to Tao Qian's famous prose titled "Taohuayuan ji" 桃花源記 (A Record of Peach Blossom Spring) and the utopian world constructed therein. Compare that image of the Peach Blossom Spring to the one depicted in *MDT* in the following instances:

(Liniang puts on a face of annoyance):

Bah! I came here merely by chance,
but you suggest I seek after leisure like a salted flirt.

(Chunxiang):

Well, you're not salted.
You're sweet.

(Liniang):

Don't take advantage of my temper sweet,
and turn every custodial Spring Terrace³⁰ into a delusive Peach Blossom Spring.

(旦作惱介) 咄，偶爾來前，道的咱偷閑學少年。(貼) 咳，不偷閑，偷淡。(旦) 欺奴善，把護春臺都猜做謊桃源。

(*MDT* 12:53–54)

[(Du Liniang):]

I fear that when powder becomes cold, scent vanishes and tears start
by the crimson gauze pane,
this meeting could turn out to be another empty dream of enjoying
moonlit splendour in Gaotang Shrine.
Head swiftly turned in shame, hair fallen awry,
hands clutch at temples.
Ah, there is his room ahead.
I am afraid that I might mistake the path to the Peach Blossom Spring.
Let me linger to make sure that it is he.

怕的是粉冷香銷泣絳紗，又到的高唐館玩月華。猛回頭羞颯髻兒鬢，自擎拿。呀，前面是他房頭了。怕桃源路徑行來詫，再得俄旋試認他。

(*MDT* 28:140–141)

Clearly, the "Peach Blossom Spring" (*Taoyuan* 桃源) that Du Liniang refers to is not the utopian world of Tao Qian, but rather, a site of rendezvous for

30 A reference to the garden.

lovers.³¹ The same applies also to the term Wuling 武陵, which was usually used as an alternative term associated with the utopian world of the Peach Blossom Spring since it was discovered by a fisherman from Wuling in Tao Yuanming's story.³² In all of the four occurrences of this term in *MDT*, the Wuling stream invariably suggests a place where one's immortal lover can be found, alluding more strongly to the path on which Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao met their fairy maids:

What made the fairy retrace her steps to the Wuling Spring?
It must be those flying petals flecking ripples before my eyes.
The Lord of Heaven needs pay the florist nothing,
but what grief for the human hearts weeping for these fallen blossoms.
Alas! What a waste of the wonderful springtime.

爲甚呵，玉真重溯武陵源？也則爲水點花飛在眼前。是天公不
費買花錢，則咱人心上有啼紅怨。咳，辜負了春三二月天。

(*MDT* 12:53)

(Liniang): Where to seek my lover who at Wuling found fairy love? [Monk
Jiaoran] (Chunxiang): The blame lies on the affections of a wanderer
so soon out of mind. [Wei Zhuang]
(Liniang): From now on I will always wander in my spring dream (love
longing), [Bai Juyi] (Chunxiang): Regrets are forever tied to the heart.
[Zhang Hu].³³

(旦) 武陵何處訪仙郎？ 釋皎然 (貼) 只怪游人思易忘。 韋莊
(旦) 從此時時春夢裏， 白居易 (貼) 一生遺恨繫心腸。 張
祜。

(*MDT* 12:56)

Behind a bolted gate,
stands the fairy land of this Wuling Spring.
Such a beautiful place, in such disarray!

門兒鎖，放著這武陵源一座。恁好處教頹墮！

(*MDT* 24:125)

31 See entry for *Táoyuán* in Glossary.

32 See Glossary.

33 This is another pastiche of lines from Tang poems at the end of a scene.

When the evening breeze blows down,
among a wisp of rosy cloud beside the stream of Wuling,
emerges a girl who is so charming.

晚風吹下，武陵溪邊一縷霞，出落箇人兒風韻殺。

(*MDT* 28:139)

Hence, we may say that there are two allusions about two peach blossom springs, one associated with Tao Qian's "Record of the Peach Blossom Spring" and another linked to the story of Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao. As early as in the Tang dynasty, we can find that these two allusions were already conflated in Wang Zhihuan's 王之渙 (688–742) poem:

Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao come back again but they lost the path,
Peach Blossoms wither over the Wuling stream.

晨肇重來路已迷，碧桃花謝武陵溪。³⁴

This allusion is apparently very popular in song lyrics and there is a tune pattern "Ruanlang gui" 阮郎歸 (Lover Ruan returns) named after the story.³⁵ The tune pattern also has alternative titles such as "Zui taoyuan" 醉桃源 (Drunken at the Peach Blossom Spring) and "Yan taoyuan" 宴桃源 (Feast at the Peach Blossom Spring) which again reminds one how the Peach Blossom Spring was strongly linked with the Ruan Zhao story.

Just like the Peach Blossom Spring which was increasingly associated with the site of romantic meeting between Ruan Zhao and the goddess, Tao Qian was removed far from his utopia and transformed into a figure of romance in cases of mistaken identity. Moreover, there is an interesting twist in the passiveness of the male protagonist in such encounter with a fairy lover. In *MDT*, agency lies almost entirely in the female character. It is no longer the two men Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao encountering the goddesses by chance, but the young girl Du Liniang actively looking for her "fairy love" (武陵何處訪仙郎). Such a reversal of gender roles in the literary topos of the quest of the goddess is also

34 Wang Zhihuan, "Chouchang shi" 惆悵詩, No. 10 of 12, *Quan Tang shi (zengding ben)*, 690:7990.

35 This may be related to the tune title "Ruanlang mi" 阮郎迷 (Lover Ruan Lost) listed among the songs performed at the court entertainment bureau in the Tang dynasty. See *Jiaofangji* 教坊記, p. 15.

evident in the line “What made the fairy retrace her steps to the Wuling Spring” 爲甚呵，玉真重溯武陵源。³⁶

Case C: The Complex Allusions to Zhang Qian and the Milky Way

When asked by Liniang to make a guess about her identity, Liu Mengmei mentioned two names, “Zhang Qian” and the “little Liang Qing,” both associated with the legend of the Weaving Girl (*zhinü* 織女).

“Little Liang Qing who escaped from Heaven’s punishment” probably refers to Liang Yuqing 梁玉清, the maid-in-waiting of Weaving Girl, who eloped with Taibai star (Venus) down to the human world.³⁷ This allusion appears to be less commonly used in Chinese drama. To my knowledge, the other play that used this allusion is the Qing dynasty drama *Changshengdian* 長生殿 (Palace of Eternal Life) which might have been inspired by *MDT*.³⁸

The case with Zhang Qian is more complex. “Zhang Qian travelling to the Milky Way on a raft” is a conflation of myths from two separate traditions. Zhang Qian (195–114 BCE) was a Han emissary and explorer well-known for his expeditions to the “Western regions.” He was believed to have once been ordered to search for the origin of the Yellow River.³⁹

The story of the raft to the Milky Way (*xinghan cha* 星漢槎), a key word of the allusion as used in *MDT*⁴⁰, however, appeared to have originated from a different source. According to *Bowu zhi* 博物志 (Treatise on a Broad Array of Things), there was once a man in the Han dynasty who travelled in a raft to the Milky Way and met Herd Boy and Weaving Girl.⁴¹ In Chinese folklore, the Herd Boy and the Weaving Girl represents the two stars, Altair and Vega, situated on opposite ends of the Milky Way and only allowed to meet once each year on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month. Consequently, these myths and anecdotes were later conflated in such a way that in his search for the origins of the Yellow River, Zhang Qian once sailed up the Milky Way on a raft to the star of

36 Cf. Li 2004, p. 254.

37 See the entry on “Liang Yuqing” in *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記, 59:364.

38 Cf. a similar line (早難道逐梁清又遭天曹譴) in *Changsheng dian* 1983, 46:205. Note, however, that the footnote provided in this modern edition misreads “zhu Liang Qing” 逐梁清 as a description of Consort Yang’s clear voices of singing that lingers on the beams (46:210n37), another telling sign that this allusion may not be well known.

39 In earlier historical sources, it was only recorded that a Han ambassador sought the source of the Yellow River and it took place after Zhang Qian passed away. See *Shiji*, 123: 3171, and *Hanshu*, 31: 2696. Later, however, it became Zhang Qian who received the orders to investigate the source of the Yellow River, see *Sanguo zhi*, 30:840.

40 There are two occurrences of this allusion in *MDT*. See *xinghan cha* 星漢槎 in Glossary.

41 *Bowuzhi jiaozheng*, 10:111.

Vega who is personified as the Weaving Girl in legends.⁴² The legend was also dramatised and adapted into several plays.⁴³

Most annotations would quote the above account cited from *Jing Chu suishi ji* 荆楚歲時記 (Record of the Seasonal Customs of the Jing-Chu Region) as the reference to the allusion of Zhang Qian, yet it seems that the question is only half answered. Whereas it was explained that Zhang Qian encountered the Weaving Girl, to whom Du Liniang was compared here, and how does this line fit into the context of the first meeting between the two lovers in *MDT*? What is the role of Zhang Qian and how did this Han emissary become associated with romance?

If we look at other Chinese dramatic texts which allude to Zhang Qian, we will see that in different contexts the reference to Zhang Qian could evoke various meanings. For example, Tang Xianzu's other play *Handan ji* 邯鄲記 (Record of Handan) gives a historical account of Zhang Qian pioneering the way to the Western Regions, citing the same expression “*Zhang Qian zaokong* 張騫鑿空” originally recorded in *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian).⁴⁴ In another Ming play, *Jinjian ji* 錦箋記 (The Embroidered Notepaper), the expression “Zhang Qian floats on a raft” 泛渚張騫 is used in conjunction with “Li Bai rides on a whale” 李白騎鯨 to describe the splendours of a lantern festival.⁴⁵ In these two examples, the reference to Zhang Qian has nothing to do with romantic encounters at all.

Ma Zhiyuan's 馬致遠 (ca.1250–ca.1321–23) *Qingshan lei* 青衫淚 (Tears on the Blue Gown) presents an interesting case. Act 4 of the play mentions a certain “reckless Zhang Qian” which appears to be quite similar to the image of the reckless Zhang intruding the River of Stars in the cited Scene 28 from *MDT*:

He is just like the reckless Zhang Qian who floated a raft to Heaven.
After all he has not arrived at the Yellow Spring.

他便似莽張騫天上泛浮槎，可原來不曾到黃泉下。⁴⁶

42 According to *Jing Chu suishi ji* 荆楚歲時記 as cited in *Guixin zashi*, “qianji” 前集, 29. Deng Shaoji speculates that the legend of Zhang riding on a raft to the Milky way appeared around the fifth or sixth century [between the Song (420–479) and Liang (502–557) of the southern dynasties]. See Deng 1995, p. 10.

43 For example, the Yuan dynasty playwright Wang Bocheng 王伯成 wrote a play titled *Zhang Qian fan fucha* 張騫泛浮槎 (Zhang Qian travels to the Milky Way on a raft) which is no longer extant. Two Qing dynasty plays, *Bowang fang xing* 博望訪星 and *Yinhan cha* 銀漢槎 also expanded on this topo.

44 See *Handan ji*, 14:766, and *Shiji*, 123:3169.

45 See *Jinjian ji*, 6:15.

46 *Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu*, p. 2303.

The annotations in *Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu* explains that this allusion to Zhang Qian floating in a raft highlights the long journey taken by Bai Juyi, the main protagonist of the play who was banished to Jiangzhou.⁴⁷ But one can sense that in the above allusion to Zhang Qian in *Qingshan lei*, there is perhaps more than just a description of the long and arduous journey made by Bai Juyi. In the above quotation, what does Pei Xingnu 裴興奴, a courtesan in love with Bai, imply when she describes Zhang Qian as being “reckless”? Bearing in mind that Pei was explaining to the emperor how she and Bai managed to be reunited once again, the emphasis here appears to be more on Pei’s surprise to find that her lover Bai Juyi suddenly appearing before her just like the reckless Zhang Qian, and therefore knowing that he was not dead. A female figure, one who is in pursuit of love, is introduced in this usage of the allusion which brings us closer to an understanding of how the Zhang Qian allusion can be used in the context of a love encounter.

This is more clearly so when we find the term *pan* 盼 (to long for) used in conjunction with the raft or Zhang Qian. We can find at least two such instances in Chinese drama. The first example is the beginning of Act 2 in *Qiannü lihun* 倩女離魂 (Qiannü’s soul leaves her body):

[To the tune of *Zihua'er xu*]

Think on the vexations of parting in Qiannü’s heart –
 Catching up to Student Wang’s orchid boat beyond the willows
 Is like searching for Zhang Qian’s raft floating beyond the heavens.
 Sweating, damp and drenched, rose quartz beads sparkle on my face;
 Tangled, tossed, and tousled, my cloudy locks pile up black on raven’s
 black.
 I’ve come so far my muscles are tired and worn out.

【紫花儿序】想倩女心间离恨，赶王生柳外蘭舟，似盼張騫天上浮槎⁴⁸。汗溶溶瓊珠瑩臉，亂鬆鬆雲髻堆鴉，走的我筋力疲乏。⁴⁹

47 *Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu*, p. 2308n32.

48 The term *fucha* 浮槎 (floating in a raft), a variant of *xinghan cha* 星漢槎, is not used in *MDT* but appears in *Xixiang ji* as a description of the Yellow River: “And it once floated a raft to the edge of the sun and moon”也曾泛浮槎到日月邊。See *Xixiang ji*, Vol. I, Act 1, p. 6. West and Idema propose that the use of this allusion in *Xixiang ji* lends a mythic dimension to the love story between Student Zhang and Yingying (Oriole) by comparing them to the Herdboy and Weaving Girl. See West and Idema 1995, p. 55.

49 *Mi qingsuo Qiannü lihun* 迷青瑣倩女離魂, Act 2, in *Maiwangguan chaojiaoben gujin zaju* 脈望館鈔校本古今雜劇, p. 9a. Translation cited from West and Idema 2010, pp. 212–213.

The *Quan Yuanqu diangu cidian* 全元曲典故辭典 (A Dictionary of Allusions in *Qu* Songs of the Entire Yuan Dynasty) explains that the reference to Zhang Qian here compares Qiannü's search for Scholar Wang to Zhang's journey which was just as difficult.⁵⁰ But if we turn our attention to the introduction of the verb *pan* in this case, it seems equally important to note how Qiannü longed for Zhang to arrive in his raft. In doing so, Qiannü appears to be comparing herself to the Weaving Girl.

This link is especially strong when we also take into account a similar use of the allusion in Act One of *Han gong qiu* 漢宮秋 (Autumn in the Han Palace) :

[To the tune of *Hunjiang long*]

I assume that their pearly curtains have not been furled –

They gaze toward the Zhaoyang Palace, at every single step the edge of heaven recedes.

Their expectations are aroused by every bamboo shadow that lacks a breeze,

And their resentments are provoked by windows' gauze that grows flush with the moonlight.

Whenever they see the emperor riding his jade carriage in the palace,

It is to them no different than the floating raft of Zhang Qian in the sky!

【混江龍】料必他珠簾不掛，望昭陽一步一天涯。疑了些無風竹影，恨了些有月窗紗。他每見宮裏君王乘玉輦，恰便似天上張騫泛浮槎。⁵¹

In the *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選 (Selected Yuan Plays) edition, however, the last two lines read as follows:

Whenever they see my jade carriage making its rounds amid the sounds of flutes and strings, it is to them no different from waiting by the Starry Shore for the floating raft.

他每見弦管聲中巡玉輦，恰便似斗牛星畔盼浮槎。⁵²

50 See Lü 2001, p. 407.

51 *Han gong qiu*, *Maiwangguan chaojiaoben gujin zaju* edition, 1:4a. Translation cited from West and Idema 2010, pp. 165–166, with minor amendments.

52 *Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu*, p. 175.

The emperor imagines that the palace ladies are awaiting (*pan* 盼) his arrival, just like someone in the Milky Way waiting by the shore for the arrival of the raft (by Zhang Qian) from the human world.

From the above examples, we can gather that the allusion to Zhang Qian as used in romantic encounters consists of two levels of meanings. First, it implies that the journey is long, infrequent, or unexpected. Second, there is a female figure longing for such a visit by her lover.

Turning our attention back to the use of this allusion in *MDT*, when Liu Mengmei asks Du Liniang, “Is it because that reckless Zhang Qian has intruded your River of Stars in his raft” 莫不是莽張騫犯了你星漢槎, he is therefore comparing himself to Zhang Qian and thereby turning Liniang into yet another goddess figure, the Weaving Maid. Although this line does not say that the Weaving Maid (Liniang) longs for (*pan*) the arrival of Zhang Qian (Liu Mengmei), the meaning is nonetheless implied and would be explicitly spelt out by Liniang later in the very same scene. When Liu Mengmei, once again assuming the persona of Zhang Qian, rejoices in his good fortune: “what day is today that has steered this raft to the Milky Way” 問今夕何年星漢槎, Liniang responds, “Now my hopes are truly fulfilled after all the waiting” 這等真箇盼著你了.⁵³

We see a full transformation of Zhang Qian from an explorer in search of the origin of the Yellow River, to one that not only met the Weaving Girl, but appeared to have developed some sort of romantic relationship with the latter. Such a reading is supported by a similar use of the allusion in Scene 20 of a later play *Jiaohongji*:

Shen:

(*Same tune*)

Flawless
 this lovely face commanding adoration:
 Surely Chang’o has left her moon palace
 to sit before this mirror here on earth!
 How can I, mere mortal of the muddy world
 match this choice bloom from fairyland?
 Like rash Zhang Qian of legend
 I’ll ride a star-raft up the river of Heaven
 we’ll steal across the magpie bridge together!
 How fine, this night’s clear brilliance
 “one moment’s price a thousand bars of gold.”

⁵³ *MDT*, 28: 142.

[生] 【前腔】無瑕，嬌臉兒教人愛煞，可便是月殿裡嫦娥，向人間並倚菱花。念小生濁世凡胎，怎配的上閨苑仙葩？星查，似莽張騫夜犯銀漢下，待和你鵲橋偷駕。覩今夜清暉可佳，兀的是一刻良宵千金高價。⁵⁴

References like these are abundant in *MDT* and one can continue to build on this list of words and allusions of love. At times, the play enters a mode of conscious cataloguing of earlier models of romance, for example, in the following scene:

(Flower Spirit): ... And considering all the beautiful women there have been, who ever heard of one that died for her admiration of flowers?

(Judge): You say no beauty ever died for her admiration of flowers? Let me list some for you.

[To the tune of *Jishengcao*]

Ladies whose youth was sacrificed to flowers,
ladies whose tragic fates the flowers decreed:
like that night-blooming lotus who, though they clutched her billowing fairy skirt, could not be stopped from soaring to the sky;
or like that sprig of crabapple bloom, whose brocade perfume sachet bore magic testimony to her griefs;
or yet again, the daphne that spelled the death of Parting Mist.
You ask which beauties died for love of flowers?
Flower Spirit, here is guilt that you must share.

(末).....且看多少女色，那有玩花而亡。

(淨)你說自來女色，沒有玩花而亡。數你聽著。

【寄生草】花把青春賣，花生錦繡災。有一箇夜舒蓮扯不住留仙帶；一箇海棠絲翦不斷香囊怪；一箇瑞香風趕不上非煙在。你道花容那箇玩花亡？可不道你這花神罪業隨花敗。

(*MDT* 23:114)

One could again trace to earlier sources the above-mentioned allusions about girls who died because of romance. But it is also true that many of the allusions in *MDT* are so commonly used elsewhere that it is difficult or indeed fruitless to ascertain which source or sources Tang Xianzu consciously referred to. In fact, the stories of some of the allusions discussed above were already adapted for the stage or captured in tune titles before Tang's times. For example, the

⁵⁴ *Jiaohong ji*, 20: 93. Translation from Birch 2001, p. 120.

story of Liu Chen and Ruan Zhao encountering two fairies was adapted by the late Yuan to early Ming playwright Wang Ziyi 王子一 as a *zaju* drama titled *Wuru Tiantai* 誤入天台 (Entering Tiantai Mountain by Mistake, alternatively titled *Wuru Taoyuan* 誤入桃源 Entering the Peach Blossom Spring by Mistake), and has inspired several other plays on the same subject matter in late Ming and Qing dynasties.⁵⁵ It is clear that these words and models of romance belong to a common storehouse of popular tropes in Chinese vernacular literature from which writers could easily adapt for their own use.

If the tracing of allusion to a single source text does not necessarily or adequately explain these shared words of love in *MDT*, how may we better account for the ‘literary connections’ between *MDT* and other texts?

Worlds of Love: *MDT* as Intertext

The shared nature and dialogism of the words of love in *MDT*, as we have discovered above, mean that a reader is less likely to approach *MDT* as an isolated work, but will instead read it against other works that share the same words and worlds of love. When we delve deeper into the use of the various words and allusions of love, we are often led and introduced to more texts of similar settings.

Let us take another example, that of the allusion of “tying one’s horse by the green poplar”, which means to dismount from one’s horse to meet his lover. In explaining this allusion, modern critical editions point us to earlier usages in a Yuan play titled *Liangshi yinyuan* 兩世姻緣 (Marriage in Two Lives) by Qiao Ji 喬吉 (1280–1345) and also a *ci* lyric by the Song poet Jiang Kui 姜夔 (ca.1155–1221).⁵⁶ Because this is another widely used allusion which appears in a plethora of poems, *ci* lyrics, and also drama, one cannot be certain whether Tang Xianzu was necessarily thinking of *Liangshi yinyuan* in his use of this allusion.

Instead of claiming the influence of one work on the other, it may be more informative if we do a horizontal reading of these two texts to see how such readings can enrich our interpretation not just of *MDT*, but also of *Liangshi*

55 The goddess of Wu Mountain is also the subject matter of many dramatic adaptations, most famous of which is Wang Daokun’s 汪道昆 *Gaotang meng* 高唐夢. In addition to the example of the tune pattern “Ruanlang gui” (Lover Ruan returns) as discussed above, we also have the allusion of “Yinhan fucha” 銀漢浮槎 (Floating Raft on the Milky Way) adopted as the title of a tune pattern (alternative name “Qiaomucha” 喬木查). See “Tiantai Tao Jiucheng lunqu” 天台陶九成論曲, in *Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu*, p. 27.

56 See, for example, *MDT*, 28: 144–145n30.

yinyuan. Scholars have previously noted the possible influence of *Liangshi yinyuan* on *MDT* based on thematic parallels between the two plays. On another level, we can see that the two plays are strongly linked to each other also in their shared use of a cluster of similar words of love such as references to “tying horse to the green poplar” and also the goddess of Wu Mountain, for example, in Act 3 of *Liangshi yinyuan*:

(Zhang Yuxiao sings:)

[To the tune of *Tiaoxiaoling*]

Where have I seen him in this life?

Could it not be that my eyes are blurry?

Tapping his teeth, I wonder if he is thinking about me.

(speaks:) How strange.

(sings:)

I can't help but my hearts are entangled.

Could he not be my dear predestined lover from previous life?

Where did he once tie his horse to the green poplar for my sake?

Could it not be that in our dreams, we once experienced cloud and rain in Wu Gorge?

【調笑令】這生我那裏也曾見他，莫不是我眼睛花？手抵著牙兒是記咱。(帶云:)好作怪也。(唱:)不由我心兒裏相牽掛，莫不是五百年歡喜冤家？何處綠楊曾繫馬，莫不是夢兒中雲雨巫峽。⁵⁷

There is at least one other important text that we should include in this horizontal reading of texts of similar scenes. If we look at the concluding aria in Act 2 of Volume I of *Xixiangji*:

(Scholar Zhang sings:)

[Coda]

Charming and shy, a flower that speaks;

Warm and supple, a jade that has fragrance.

We met by accident, and I can't remember fully her charming appearance;

I can only tap my teeth, and slowly, slowly imagine.

⁵⁷ *Liangshi yinyuan*, in *Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu*, p. 2495.

【尾】嬌羞花解語，溫柔玉有香，我和他乍相逢記不真嬌模樣，我只索手抵著牙兒慢慢的想。⁵⁸

The same expression, “tapping one’s teeth” 手抵著牙兒 (literally, finger tapping one’s teeth), is found in both *Xixiang ji* and *Liangshi yinyuan*. When read alongside each other, one could possibly read the line in *Liangshi yinyuan*, “Tapping his teeth, I wonder if he is thinking about me” 手抵著牙兒是記咱, as a response to Student Zhang’s line, “I can only tap my teeth, and slowly, slowly imagine” 我只索手抵著牙兒慢慢的想, in *Xixiang ji*.

In this context, how shall we understand Zhang Yuxiao’s line about her blurry vision in *Liangshi yinyuan*? One can think of at least two different readings. First, Yuxiao, having just met her destined lover, may be comparing her situation to that of Student Zhang in *Xixiang ji* who could not remember Yingying’s appearance well since they have only just met 我和他乍相逢記不真嬌模樣. But there is also a second possible reading. When read alongside similar lines in *MDT*, could it possibly refer to the allusion of “mistaking Tao Qian in one’s blurry vision” 認陶潛眼挫的花 as used in *MDT*? If so, it would mean that Zhang Yuxiao says she has mistaken Tao Qian as her lover, as she was uncertain about the identity of the man standing before her.

To borrow a modern critical concept, *MDT* may be seen as an intertext of love in Chinese literature. The term “intertextuality” has been used to signify the various and multiple ways in which a literary text is inseparably inter-involved with other texts, including those which will be written in the future, whether by its open or covert citations and allusions, or by its assimilation of the formal and substantive features of an earlier text or texts, or simply by its unavoidable participation in the common stock of linguistic and literary conventions.⁵⁹

Taking *MDT* as an intertext of love allows us to read and analyse it as the site of numberless other texts mainly of amatory tradition, and to consider the various possibilities of making ‘literary connections’ among these texts based on one’s reading experience. A reader, upon encountering the text, could make various kinds of connections and links, which may or may not be intended by the author. For instance, one can think of an echoing of similar scenes or lines

58 *Xixiang ji*, p. 22. Translation from West and Idema 1995, p. 136, with minor modifications. West and Idema prefer to read the third line in the aria following the original character “qiao” as in *qiao moyang* 喬模樣 instead of the emended *jiao moyang* 嬌模樣, hence translating it as “feigned” instead of “charming”.

59 Abrams 1993, p. 285. For a comprehensive study of the various definitions and applications of this term, see Allen 2011.

of *MDT* in a later play like *Jiaohong ji*. In fact, as seen in the cases of *Jiaohong ji* and *Changsheng dian*, such horizontal reading of texts may help us in understanding how later playwrights understood earlier models. Rather than taking *MDT* as a target text and attempting to find its source text, it is more rewarding to read its intertextual relations with other precedent, contemporaneous, and even later texts in the Chinese amatory tradition.

To illustrate this, we begin again from the same scene in *MDT* to read more closely one of the first questions Liu Mengmei asked Du Liniang:

(Liu): May I venture to ask, young lady, where you are from and what brings you here so deep in the night?

(生)小娘子到來，敢問尊前何處，因何夤夜至此？

Compared to the rest of the subsequent dialogue which was heavily loaded with allusions, this line may seem straightforward and require no annotations to help us understand it.⁶⁰ However, even seemingly simple and transparent lines like this can constitute various layers of reading and trigger the reader to recall similar scenes or worlds of love in other Chinese literary works. In this case, I read this line as belonging to a form of type scenes of the first meeting between lovers. More specifically, it brings to mind several plays with key scenes on the first meeting of lovers which took place in the “dead of night” (*yinye* 夤夜).

For instance, thrice in quick succession in the *Xixiang ji*, the maid Hongniang reprimanded Student Zhang for entering her mistress's garden in the dead of night:

Student Zhang, come forward and kneel down! You have studied the books of the sage Confucius, you should be familiar with the principles of the duke of Zhou. What concern brought you here in the dead of night.

張生，你過來跪著！你既讀孔聖之書，必達周公之禮，夤夜來此何干？

...

Who had you break and enter in the dead of night?

If it was not for fornication, then it was for theft!

You are a cassia-plucking man

Who's turned into a flower-filching lout!

60 Modern critical editions provide a footnote to explain that *yinye* 夤夜 means late in the night but see no need to provide precedents of this term in earlier texts. See, for example, *MDT*, 28:144n26.

You don't want to jump across the dragon's gate
But do want to learn how to mount a mare.

誰著你夤夜入人家，非奸做賊拿。你本是個折桂客，做了偷花漢。不想去跳龍門，學騙馬。

...

Since you are a young scholar, you should be exerting yourself to the utmost beneath the cold window. Who made you break and enter someone's flower garden in the dead of night? If what was on your mind was not fornication, then it was petty theft.

你既是秀才，只合苦志於寒窗之下，誰教你夤夜輒入人家花園，做得个非奸即盜。⁶¹

This is a famous scene which will be revisited in several later Chinese plays.⁶² The last line cited above is also closely related to a more fully developed scene in another Yuan play about the Tang poet Han Yi 韓翃 being accused for sneaking into Prefect Wang's garden late in the night in pursuit of the latter's daughter.⁶³

In *MDT*, it is interesting to find an inversion of words and situation. This time, it is the female protagonist, Du Liniang, who visited Liu Mengmei late in the night and was questioned for doing so. But *MDT* is not the first play for inverting the situation. Let us compare it with the following scene from an earlier Yuan dynasty northern drama titled *Bitao* 碧桃花:

(Zhang Daonan sees [Xu Bitao] and speaks) What a fine lady in the shades of the flowers! See her cloud-like hair and mist-like temples, apricot-flower face and peach-blossom cheeks, willow eyebrows and starry eyes, I can't help but be aroused. Let me try and ask her: My young lady over there, which family are you from? What is the reason for you to come here so deep in the night?

(張道南做見科，云) 花陰下好一個女子也！看他那雲鬢霧鬢，杏臉桃腮，柳眉星眼，不由咱不動心也。俺試問他咱：那壁小娘子，誰氏人家？夤夜到此何故？⁶⁴

61 *Xixiang ji*, Vol. III, Act 3, p. 120. Translation from West and Idema 1995, pp. 213–214, with minor changes.

62 See, for example, *Jiaopa ji* 蕉帕記, Scene 8:25.

63 See *Jinqian ji* 金錢記, Act 2, in Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu, p. 228.

64 See *Bitao*, Act 1, in *Yuanqu xuan jiaozhu*, p. 4256. This is the second meeting between the two but Zhang did not realise that Xu was the girl he once met. It is noteworthy that

In fact, one can find many parallels between Act One of *Bitao* and Scene 28 of *MDT*. In both cases, the female figure that arrives is not a living human. Just like Liniang in *MDT*, Xu Bitao in *Bitao* had died at this stage of the play and it was her soul that visited Zhang.

In this chapter, I argue that, apart from the early sources of the allusions, equally on the minds of the readers (and perhaps the author) of *MDT* are other texts that made use of a similar set of allusions. Together with these other texts, *MDT* shares a common world of words of love.⁶⁵ Therefore, in order to understand the language of love and the rich textual layers in *MDT*, there is a need to move away from the mode of tracing a certain allusion to a single source text or *locus classicus*. This will open up more possibilities in considering how *MDT*, on a broader level, speaks to other texts intertextually.⁶⁶

The cited passage in Scene 28 of *MDT* is first of all a discourse of love between the two young lovers, Liu Mengliu and Du Liniang, in the play. But we can also read it very much as a display of shared knowledge and literary usage between the playwright Tang Xianzu and his fellow writers and readers in the late Ming, as well as a form of communication of the language of love with later writers as well as the modern reader four centuries later.

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earlier in the play (Wedge), when Xu Bitao first met Zhang, it was she who asked Zhang where he is from, what his name is, and why he had come to the garden of her family.

- 65 This chapter has covered only one of various aspects of the language of love in *MDT*. There is, for example, a different level of exchange of crude and bawdy words sometimes achieved through the intentional misuse of classical texts. In the Glossary, we have provided notes to explain such use of phrases and expressions extracted from *Qianziwen* 千字文 for sexual innuendos in *MDT*. In her study focusing on Scenes 7 to 10 of *MDT*, Waiyee Li has convincingly shown how Tang Xianzu's drama plays very much on two stylistic levels in the expression of love through a combination of the high and low, and the sentimental and ironic diction of love. See Li 2004.
- 66 As Stephen Hinds has shown, such an approach can break from the constraints of studying allusions (what he calls 'Philological fundamentalism') to engage more with the interconnectedness between texts that speak to one another. See Hinds 1998, Chapter 2.

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