

**"Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger":**

**A Story to Defend Folk Literature**

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## Abstract

This thesis takes a look at one of the short stories in Feng Menglong's *Sanyan* collection, "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger." Written during the late Ming dynasty, the story has been typically analyzed by present-day scholars as a political allegory or as a lesson to teach *qing*, a term which translated alternately as "passions," "love," or "romantic sentiments" in English. Based on the background that the archaic elite literature was advocated through the Ming literary movement called "the restoration of the past" and Feng Menglong, as a follower of key anti-archaists like Wang Yanming, Li Zhi, and Yuan Hongdao, emphasized authentic feelings and spontaneity in literature, this thesis argues that in "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger," Feng Menglong metaphorically defended folk literature by defending Du Shiniang. Through examining the ways in which Feng Menglong praised the courtesan Du Shiniang's spontaneous and sincere nature that embodied in her *xia* (chivalry) and *qing* characteristics in the story, it becomes clear that Feng Menglong advocated folk literature as what should be extolled in the late Ming. The thesis concludes by recommending that this Feng Menglong's story is possibly a forerunner of a growing genre in the Qing dynasty which makes it worth for further researches.

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## Introduction

Scholars of Chinese literature have argued that the Chinese terminology *xiaoshuo* 小说 is closest to but at the same time largely different from the western idea of fiction, which Victor Mair clearly states in his study of Chinese narrative

[The] Chinese term for "fiction" is *hsiao-shuo* [*xiaoshuo*] (literally, "small talk" or "minor talk"). This immediately points to a fundamental contrast with the English word, which is derived ultimately from the past participle of Latin *ingere* ("to form" or "to fashion," "to invent"). Where the Chinese term etymologically implies a kind of gossip or anecdote, the English word indicates something made up or created by an author or writer...when a literary piece is declared to be "*hsiao-shuo*," we are given to understand that it is gossip or report.<sup>1</sup>

With its original link to the spoken word, Chinese *xiaoshuo* has gone through two fundamental transitions to become what it is today: first the shift from street talk and gossip to a mature form of storytelling and then the shift from storytelling to the final form of fictional art.<sup>2</sup> In order to reach the final stage of the transition, as Mingdong Gu illustrates in his book *Chinese Theories of Fiction: A Non-Western Narrative System*, a story is required to have surplus values; that is to say beyond the aim of telling an intriguing plot, a story should have some signifying elements which are valuable for further reflection when the tale ends.<sup>3</sup>

Along with Mingdong Gu's notion, some cases of Chinese *xiaoshuo* that have attained the status of fictional art are stories which were rewritten from existing ones by literati during the imperial period. When the rewriting process was carried out, both "literally and figuratively

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<sup>1</sup> Mingdong Gu, *Chinese Theories of Fiction: A Non-Western Narrative System* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 19-20.

<sup>2</sup> Gu, *Chinese Theories of Fiction*, 67.

<sup>3</sup> Gu, *Chinese Theories of Fiction*, 69.

surplus discourse elements that carry surplus signifying values" were added to the original stories.<sup>4</sup> Among them, the collection of short folk stories (*huaben* 话本) that Feng Menglong 冯梦龙 (1574-1646) edited based on originals from the Song, Yuan, and mid-Ming periods, which was later divided into three books called *Stories Old and New* (*Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小说), *Stories to Caution the World* (*Jing shi tong yan* 警世通言), and *Stories to Awaken the World* (*Xing shi heng yan* 醒世恒言), is thought to be the representative of fictional art.<sup>5</sup> The origin of folk stories can be traced back to as early as the second half of the thirteenth century.<sup>6</sup> But it is not until the mid-sixteenth century that folk stories were printed in collections, and *Sixty Stories* (*Liushijia xiaoshuo* 六十家小说), which was published by Hong Pian 洪楩 around 1550, is the earliest surviving anthology long before Feng Menglong's *Sanyan* 三言 came to existence. However, as the editor Hong Pian did not put much effort into arranging those stories written by anonymous writers: the tales in *Sixty Stories* are organized so loosely that they seem to have been collected without selection. In contrast, Feng Menglong's *Sanyan* represents "the first self-conscious literati effort to rework folk stories" and to develop them into a literary genre.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gu, *Chinese Theories of Fiction*, 121.

<sup>5</sup> *Stories Old and New* is also called *Illustrious Words to Instruct the World* 喻世明言. The book's name was *Stories Old and New* when it was first published. It was changed to *Illustrious Words to Instruct the World* later when the book was reprinted as a way to match the Chinese names of the other two books *Stories to Caution the World* and *Stories to Awaken the World*. And it is the use of *Illustrious Words to Instruct the World* that the three books are called *Sanyan* as a whole. For detailed information, see Feng Menglong, *Jing shi tong yan* 警世通言, ed. Yan Dunyi (Beijing: Renmin wuxue chubanshe, 2013), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Wilt Idema and Lloyd Haft, *A Guide to Chinese Literature* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1997), 212.

<sup>7</sup> Shuhui Yang, *Appropriation and Representation: Feng Menglong and the Chinese Vernacular Story* (Ann Arbor: Center for Chinese Studies, The University of Michigan, 1998), 14.

Yan Dunyi, an editor of classical literature in Beijing, once stated that tales in *Sanyan* are not only interesting but attached with moralistic lessons and undue importance to outward form and strange incidents.<sup>8</sup>

Most scholars who study Feng Menglong and those who study the folk stories in *Sanyan* hold the same idea as Yan Dunyi did, and analyze Feng Menglong's works by assigning them with didactic purpose. One of the most famous tales in *Stories to Caution the World* called "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" (*Du Shiniang nuchen baibaoxiang* 杜十娘怒沉百宝箱) has gained considerable attention from scholars because of its impressive characters and ideological content.<sup>9</sup> According to Patrick Hanan, the story was edited by Feng Menglong based on Song Maocheng's 宋懋澄 (1570-1622) classical Chinese narrative "The Faithless Lover" (*Fuqingnong zhuan* 负情侬传) in *Jiuyue ji* 九齣集 and must have been rewritten after the year 1619.<sup>10</sup> "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" begins with the prefatory tale which provides context: the main story happened during the twentieth year of the Wanli reign, when Japan invaded Korea. In response to the emergency call for help from Korea, the Ming court sent troops for aid. With the endorsement of the emperor, the Ministry of Revenue incurred the lack

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<sup>8</sup> *The Courtesan's Jewel Box: Chinese Stories of the Xth-XVIIth Centuries*, trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1981), iv.

<sup>9</sup> The name of Feng Menglong's story is translated as "Courtesan's Jewel Box" and the courtesan's name is translated as "Decima" by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang in *The Courtesan's Jewel Box: Chinese Stories of the Xth-XVIIth Centuries*, which have been referred by some scholars in their articles. In this essay, I use Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin's version since both the translation and the inclusion of interlinear and marginal comments make it closer to the original Chinese text.

<sup>10</sup> Patrick Hanan, "The Making of The Pearl-Sewn Shirt and The Courtesan's Jewel Box," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 33 (1973): 125-126; Hanan, *The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 23, 241.

of army provisions and thus opened the National University to any student who could offer tribute in order to make up the shortage. Having the status as a tribute student meant one could enjoy advantages such as the opportunity to study at the National University and the eligibility for the imperial civil service exam. Therefore, large numbers of sons of rich families took advantage of this new expedient track to *xiucaï* 秀才 status. Among these tribute students there was one named Li Jia 李甲 who falls in love with the celebrated courtesan Du Shiniang 杜十娘 when he is at the National University in Beijing.<sup>11</sup> Du Shiniang at the same time also loves Li Jia and hopes to devote her life to him. After the two together raise the three hundred taels of silver that is required by the brothel's madam, Du Shiniang gains her freedom and sets off with Li Jia for a new life. When they reach Guazhou, Du Shiniang's singing is overheard by another tribute student Sun Fu 孙富 on an adjacent boat. Sun Fu is attracted by Du Shiniang's voice and assumes that the singer must not be an ordinary chaste wife. Thus, Sun Fu tricks Li Jia into exchanging Du Shiniang for a thousand taels. Li Jia thinks the money will allow him to reach a reconciliation with his father and therefore agrees with Sun Fu's suggestion. When Li Jia tells Du Shiniang about the arrangement he has made with Sun Fu, Du Shiniang appears to accept it, but on the next day before getting onto Sun Fu's boat, Du Shiniang commits suicide by throwing

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<sup>11</sup> For students who wanted to gain the status of *xiucaï*, they had to take the entry-level examinations which were collectively called *tongshi* 童试 and were hierarchically broken down into the county exam, the prefectural exam, and the college exam. Only after passing the college exam that a student could be called as *xiucaï*. The term "tribute student" here is a translation from *jiansheng* 监生 in Chinese. During the Ming dynasty, tribute students mainly included four types: *jujian* 举监, *gongjian* 贡监, *yingjian* 荫监, and *lijian* 例监. For detailed information, see Zhu Quanfu, *Studies of Sanyan and Erpai* ("Sanyan," "erpai" yanjiu) "三言"、"二拍"研究 (Guangzhou: Jinan University Press, 2012), 181-182. The character Li Jia here belongs to the fourth category *lijian*, who offers tribute and pays money, and a *jiansheng* who studied at the National University automatically had the status of *xiucaï* 秀才.

herself into the river.

While evaluating Feng Menglong's "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger," scholars typically treat it as a political allegory or as a lesson to teach *qing* 情, a term which is often translated alternately as "passions," "love," or "romantic sentiments," since there is no exact English equivalent.<sup>12</sup> The first popular opinion results from the fact that scholars focus on the story as a reflection of Feng Menglong's social environment. Feng Menglong lived during the late Ming, a historical period when business and economy developed rapidly in China. The commercial boom incited the accumulation of material wealth and at the same time changed the populace's values; frugality was no longer appreciated and most Ming citizens instead pursued the extravagant and luxurious life style.<sup>13</sup> In addition, they overlooked the importance of spiritual discipline and indulged in physical desire and stimulation.<sup>14</sup> Based on this background, scholars, such as Zhu Quanfu argues that the tribute student character Li Jia, who buys his way into the National University but is derelict in his duty of studying while seeking pleasure at the courtesans' quarters and lusting for women, embodies the vulgar and decayed atmosphere of the late Ming dynasty.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> In my thesis, I use pinyin to represent words in Chinese. But if an author uses Wade Giles in his or her article or book, I will cite whatever the author uses. For example, here I use *qing* for 情, but later in the paper when I present the quotation, I will use *ch'ing* for 情 as it originally occurs in the book.

<sup>13</sup> Li Xiaojuan, "The Emotional Moral Education of Feng Menglong and the Judgment on Women in 'Sanyan'" (*Feng Menglong de qingjiaoguan yu sanyan zhong de nüxing pingjia*) 冯梦龙的情教观与三言中的女性评价 (master's thesis, Hunan Normal University, 2006), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Li, "The Emotional Moral Education," 9.

<sup>15</sup> Zhu, *Studies of Sanyan and Erpai*, 189-190.

Because Feng Menglong was thought to have compiled the anthology about *qing* called *Qing shi* 情史, some scholars view "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" as a lesson to teach *qing*. *Qing shi*, which includes more than 850 tales and anecdotes about love and passion among which nine-tenths have pre-Ming origins, was published around the early seventeenth century.<sup>16</sup> The two prefaces to *Qing shi*, which were written by Feng Menglong and Zhanzhan waishi 詹詹外史, respectively put the anthology's compilership in question. Feng Menglong in his preface "disclaims all credit, asserting that he intended to collect items on the subject but had not the time." In the meantime, Feng Menglong says that Zhanzhan waishi then helped carry out all works for him, and he both appreciates and apologizes for the classification and the selection which Zhanzhan waishi had done.<sup>17</sup> Although Feng Menglong's preface seems to indicate Zhanzhan waishi as the compiler, Hua-yuan Li Mowry suggests through her thorough study of *Qing shi* and Feng Menglong's available works that Zhanzhan waishi is the pseudonym used by Feng Menglong, making Feng Menglong the sole compiler.<sup>18</sup> Together with Mowry's claim that Feng Menglong compiled this book about *qing*, Feng Menglong's declaration in the preface that "I intend to establish a school of *ch'ing* [*qing*] to teach all who are living... I hope to reach those others who have an abundance of *ch'ing* that together we might propagate the teaching of *ch'ing*" confirms his aim of educating the public with *qing*.<sup>19</sup> In fact Feng Menglong had never

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<sup>16</sup> Feng Menglong, *Chinese Love Stories from "Ch'ing-shih,"* trans. Hua-yuan Li Mowry (Hamden: Archon Books, 1983), vii, 7.

<sup>17</sup> Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 95-96.

<sup>18</sup> Mowry, *Chinese Love Stories*, 24.

<sup>19</sup> Mowry, *Chinese Love Stories*, 13-14.

physically established a school to teach *qing*; his statement is the common pose of some Neo-Confucian followers to indicate their belief in *qing*. Feng Menglong's relationship with *Qing shi* shapes how scholars view "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger." In her thesis Li Xiaojuan states that if *Qing shi* embodies the theoretical system of Feng Menglong's belief on emotional moral education, *Sanyan* is the externalization of using *qing* to educate the public.<sup>20</sup> She further argues that by constructing the character Du Shiniang as the exemplification of *qing* and showing his respect to Du Shiniang, Feng Menglong intends to teach what *qing* is.<sup>21</sup>

Considerations such as those raised by Zhu Quanfu and Li Xiaojuan all provide significant readings of the story. In my thesis, I intend to approach the importance of the story from another aspect. In his book *Appropriation and Representation*, Shuhui Yang says that Feng Menglong's strong penchant for wordplay is revealed in "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" through his concern with names.<sup>22</sup> Song Maocheng in "The Faithless Lover" only called the male protagonist Master Li without giving him a full name. But Feng Menglong assigned the first name *jia*, which has the same pronunciation as the character fake (*jia* 假) in Chinese, to Li Jia as an attempt to suggest his pretended personality and insincerity. Such wordplay thus suggests that spontaneity is one of the story's main themes. And for the proposition of literature, Feng Menglong held "his stress on plain diction, his belief in the direct expression of emotion as

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<sup>20</sup> Li, "The Emotional Moral Education," 24.

<sup>21</sup> Li, "The Emotional Moral Education," 26.

<sup>22</sup> Yang, *Appropriation and Representation*, 139,141.

a paramount value in the lyrical forms; his concern for sheer affective power as a paramount value in fiction and drama; and even, out of this same concern, his espousal of the vernacular."<sup>23</sup> Since what Feng Menglong emphasized in literature were authentic feelings and spontaneity, in this thesis, I argue that in "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger," Feng Menglong defended folk literature by defending Du Shiniang. As resistance to the archaic elite literature which was supported by the Seven Masters (*qizi pai* 七子派), Feng Menglong in his story used the character Du Shiniang, a low courtesan, as a metaphor for folk literature based on the paralleled status difference between the two in Chinese society. By praising Du Shiniang's spontaneous and sincere nature which embodied in her *xia* 侠, or chivalry in English, and *qing* 情 characteristics at the end of the story, Feng Menglong advocated that folk literature, with its spontaneity and sincerity, is what should be extolled in the late Ming.

### **Statuses at Two Poles: Courtesans vs. Literati and Folk Literature vs. Elite Literature**

During the late imperial China, courtesans had an extremely low status and were called "mean people" (*jianmin* 贱民). In the Ming dynasty, the law only recognized citizens within two sub-divisions—mean people and commoners (*liangmin* 良民), and those with the status of mean were subject to certain legal restrictions: the law regulated that any crime committed by mean people was punished more harshly, and any crime against them punished more lightly than if they had been commoners.<sup>24</sup> Thus, mean people like courtesans were outcasts of the society. The

<sup>23</sup> Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, 76.

<sup>24</sup> Harriet T. Zurndorfer, "Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Confucian Moral Universe of Late Ming China (1550-1644)," *International Review of Social History (IRSH)* 56 (2011): 200; Beverly Bossler, "Shifting Identities: Courtesans and Literati in Song China," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 62, no.1

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use of English words such as "courtesan" or "prostitute" to translate the Chinese term *ji* 妓, as Beverly Bossler points out, is hardly adequate to "express the most essential aspect of the *ji*'s persona."<sup>25</sup> When examining the etymology of *ji*, it is important to notice that Lu Fayan of the Sui dynasty says in *Qieyun* 切韵 that *ji* are female musicians (*Ji, nü yue ye* 妓, 女乐也).<sup>26</sup> This indicates that Chinese courtesans were first and foremost cultivated performing artists who were expert in music and dance. And *chang* 娼, a synonym for *ji* in Chinese, identifies the same basic role of courtesans since it is interpreted as music (*yue* 乐) in *Shuowen jiezi* 说文解字.<sup>27</sup> Their partial roles as entertainers nevertheless further affixed courtesans with low status and pushed them to the bottom of Ming era society. Entertainment performed by courtesans was thought to be at the same level as other works mean people did which were "humiliating or polluting, or both, or of little or no value to society."<sup>28</sup> Such negative consideration may well have been influenced by Neo-Confucian discourse from the Song dynasty. For instance, Cheng Yi said that "the courtesan-as-artist may have had a place at the side of the urbane man of culture, but she was anathema to the man for whom moral self-cultivation and detachment from physical desires

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(June 2002): 12.

<sup>25</sup> Bossler, "Shifting Identities," 6.

<sup>26</sup> Wu Zhou, *A History of Chinese Courtesan Culture (Zhongguo jinü wenhuashi)* 中国妓女文化史 (Shanghai: Dongfang chubanshe, 2006), 15.

<sup>27</sup> Saito Shigeru, *Courtesans and Literatus (Jinü yu wenren)* 妓女与文人, trans. Shen Heli (Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2014), 7.

<sup>28</sup> Zurndorfer, "Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Confucian Moral Universe," 201.

were the essence of a proper literati persona."<sup>29</sup>

At the opposite pole of the social hierarchy, literati occupied a high status in imperial China. This in fact largely relates to the civil service examination, a test system which had been used to select officials from at least the beginning of the empire and became mature in the Song dynasty. In order to succeed in the examination, test takers had to start preparing during childhood by meeting the basic requirement of learning the Four Books and Five Classics and by memorizing ancient texts in archaic classical Chinese. However, these archaic cultural and linguistic resources that the civil service examination required could be provided by only a few wealthy families; "to expect that artisan or peasant mothers and fathers could afford the luxury of years of training for their sons in a 'foreign' language divorced from vernacular grammar and native speech was naive."<sup>30</sup> Although the examination was open to all, "the content of the civil service competition clearly excluded over 90 percent of China's people from even the first step on the ladder to success."<sup>31</sup> Consequently under the civil service examination, most literati in late imperial China were those from families with high social status which were capable to invest sufficient cultural resources for their test preparations. And by memorizing Confucian classics, literati became Confucianized persons whose ideas were consistent with state ideology because as early as Han dynasty, Emperor Wu had established Confucianism as state orthodoxy.<sup>32</sup> Thus it

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<sup>29</sup> Bossler, "Shifting Identities," 33.

<sup>30</sup> Benjamin A. Elman, "Political, Social, and Cultural Reproduction via Civil Service Examinations in Late Imperial China," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 50, no.1 (February 1991): 17.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Charles Holcombe, *A History of East Asia: From the Origins of Civilization to the Twenty-First*

is no wonder that privileged literati whose thoughts were favored by the state were further rewarded with high standing. Moreover, when he discusses the civil service examination, Charles Holcombe mentions that "the examination system helped shape the kind of society late imperial China became. To a remarkable degree, it was a society focused on education and book learning."<sup>33</sup> Being in this type of society, well-educated and knowledgeable literati were universally appreciated and highly positioned.

Among literati, the subdivision called tribute scholars, those who were able to get into the National Universities, further broadened the class divide during the Ming dynasty. The Ming government patronized a widespread array of schools, and Confucian schools were the most important of them. "Located in counties, sub-prefectures, and prefectures, their purpose was to prepare young men for official careers, in part, by sending graduates for advanced study to the National Universities at Peking and Nanking."<sup>34</sup> However, the number of students that Confucian schools at different local levels could send was strictly controlled according to fixed quotas: "each prefectural school was required to send two students to the universities every year, each sub-prefectural school three every two years, and each county school one each year."<sup>35</sup> Because of this limitation, such promoted students, who were titled tribute scholars and selected

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*Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 98.

<sup>33</sup> Holcombe, *A History of East Asia*, 132.

<sup>34</sup> Denis C. Twitchett and Frederick W. Mote, ed., *The Cambridge History of China: Volume 8, The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, Part 2* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 31.

<sup>35</sup> Twitchett and Mote, *The Cambridge History of China*, 32.

by schools, were exceptionally talented persons and elites among their companions. Besides promoted students from Confucian schools, tribute scholars were supplemented by other categories of students. They included heirs of nobles and the highest ranking central government officials and also sons of men who had died honorably in battles and princelings who were sent to be educated in China. When the Ming government opened the National Universities' student status for purchase in 1450, the policy was for the rich who could make monetary or material contributions to the state.<sup>36</sup> Composed of academic elites, persons with remarkable backgrounds, and children from rich families, tribute scholars were those with especially high status and hence highlighted the class divide between courtesans and literati in the society.

Like the conditions of literati and courtesans, there was also a distinct status difference within Chinese literature with the dichotomy of folk and elite in the dynastic history.<sup>37</sup> *Xiaoshuo* was under the category of folk literature while lyric poetry and classic prose were considered as belonging to the elite culture.<sup>38</sup> The separation of literary forms has much to do with Confucius's attitude. When Confucius brings up *xiaoshuo*, he says "even by-ways are worth exploring. But if we go too far we may be bogged down" so gentlemen should not engage in them (*shi yi junzi fu wei ye* 是以君子弗为也).<sup>39</sup> But regarding poems, Confucius declares in *Analects* that poems

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<sup>36</sup> Twitchett and Mote, *The Cambridge History of China*, 32-33.

<sup>37</sup> Yang, *Appropriation and Representation*, 5.

<sup>38</sup> Gu, *Chinese Theories of Fiction*, 29. Actually, the dichotomy does not naturally exist since *xiaoshuo* writings and poems, such as those in *Book of Songs*, share the same original source: they were both collected by royal officials from among the common people.

<sup>39</sup> Lu Hsun, *A Brief History of Chinese Fiction*, trans. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1959), 4; Nie Fusheng, *Studies of Feng Menglong (Feng Menglong yanjiu)* 冯梦龙研

have four functions: to express emotion (*xing* 兴), to observe society and nature (*guan* 观), to make friends (*qun* 群), and to satirize injustice (*yuan* 怨). He further emphasizes that poems could help one serve one's parents and, in larger sense, they could help one serve one's lord (*Er zhi shi fu, yuan zhi shi jun* 迩之事父, 远之事君).<sup>40</sup> While poems were favorably honored, *xiaoshuo* was given a bottom place by Confucius. Because of his disparagement, "in the mainstream literary establishment Chinese *xiaoshuo* was not deemed a form of verbal art worthy of respect" during the imperial period.<sup>41</sup> For both were discriminated and belonged to the lowest rank, courtesans and folk literature share the analogous position. This similarity between the two thus builds up the base for Feng Menglong's use of Du Shiniang as a metaphor for folk literature in the story.

### **Literary Propositions: Seven Masters vs. Liberal-Minded Scholars**

While the distinction between folk and elite literature was preserved throughout Chinese dynastic history, it was during the Ming dynasty that a particular kind of elite literature appeared which brought about the controversy in regard to the two literary divisions. From Hongzhi's reign, the archaic elite literature that was acclaimed by the so-called Seven Masters, who thus commenced a nearly one-hundred-year-long literary movement named "the restoration of the past" (*fugu* 复古) with the leading figures Li Mengyang, He Jingming, Li Panlong, and Wang

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究 (Shanghai: Xuelin chubanshe, 2002), 92.

<sup>40</sup> Nie, *Feng Menglong yanjiu*, 91.

<sup>41</sup> Gu, *Chinese Theories of Fiction*, 8.

Shizhen, dominated Chinese literature.<sup>42</sup> Since the early Ming, scholars began to hold the strong illusion that the establishment of their empire symbolized the renaissance of the world and also the termination of a dark period. This fantasy resulted from the fact that prior to the Ming dynasty, China was ruled by Jurchens and Mongols, who were called "barbarians" by the Han Chinese. Scholars felt their nation had been abused and their own self-esteem as Han ethnics had been hurt under these barbarians' control. The founding of the Ming dynasty hence represented a brand-new era which provided scholars hope to restore the flourishing age of the Chinese nation in the hands of the Han people.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the mid-Ming scholars began considering the replication of the ancient heyday as their goal and raised the claim that the Ming would be as prosperous as the earlier Yao, Shun, Han, and Tang eras (*Shang jie yao shun, xia cheng han tang* 上接尧舜，下承汉唐).<sup>44</sup>

It was under this circumstance that the Seven Masters emerged. Their pure pursuit of the artistic tradition and the aesthetic ideal of the classical poetry and prose was fundamentally based on their search for a supreme society.<sup>45</sup> The Seven Masters advocated that in the present age of Ming in order to create outstanding prose, one should emulate only the styles of masters of the Qin and Han dynasties. "And for poetry, only masters of the High Tang such as Li Bai and Du Fu

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<sup>42</sup> Yang, *Appropriation and Representation*, 25.

<sup>43</sup> Xie Xu, "The Study of the Relationship Between the Wang School and Late Ming Literary Theory: Using the Examples of Seven Masters and Gong'an Association" (*Wangxue yu zhong wan ming wenxue lilun de guanxi yanjiu: yi qizipai he gonganpai wei ge'an*) 王学与中晚明文学理论的关系研究：以七子派和公安派为个案 (PhD diss., Shaanxi Normal University, 2013), 16.

<sup>44</sup> Xie, "The Study of the Relationship," 16-17.

<sup>45</sup> Xie, "The Study of the Relationship," 17.

will do" (*Wen bi qin han, shi bi sheng tang* 文必秦汉，诗必盛唐).<sup>46</sup> For the Seven Masters, "restoring antiquity' was a goal, while imitation was merely a means by which to reach this goal."<sup>47</sup> They believed that the elegant and righteous tradition of the Tang poetry and also the glorious Tang era were models for creating a thriving Ming culture and a new brilliant dynasty.<sup>48</sup> In addition, the Seven Masters considered the Qin and Han prose was chronologically close to the time of Yao's and Shun's rule and thus through emulation, the Ming would be able to learn the essential spirit from the traditional prose and become an equally successful dynasty.<sup>49</sup>

This type of elite literature advocated by the Seven Masters, with its special emphasis on simulating the artistic characteristics of archaic poetry and prose, was opposed by a group of more liberal-minded people among whom Li Zhi 李贽 (1527-1602) and Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道 (1568-1610) are two representatives. Both Li Zhi and Yuan Hongdao's ideas significantly influenced Feng Menglong. For them, "the philosophical foundation of their anti-archaist literary theories and practices was the notion of 'innate knowledge'" put forward by Wang Yangming 王阳明 (1472-1529).<sup>50</sup> According to Wang Yangming, "knowledge of the good is inborn in the mind of the individual and one should follow it spontaneously wherever it leads" and when it

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<sup>46</sup> Yang, *Appropriation and Representation*, 25.

<sup>47</sup> Chih-p'ing Chou. *Yüan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 30.

<sup>48</sup> Zhu Xiacong, "The Retro Theory of the 'Poetry From Later Than the Middle Tang' Slogan" (*'Shi bi sheng Tang' zhong de fugu guan*) "诗必盛唐"中的复古观 (Master's thesis., Nanchang University, 2014), 23.

<sup>49</sup> Zhu, "The Retro Theory," 34-35.

<sup>50</sup> Yang, *Appropriation and Representation*, 26.

was applied to literature, "spontaneity came to be highly valued."<sup>51</sup> Wang Yangming himself had once expressed his opposition towards literature which has aesthetic essence but lacks naturalness; "the reason the world is not in order is because superficial writing is growing and concrete practice is declining...People devote much of their time and energy to competing in conventional writing and flowery composition."<sup>52</sup>

Li Zhi further developed the implications of Wang Yangming's "innate knowledge" theory in his essay "On the Childlike Mind" (*Tongxin shuo* 童心说):

Once people's minds have been given over to received opinions and moral principles, what they have to say is all about these things, and not what would naturally come from their childlike minds. No matter how clever the words, what have they to do with oneself? What else can there be but phony men speaking phony words, doing phony things, writing phony writings? Once the men become phonies, everything becomes phony.<sup>53</sup>

The word "phony" that appears repeatedly is the translation of the character *jia* 假 in the original Chinese version. And the term "phony men" which is interpreted from *jiaren* 假人 is likely to be where Feng Menglong got his idea for Li Jia's name. By stating "the phonies have destroyed so much good literature in the world!...The best literature always comes from the childlike mind," Li Zhi argues instead for a spontaneous literature with sincere and genuine feelings.<sup>54</sup> He thus appeared to his contemporaries to have an extraordinary enthusiasm for folk literature because

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, 76.

<sup>53</sup> Wm. Theodore de Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought," in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, ed. Ivan Morris et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 195.

<sup>54</sup> Yang, *Appropriation and Representation*, 27.

both its content and form could be considered "to represent the most natural, the most spontaneous."<sup>55</sup> He points out:

Why are poems selected from the past and prose from the early Qin? It descended to the Six Dynasties and transformed into new modern style; then developed into *chuanqi*, then *yuanben*, then Yuan play, then the *Romance of the Western Chamber*, and then the *Water Margin*...One cannot judge them by depending on chronology and praise the ancient ones while degrading those of the present.<sup>56</sup>

While fighting against the elite literature which superficially imitated the prose and poetry from precedent masters, Li Zhi at the same time affirms the literary status and value of the folk literature; he refers to the *Romance of the Western Chamber* and the *Water Margin* "as works of 'transcendent art'" and thus includes drama and fiction in the literary realm.<sup>57</sup>

Li Zhi influenced Yuan Hongdao and his two brothers' ideas on literature and gave them incentive to form the anti-archaic and anti-imitative Gong'an School 公安派.<sup>58</sup> Yuan Hongdao, the leader and spokesman of that school, remarks that "it is not the poetry and prose of our age which will be passed down to posterity. The works most likely to be handed down...do not mirror the frowns of writers of Han or Wei, nor do they dog the steps of writers of the heyday of T'ang;

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<sup>55</sup> Mowry, *Chinese Love Stories*, 2.

<sup>56</sup> This part is my translation from the following: *Shi hebi guxuan, wen hebi xianqin. Jiang er wei liuchao, bian er wei jinti; you bian wei chuanqi, bian er wei yuanben, wei zajü, wei xixiangqu, wei shuihuzhuan...buke de er shishi xianhou lun ye* 诗何必古选，文何必先秦。降而为六朝，变而为近体；又变为传奇，变而为院本，为杂剧，为《西厢曲》，为《水浒传》……不可得而时势先后论也。 Yang Kun, "Understanding the Adjustment of Elegance and Vulgarly in Feng Menglong's Works from Sanyan" (*Cong 'Sanyan' kan Feng Menglong zuopin de 'ya,' 'su' tiaoshi*) 从“三言”看冯梦龙作品的“雅”，“俗”调适 (master's thesis, Capital Normal University, 2006), 9.

<sup>57</sup> Chou, *Yüan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School*, 24.

<sup>58</sup> Chou, *Yüan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School*, 14.

they are compositions occasioned by man's genuine emotions."<sup>59</sup> What Yuan Hongdao argues is that "'genuine emotion and straightforward diction' are essential criteria for judging the quality of literary works: those that meet this standard will last; others will perish," and he therefore commented favorably about folk literature.<sup>60</sup>

When Feng Menglong was around twenty, the archaist leader Wang Shizhen was the most influential figure in Chinese literature, and he dominated the literary arena with numerous followers. Simultaneously, liberal-minded people found this archaic tendency in literature as intolerable and thus highly advocated Wang Yangming and Li Zhi's ideas.<sup>61</sup> Born in an educated family which focused on studying Neo-Confucianism (*lixue mingjia* 理学名家) and lived through the youth when Wang Yangming and Li Zhi's canons thrived in China, Feng Menglong was deeply influenced by anti-archaists' ideological trend.<sup>62</sup> Among Feng Menglong's works, he wrote "a vernacular life of Wang Yangming that dealt with Wang's ideas as well as his military campaigns. He also constantly quoted Li Zhi, who derived many of his ideas from Wang, and he was also much influenced by Yuan Hongdao, who derived many of his ideas from Li."<sup>63</sup> These facts again verify that Feng Menglong followed after the thoughts of main anti-archaic figures. Li Zhi's approval of drama and novel as well as Yuan Hongdao's appreciation of sincere literary

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<sup>59</sup> Mowry, *Chinese Love Stories*, 3-4.

<sup>60</sup> Chou, *Yüan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School*, 49, 54.

<sup>61</sup> Yang, *Appropriation and Representation*, 26.

<sup>62</sup> Yang Kun, "Understanding the Adjustment of Elegance and Vulgarity," 11-12.

<sup>63</sup> Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, 78.

works shaped Feng Menglong's views on folk literature.<sup>64</sup> Feng Menglong had contempt for the archaic elite literature's pursuit of artistic and aesthetic forms which was sustained by the Seven Masters and once asserted that "the most abused literary genres today are classical poetry and prose."<sup>65</sup> Differing from his senior contemporaries—the three Yuan brothers—who opposed the Seven Masters' archaic elite literature by directly expressing their arguments in essays, Feng Menglong's reaction "was primarily manifested in his passion for publishing works...[such] as folk songs and vernacular fiction" which were categorized under the folk literature division.<sup>66</sup> Besides demonstrating his anti-archaist posture, Feng Menglong used his publication of folk literature as a method to simultaneously criticize the polarized high and low culture, to rally for concern and respect for the culture of the periphery, and most importantly to promote the underrated genre.<sup>67</sup>

### **"Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger": Defending Folk Literature by Eulogizing Spontaneity and Sincerity through *Xia* and *Qing***

The story "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" is one of the publication in which Feng Menglong revealed his intention to defend folk literature, and its defense is articulated in Du Shiniang's final speech, which embodies Wang Yangming's claim of naturalness and the

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<sup>64</sup> Yang Kun, "Understanding the Adjustment of Elegance and Vulgarly," 10; Mowry, *Chinese Love Stories*, 3.

<sup>65</sup> Yang, *Appropriation and Representation*, 29.

<sup>66</sup> Yang, *Appropriation and Representation*, 29.

<sup>67</sup> Hsu Pi-ching, "Courtesans and Scholars in the Writings of Feng Menglong: Transcending Status and Gender," *Nan Nü* 2, no.1 (2000): 44; Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, 75.

genuine feeling that is advocated in Li Zhi's essay. Right before Du Shiniang commits suicide, she makes a harangue on the boat in front of the spectators on the shore, who are trying to figure out what is going on between Du Shiniang, Li Jia, and Sun Fu. This speech is equivalent to a storytelling performance by Du Shiniang for the internal audience since it is a straight narration about what has led to the current circumstance and we as readers have already "witnessed" these events: Sun Fu's plan of exchanging her for a thousand taels with Li Jia comes out of lecherous motives and it destroys the relationship between her and Li Jia. The jewel box in fact belongs to her and she has already decided to use it to add some grandeur to Li Jia once they meet Li Jia's parents. She has made up her mind to spend the rest of the life with Li Jia, but Li Jia trusts her little and abandons her after listening to Sun Fu's cunning advice.<sup>68</sup> Although the language of the whole storytelling is plain, it overflows naturally: the uttered words are "unleashed [in] an explosion" without consideration.<sup>69</sup> And Du Shiniang does not hide her fury from the public at all since she strongly curses Sun Fu that "if my spirit survives my death, I will certainly bring a complaint against you to the gods. As for the pleasures of the pillow, you don't have a ghost of a chance" and decisively scolds Li Jia "it's you who have betrayed me!"<sup>70</sup> The impact which the storytelling left is that "there was not a dry eye among the onlookers."<sup>71</sup> Xu Wei, the artist of the Ming period, says in a preface to the Yuan dynasty play *The Story of the Western Wing* that it is

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<sup>68</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 563-564.

<sup>69</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 563.

<sup>70</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 563-564..

<sup>71</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 564.

the authentic which makes "everyone 'oohs and aahs' about, I 'ho-hum' about."<sup>72</sup> According to Xu Wei, here the spectators' emotional responses are apparently caused by the spontaneous words that result from the use of vernacular and the true sentiment that the storytelling holds.

Du Shiniang's storytelling, nearly a summary of the preceding content, is less crucial to the movement of the plot than to the underlying meaning of the scene. Its emphasis on spontaneity and sincerity shows Feng Menglong's purpose of defending folk literature. Through the scene, Feng Menglong demonstrated that even without special consideration of aesthetic crafts and artistic forms, the storytelling with its sincere and spontaneous characteristics alone can move audience. Du Shiniang's speech thus becomes Feng Menglong's reaffirmation of his view on literature: authenticity and spontaneity are the most important qualities and thus folk literature should be highly valued.

Such intention of defense in the story together with the aforementioned parallels between the marginal status of courtesans and folk literature suggests that Feng Menglong in fact used Du Shiniang as a metaphor for folk literature. In order to successfully reach his objective to elevate the low culture, Feng Menglong concentrated his focus at the end of "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" to elevate Du Shiniang's status. The ultimate part, in which Du Shiniang faces the plight of being traded between Li Jia and Sun Fu and thus commits suicide, is unquestionably the highlight of the whole story. During the early periods of imperial China, the courtesans' plight was considered as sinful or wicked. But during the late Ming dynasty, the

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<sup>72</sup> Shiamin Kwa, *Strange Eventful Histories: Identity, Performance, and Xu Wei's "Four Cries of a Gibbon"* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2012), 10.

attitude changed and intellectuals considered courtesans' unfavorable situation as something unfortunate and took pity on them.<sup>73</sup> Besides conveying sympathy, Feng Menglong emphasized Du Shiniang's spontaneous and sincere emotions from *xia* and *qing* respectively throughout the final section. By honoring her spontaneity and sincerity, Feng Menglong brought Du Shiniang, and moreover the folk literature, to the prestigious standing.

During the late Ming dynasty, *xia* enjoyed a wave of popularity and was considered by intellectuals as a powerful force that could guide human behavior.<sup>74</sup> The acceptance of *xia* was due to the blurring boundaries of the late Ming cultures. For the late Ming intellectual landscape, "syncretism has long been singled out as a characteristic trait" and one of the most significant movements was the unity of three doctrines: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism.<sup>75</sup> Aside from syncretism, eclecticism also occurred. There were attempts "to combine Confucian and Christian teachings, and even the chivalric (*xia*) tradition...represented an ideological inspiration for some late Ming Confucians."<sup>76</sup>

Among different Confucian schools, philosophers who associated with the Taizhou School 泰州派, such as Yan Jun and He Xinyin, showed the adoption of chivalric standards.<sup>77</sup> It was the

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<sup>73</sup> Zurndorfer, "Prostitutes and Courtesans in the Confucian Moral Universe," 206.

<sup>74</sup> Allan H. Barr, "The Wanli Context of The 'Courtesan's Jewel Box' Story," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 57, no.1 (June 1997): 110.

<sup>75</sup> Giovanni Vitiello, "Exemplary Sodomites: Chivalry and Love in Late Ming Culture," *Nan Nü* 2, no.2 (2000): 207-208.

<sup>76</sup> Vitiello, "Exemplary Sodomites," 209.

<sup>77</sup> Vitiello, "Exemplary Sodomites," 243.

Taizhou School which played the most significant role in remodeling and redefining the late Ming *xia* characteristic. Since the Taizhou School used Wang Yangming's "innate knowledge" as the basic theory to frame *xia*, chivalry of the late Ming period was associated with spontaneity. As a result, it was considered that every person, no matter what situation he or she is in, carries out the chivalric behavior spontaneously (*Meigeren suo shishi de xiayi xingwei doushi zai butong qingjing zhong zifa jinxing de* 每个人所实施的侠义行为都是在不同情境中自发进行的).<sup>78</sup> Feng Menglong, who highly valued *xia* at his time, exalted "persons with the disposition characteristic of *hsia* [*xia*] ("knight")... since spontaneity...[is] often found to reside with them."<sup>79</sup> Thus, *xia* embodies spontaneity and to Feng Menglong, those who could be called knights were simultaneously spontaneous people.

In the early part of "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger," Du Shiniang already reveals her *xia* qualities. When Li Jia is not able to raise any money, Du Shiniang provides him a hundred and fifty taels of silver from her private savings as a way to give him means to buy her from the madam. And before the two leave the brothel, Du Shiniang gives Li Jia, who has run out of money, twenty taels as their travel fare. But when they are about to board the government courier boat to Guazhou, Li Jia again does not have a penny left since he has already spent the twenty taels on redeeming his gowns and buying new bedding. When noticing Li Jia's worried

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<sup>78</sup> He Zongmei and Zhang Xian, "On the Ming Dynasty Taizhou School and 'Xia'" (*Mingdai taizhou xuepai yu 'xia' luelun*) 明代泰州学派与“侠”略论, *Journal of Southwest University Social Science Edition* 37, no.5 (September, 2011): 66.

<sup>79</sup> Mowry, *Chinese Love Stories*, 19.

look, Du Shiniang again offers him fifty taels of silver to pacify his anxiety.<sup>80</sup> Whenever Li Jia is in need, Du Shiniang helps him without hesitation. In *Qing shi*, Feng Menglong praises the Nanjing courtesan Zhang Xiaosan, who lends a hand to the merchant Yang and his family, by saying "her giving money to help the man in need was in the style of an ancient knight-errant."<sup>81</sup> Comparable to Zhang Xiaosan who provides money to help her man out, Du Shiniang behaves in the same chivalrous way.

In addition to the early scenes, Feng Menglong underscored Du Shiniang's spontaneity by depicting her *xia* at the end. And this becomes most obvious when the ending which was originally written by Song Maocheng and that by Feng Menglong are contrasted. In Song Maocheng's "The Faithless Lover," the ending portrays the following: "the onlookers wept who were standing on the other boats and on the bank, and while they damned Li for a falsehearted rouge, Shih-niang disappeared into the water clutching the pearls."<sup>82</sup> For "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger," it ends with onlookers whom "cursed Li for being the fickle ingrate that he was. Ashamed and exasperated, Li shed tears of remorse and was about to apologize to Shiniang when she threw herself into the middle of the current, the jewel box in her arms."<sup>83</sup> Feng Menglong slightly modified the ending in his rendition: instead of clutching the pearls, Du Shiniang is clasping the jewel box with her when she commits suicide.

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<sup>80</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 553, 556.

<sup>81</sup> Hsu, "Courtesans and Scholars in the Writings of Feng Menglong," 73.

<sup>82</sup> Hanan, "The Making of The Pearl-Sewn Shirt," 145-146.

<sup>83</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 564.

This change makes Du Shiniang's suicide scene become strikingly similar to that in the legend of Qu Yuan 屈原, who "clasped a big rock in his arms and threw himself into the river" to prove his ambition to die for his kingdom Chu when the capital Yingdu was captured by the other kingdom Qin.<sup>84</sup> The resemblance between the two suicides illustrates Feng Menglong's effort to connote the paralleled status between Qu Yuan and Du Shiniang: like the heroic figure Qu Yuan, Du Shiniang is "a female knight-errant for all time (*qiangu nǚxia* 千古女侠)."<sup>85</sup> By demonstrating her chivalric behavior and further calling her a female knight, Feng Menglong indicated Du Shiniang's spontaneity through the *xia* quality and challenged Du Shiniang's low standing as a courtesan; he considered her as honorable as the patriot Qu Yuan.

While *xia* shows spontaneity, *qing* is the concept which concerns sincere emotion. In traditional Chinese philosophical discourse, *qing* was considered in relation to another concept *xing* 性, which means one's inborn nature.<sup>86</sup> However, these two were treated as antithetical concepts and *qing* was often regarded as the negative force in moral behavior.<sup>87</sup> Beginning around the mid-Ming, the notion of *qing* was reconsidered by some literati thinkers. For instance, Yang Shen raised a more balanced view of *qing* and *xing*: "What will happen if one promotes *xing* but neglects *qing*? He will become dead ashes."<sup>88</sup> During the late Ming dynasty, some

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<sup>84</sup> Yang, *Appropriation and Representation*, 139.

<sup>85</sup> Barr, "The Wanli Context," 117.

<sup>86</sup> Martin W. Huang, "Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of Qing in Ming-Qing Literature," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 20 (December 1998): 153-154.

<sup>87</sup> Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, 79.

<sup>88</sup> Huang, "Sentiments of Desire," 156.

literati disagreed with the warning that *qing* was the violent wave and Feng Menglong was also one of these *qing* advocates as he said "had heaven and earth had no *ch'ing* they would not have produced the myriad of things. Had the myriad of things had no *ch'ing* they would not have eternally given each other life."<sup>89</sup>

The correlation between *qing* and sincerity can be seen from He Yan's and Zhu Xi's comment on one specific sentence in the second part of *Analects* 13: 4. The sentence has the term *qing* in it and says: if those in higher positions love trustworthy people, then none of the public would dare to act without *qing* (*Shang hao xin, ze min mogan buyongqing* 上好信，则民莫敢不用情). When the Wei dynasty He Yan annotates the sentence in his book, he cites "the Han Period scholar Kong Anguo: '*Qing* means 'genuine feelings.' It is saying that people are transformed by those above and each in turn responds with sincerity."<sup>90</sup> Centuries later during the Song period, "Zhu Xi comments, 'The character *qing* means sincerity. The phrase *yongqing* means to be sincere in dealing with superiors."<sup>91</sup> *Qing*'s direct association with sincerity or the genuine expression of one's feeling is clearly explained by the two widely respected commentaries on the *Analects* from different historical periods. Feng Menglong saw *qing* as the direct exposure of true emotions as well and declared that the four great elements of Buddhism,

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<sup>89</sup> Mowry, *Chinese Love Stories*, 13.

<sup>90</sup> Pauline C. Lee, "'Spewing Jade and Spitting Pearls': Li Zhi's Ethics of Genuineness," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38, s1 (2011): 119.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

earth, fire, water, and wind, are all but illusion; "only *ch'ing* is neither empty nor false."<sup>92</sup> Zhang Zhiyan concludes that in late Ming times, "the cult of *qing* was also the cult of the genuine" and "therefore, *qing* [and] the genuine were inseparable."<sup>93</sup>

In the story, Du Shiniang's *qing* can be observed from her attitude to Li Jia who is with empty pockets at the beginning. When Li Jia's funds start to run out, the madam gives him the cold shoulder and tries to drive him out of the brothel. However, Du Shiniang does not change a bit after seeing the profit has come to an end and indeed, the less Li Jia has in his pocket the more passionate her love becomes. When the madam urges Du Shiniang to put Li Jia out from time to time, her words just appear to fall on deaf ears.<sup>94</sup> Du Shiniang totally ignores the madam's censures and continues being with Li Jia as before. Giving that the romantic sensuality associated with *qing* is the force which binds the relationship between the scholar and the courtesan, under her madam's pressure Du Shiniang's determination to stay with Li Jia is clearly motivated by her *qing*.<sup>95</sup>

Du Shiniang's *qing* is highly emphasized at the end by Feng Menglong through her act of tossing jewels before her suicide. After Du Shiniang personally inspects the thousand taels of silver that Sun Fu has sent to the boat, she asks to have her jewel box back so that she can take

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<sup>92</sup> Mowry, *Chinese Love Stories*, 13,152.

<sup>93</sup> Zhang Zhiyan, "Emotion *Qing* in Early Modern England and Late Imperial China, with a Focus on Emotion in Shakespeare's Plays and Ming-Qing Literature," *Ming Qing Studies* I (2012): 225.

<sup>94</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 549.

<sup>95</sup> Hsu, "Courtesans and Scholars in the Writings of Feng Menglong," 53.

out Li Jia's travel permit. But once Du Shiniang unlocks the jewel box, she starts picking the gems from drawers and tossing them all into the river.<sup>96</sup> Symbolizing high monetary value, the gems that have been thrown away contrasts with the detailed lists of monetary prices which run through Li Jia and Du Shiniang's matter in terms of its connotated meaning. At the beginning, the brothel's madam sets Du Shiniang's price for a thousand taels of silver. But because she knows Li Jia is a penniless man at that moment and no matter how much she prescribes Li Jia would not be able to pay, the madam offers a discount and acts as if she is mercy by setting the price to three hundred taels. Although Li Jia does successfully pay the whole required amount, he in fact takes Du Shiniang with him for free: half of the three hundred taels come from Du Shiniang's own private savings and the other half were raised by Li Jia's fellow scholar Liu Yuchun who considers Du Shiniang's love to Li Jia is sincere. When later Sun Fu raises the suggestion which is to offer Li Jia a thousand taels of silver for Du Shiniang, Li Jia gladly accepts it by saying Sun Fu has made him see the light. These lists of monetary prices that are interwoven with the love affair ultimately show that Li Jia actually makes a convenience of Du Shiniang, whom he gets without paying anything by himself, to earn the extra profit of a thousand taels. Li Jia's materialism thus is in stark contrast to Du Shiniang's dismissive attitude towards the jewels of high monetary prices, which she drops into the river as worthless things after seeing there is no chance for her to add grandeur to Li Jia as a way just to get accepted by Li Jia's family. Such comparison again affirms Du Shiniang's sincere willingness to spend the rest of the life with Li

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<sup>96</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 563.

Jia and her love to him.

Besides equating to monetary worth, the jewels have more significance. Of the symbolic associations, Allan H. Barr quotes Edward H. Schafer's claim that a jewel's "glossy luster typified the beneficent, morally enriching character of the Confucian virtue of 'humanity,' and its toughness and fine texture symbolized the virtues of the upright man."<sup>97</sup> Barr then continues to discuss the symbolic meaning in terms of Du Shiniang's story that "the gems are emblematic of...the emotional riches contained in a woman's love, and they defy mundane measurements of value."<sup>98</sup> According to Barr, the jewels that Du Shiniang tosses, which fully fill four drawers, are none other than the plenty of *qing* which has been accumulated during her course of falling in love with Li Jia. Although Du Shiniang's sincerity has been revealed already through *qing*, her physical action of tossing jewels parallels to the late Ming official Li Zhong's act of "flinging a pair of his wife's earring into the Yangtze, because he had vowed that he would keep nothing acquired during his term of office in Jiangxi" to demonstrate his sincerity.<sup>99</sup> Since "casting an object of value into the river has classical associations connoting...sincerity," Du Shiniang's behavior again confirms her genuine sentiment.<sup>100</sup>

Furthermore, the value of jewels that Du Shiniang tosses is consciously placed in an ascending order by Feng Menglong: the first drawer of jewelry is "worth hundreds of taels of

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<sup>97</sup> Barr, "The Wanli Context," 138.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Barr, "The Wanli Context," 139.

silver," the second one has jade and golden objects, the third drawer values "thousands of taels of silver," and the last chest includes "luminous pearls," "emeralds," and "cat's-eyes" which are so precious that "the value of which none could determine."<sup>101</sup> By deliberately making such an order and letting Du Shiniang toss herself into the river at last, Feng Menglong considered Du Shiniang, a person with sincerity, is worth even more than the most precious gem.

While the ending emphasizes Du Shiniang's spontaneous and sincere nature, it at the same time shows that Li Jia is a feigned character. Before the story goes to its end, Du Shiniang starts cleaning up and putting on the makeup after she knows Li Jia is going to exchange her for a thousand taels of silver with Sun Fu. By the time Du Shiniang finishes her toilette and is about to get on Sun Fu's boat, she glances at Li Jia and sees "a faint glow of joy on his face."<sup>102</sup> This simple description of the facial expression captures Li Jia's unintended revelation of his innermost feeling and perfectly shows Li Jia's insincerity to Du Shiniang: he gains a sense of relief and even delight by preparing to get rid of Du Shiniang; Du Shiniang to him is no more than a burden.

Apart from the portrait of Li Jia's unconscious expression, the end of the story again underscores his insincerity. After Du Shiniang has tossed jewelry from the jewel box for three drawers, she pulls out gems that are contained in the last drawer. At this point, as Feng Menglong shows: "amid thunderous cheers from the onlookers, Shiniang was about to throw them into the river when Li Jia, overcome with bitter remorse, flung his arms around her and broke into wails

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<sup>101</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 563.

<sup>102</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 562.

of grief."<sup>103</sup> The way in which Li Jia behaves here highly differs from the earlier scene: he is now completely immersed in sorrow and regret and no joy can be seen from him. However, such difference not only does not turn Li Jia into a character who has sincere emotion to Du Shiniang but even highlights his lack of sincerity. The circumstance in which Li Jia cries bitterly and shows regretful feelings about what he has done is when "the wall of spectators now gathered on the shore."<sup>104</sup> Erving Goffman argues that "when an individual appears before others his actions will influence the definition of the situation which they come to have."<sup>105</sup> With the large numbers of people who are curiously watching what is going on, Li Jia, the crucial person who has made things going wrong, definitely wishes to reduce his guilt and leave a positive image in front of others through his behavior. Thus all of Li Jia's tears and emotions can be understood as nothing but a part of his performance to gain favor from the spectators. Instead of using Song Maocheng's description that when onlookers "were about to rush forward and beat Li," he had already cast off and went his way, Feng Menglong rewrote it in the way that "gnashing their teeth and raising their fists, the crowd swarmed menacingly toward Li Jia."<sup>106</sup> By intensifying the viewers' degree of rage in his depiction, Feng Menglong showed that he himself condemned and disdained Li Jia, a person who lacks true emotion.

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<sup>103</sup> Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 563.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959), 6.

<sup>106</sup> Hanan, "The Making of The Pearl-Sewn Shirt," 146; Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang, *Stories to Caution the World*, 564.

Du Shiniang and Li Jia's positions, the courtesan and the literatus, are located at the two poles of Chinese social rank: the courtesan is the marginalized and the literatus enjoys the high status. Through the emphasis on Du Shiniang's spontaneity and sincerity from the aspects of *xia* and *qing* and Li Jia's feigned nature at the end of the story, Feng Menglong challenged the normal criteria and elevated the morally superior Du Shiniang to the prestigious position while looking down on Li Jia. With his intention to defend folk literature through Du Shiniang's speech and the shared peripheral status between courtesans and folk literature, Feng Menglong thus metaphorically redeemed this underrated literary type which shares the same spontaneous and sincere characteristics with Du Shiniang and brought it to the center.

### **Conclusion**

As a follower of Li Zhi and Yuan Hongdao, Feng Menglong fully appreciated folk literature and believed that it should be placed on a higher status than the archaic elite literature. Besides demonstrating his disapproval of the superficial imitation of prose and poetry by the past masters in works' prefaces, Feng Menglong showed his attitude in his stories. By portraying the character Du Shiniang through the metaphorical rhetoric, Feng Menglong was taking an action to oppose the false feeling in the archaic elite literature and to praise the spontaneous and sincere nature of folk literature.

Written during the late Ming, Feng Menglong's "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" is a forerunner of a growing genre in the Qing dynasty. One of the examples can be seen from the works produced by Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716-1797). Among the diverse themes of Yuan Mei's poems, there is one specifically praises women. While Yuan Mei eulogized imperial

concubines and civilian women, he also showed respect to courtesans.<sup>107</sup> In a poem written for the portrait of the Ming era courtesan Liu Rushi, Yuan Mei eulogizes Liu Rushi's national integrity and thereby satirizes late Ming celebrities, especially Liu Rushi's husband Qian Qianyi, who prepared to abandon their emperor and to surrender to the Qing military force.<sup>108</sup> The way in which the courtesan Liu Rushi was regarded superior to the literatus Qian Qianyi by Yuan Mei because of her moral value is exactly a real life mirror image of Feng Menglong's attitude toward the courtesan Du Shiniang and the literatus Li Jia in the story. It is thus proper to say that Yuan Mei's admired approach to Liu Rushi and the courtesan group in general was affected by his predecessor Feng Menglong of the Ming dynasty.

In *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Houlou meng* 红楼梦), written by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (1765-1763) during the Qing dynasty and considered to be the milestone of Chinese romantic fiction, describes in detail the life of the eminently rich family Jia and their servants and employees. The main plot line traces the male protagonist Jia Baoyu and his relationship with two female cousins Lin Daiyu and Xue Baochai, who are opposite in character. After a series of adventurous complications, Jia Baoyu thinks he is finally able to marry Lin Daiyu but discovers on his wedding night that in fact his bride is Xue Baochai. Lin Daiyu dies soon afterward and Jia Baoyu, at the end of the novel, becomes the disciple of a Daoist master and a Buddhist monk as a way to say farewell to the secular world. According to Wilt Idema and Lloyd Haft's argument in

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<sup>107</sup> Liang Kun, "Female Consciousness in Yuan Mei's Poems" (*Yuan Mei shige zhong de nüxing yishi*) 袁枚诗歌中的女性意识, *Journal of Language and Literature Studies* 16 (August 2009): 99.

<sup>108</sup> Liang, "Female Consciousness in Yuan Mei's Poems," 100.

*A Guide to Chinese Literature*, the main theme of *Dream of the Red Chamber* is the relation between appearance and reality. "'Appearance' (*se*) is the world as it seems to be" and thus means the phenomenal reality. What the novel and particularly the ending reveal is that "the highest truth is the insight that phenomenal reality is ultimately empty (*kong*)...Those who are attached to appearances regard this highest truth as nonsense; those who recognize the true nature of reality reject the world as false—in Chinese, *jia*, undoubtedly intentionally homophonous with Jia Baoyu's family name."<sup>109</sup> Therefore, similar to Feng Menglong's "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" which was written a century prior, *Dream of the Red Chamber* also intends to embody the concepts of authenticity on another level. And the wordplay on Jia Baoyu's family name again echoes Feng Menglong's use of the character *jia* for Li Jia's first name to emphasize the true-fake dichotomy. These resemblances that can be found between the Qing literature and "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" suggest the reference value of the story for future works. Such value thus perhaps well explains the reason why this Feng Menglong's story keeps being a focal point among scholars and gains its popularity even today.

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<sup>109</sup> Idema and Haft, *A Guide to Chinese Literature*, 223.

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