

夏完淳：套數二首

Two Song Suites

By Xia Wanchun

Translated by Sunny Yuchen Liu

Translator's Introduction

Taoshu 套數 (song suites, also called *taoqu* 套曲 or *santao* 散套) refers to a set of *qu* arias that are arranged in a certain order and written in the same rhyme scheme and the tunes (*qupai* 曲牌) of which are in the same tonal mode (*qudiao* 曲調).¹ Much more complicated in structure than a single aria (*xiaoling* 小令), *taoshu* is preferred when the poet intends a fuller discussion of a topic.²

The two song suites translated here are the only extant ones by Xia Wanchun (1631–1647).³ Both were written in the autumn of 1647, when the teenager was imprisoned in Jinling (present-day Nanjing), shortly before he was beheaded for treason. Famous for rebelling against Manchu rule at a young age, in his limited lifetime Wanchun also established himself as a prodigious poet—his father Xia Yunyi 夏允彝 (1596–1645) being a member of the influential literary association, the Ji Club 幾社, he was able to meet and be mentored by

¹ For more information on the rules of composing song suites, see Ren Zhongmin 任中敏, *Sanqu gailun* 散曲概論 [A general discussion of *qu* arias] ([China?]: Zhonghua shuju, 1931), *juan* 1, pp. 16a–18a.

² Luo Jintang 羅錦堂, *Zhongguo sanqu shi* 中國散曲史 [A history of *qu* arias in China] (Xi'an: Shaanxi shifan daxue chuban zongshe, 2017), p. 24.

³ See Bai Jian 白堅, ed., *Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao* 夏完淳集箋校 [Xia Wanchun's collected works, with notes and commentary] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991). The two works are on pp. 384–385 and pp. 386–387 respectively.

learned intellectuals since childhood. When the Qing troops crossed the Yangtze to the south in 1645, Xia Yunyi took his only son to join the army, fighting across the Jiangnan area. The father committed suicide in September, demonstrating his determination to never yield to the invaders; the son, following his father's will, sold off their family assets to support anti-Qing campaigns and continued his fight.⁴ Wanchun is said to be a brave soldier respected by his superiors and subordinates; unfortunately, in the summer of 1647, he was captured just as he was about to cross the sea to Zhoushan island and join the Southern Ming court.

While in prison, Wanchun kept on writing, if only to express his ambition to recover the lost land and his frustration in failing to do so, as well as his longing for home and comrades-in-arms; the two song suites are no exception.⁵ His wistful verses produced there are collected in *Nanguan cao* 南冠草 [Poetry drafts of a prisoner]. In addition to poetry, he wrote farewell letters to his mother and his wife, which also offer glimpses into the mind of a seventeen-*sui*-old facing a looming execution.⁶

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⁴ Some Qing-dynasty biographies claim Wanchun committed suicide following in his father's footsteps. For a detailed analysis of the variations of Wanchun's death, see Sun Huei-min 孫慧敏, 'Shuxie zhonglie: Mingmo Xia Yunyi, Xia Wanchun fuzi xunjie gushi de xingcheng yu liuchuan' 書寫忠烈: 明末夏允彝、夏完淳父子殉節故事的形成與流傳 [Making the Martyrology of Two Late-Ming Loyalists: Hsia Yun-i and Hsia Wan-ch'un], *Taida lishi xuebao* 台大歷史學報 [Historical Inquiry], no. 26 (Dec. 2000), pp. 279–281.

⁵ Both suites mention a certain person whom the poet missed, but scholars have different opinions on how to interpret this: some take it to refer to Wanchun's wife Qian Qinzhuan 錢秦篆 (1631–?), some think it's Prince Lu 魯王 (Zhu Yihai 朱以海, 1618–1662), then the leader of Southern Ming, while others understand it as the perished Ming dynasty. Cf. Bai Jian, *Xia Wanchun ji jianjiao*, p. 385 n. and p. 387 n.; Huang Tianji 黃天驥 and Luo Xishi 羅錫詩, comps. and annots., *Yuan Ming sanqu jinghua* 元明散曲精華 [The cream of Yuan and Ming *qu* arias] (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1992), p. 156 n. 12.

⁶ For an English translation of the letter to his mother, see D. E. Pollard, trans., 'From the Death Cell, to His Mother', *Renditions*, nos. 41 & 42 (1994), pp. 110–113.

仙呂·傍妝臺·自敘

**Self-Confession: In the Xianlü Mode, Beginning with the
Tune of ‘Bang zhuangtai’**

I, a wanderer, feel new sorrows
by a curtain covered with autumn shadows, at moonlit dusk.
How many times are my dreams sunk in rivers under the moon,
my misery kindled by springtime lakes!
Here come white geese before the frost; I shed tears as I drink.
With drunken eyes I see green mountains; in my dream, my beloved.
The hero is so regretful,
tears soaking his handkerchief.
Clink, clank—the frequent sounds of the water clock.

客愁新
一簾秋影月黃昏
幾回夢斷三江月
愁殺五湖春
霜前白雁樽前淚
醉裡青山夢裡人
英雄恨
淚滿巾
響丁東玉漏聲頻

To the Previous Tune

My brows knitted,
my heart full of woe—with whom can I talk?
Alas! A homeless man roving through the vast world,
a soul with no lakes or seas to go back to.
Where are the three thousand fine swords buried?
How many soldiers returned from the warships miles away?
The hero is so regretful,
tears soaking his handkerchief.
When will the remaining three Chu clans extinguish the Qin?

前腔
兩眉顰
滿腔心事向誰論
可憐天地無家客
湖海未歸魂
三千寶劍埋何處
萬里樓船更幾人
英雄恨
淚滿巾
何年三戶可亡秦

To the Tune of 'Bushi lu'

I look in the distance at the autumn clouds.
Having aged in the autumn wind, I have nothing left but my body.
Sorrows accumulate,
crushing me as I face towers tranquil as still water and mirrors stained
with dust.
For the one I love,
time after time I let go of the indignation in my heart,
dragging out an existence, only to repay her kindnesses of old days.
Above the gleaming water—
a goose taking off to deliver my message to a place far away.
But my silk letter won't make it there.
Oh, it never will!



極目秋雲
老去秋風剩此身
添愁悶
悶殺我樓台如水鏡如塵
為伊人
幾番拋死心頭憤
勉強偷生舊日恩
水鱗鱗
雁飛欲寄衡陽信
素書無準
素書無準

不是路

To the Tune of 'Diao jiao'er xu'

I once was an ambitious man hoping to recover the country.
Think of the day I tied up my hair and joined the army,
entering the military camp amidst bugle calls under the frosty sky;
think of the day my sword pierced the wind,
and my spear dashed into the clouds.
A flag in front of my tent,
a seal on my girdle;
riding a piebald horse,
wearing willow leaves as armour,
I stirred the ranks of the barbarians.
Time passes by in the glimpse of an eye,
I'm left here buried in the sorrows of parting.
Gazing at the clouds and mountains—
the barracks from old times are now
covered with wild grass in the slanting sunlight.

我本是西笑狂人
想那日東髮從軍
想那日霜角轅門
想那日挾劍驚風
想那日橫槊凌雲
帳前旗
腰後印
桃花馬
衣柳葉
驚穿胡陣
流光一瞬
離愁一身
望雲山
當時壁壘
蔓草斜曛

掉角兒序

To the Previous Tune

I am dying to reclaim the glory of old days,
and to see again my countrymen;
How eager I am, the ambitious man hoping to recover the country,
a solitary subject by the Eastern Sea!
The moon empty,
The wind blows strong,
The night sky lit up,
The flowers fall like rain.
The hero—both his temples now grey.
With no one to share the chrysanthemum flowers, I wonder,
is my family celebrating the Double Ninth?
Recall the old times when,
under the moon, carrying a sword,
weary though I was, I rode ten thousand miles.

萬里風塵
吳鉤月下
憶當年
丹萸幾人
黃花無分
英雄雙鬢
花似雨
夜如年
風力緊
月輪空
盼殺我東海孤臣
盼殺我西笑狂夫
盼殺我故國人民
盼殺我當日風雲

前腔

Coda

Woe is me! A lonely man struggling in dire straits, full of regrets;
a withered soul drifting about, longing constantly for his distant homeland.
The meal worth a thousand pieces of gold—how dare I not requite her
kindness!

餘音
可憐寂寞窮途恨
憔悴江湖九逝魂
一飯千金敢報恩

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Wandering Amidst Landscape 同是天涯流浪客
by Lau Ping-hang 劉秉衡 dated 1980
Courtesy of the Hong Kong Museum of Art

仙呂·甘州歌·感懷

**Reflections: In the Xianlü Mode, Beginning with the Tune of
'Ganzhou ge'**

Rise and fall, prosperity and decay.
What a shame—heroes eventually turn to dust,
their gallant bones buried in desolate lands.
For tens of thousands of years
there have been countless rulers and subjects.
My friend, of all the six dynasties' glory, only the Garden of Fragrant Joy
remains,
with several white flags fluttering above the Stone City—don't you see?
Beyond the azure sky
lies the Island of White Egrets,
where, at sunset, ravens fly across the unhurried water.
Standing in the slanting sun
is the Tower of Weaving Finery;
beside the half-hung bamboo blinds, a crescent moon.

興亡盛朽
歎英雄黃土
俠骨荒丘
千秋萬歲
無限為龍為狗
君不見六朝煙草餘芳樂
幾片降旗上石頭
青天外
白鷺洲
暮鴉殘照水悠悠
斜陽裡
結綺樓
湘簾半挂月如鉤

To the Previous Tune

New coldness creeps into my shabby coat.
Think of when I rode my fine white-saddled horse,
drifting about, unable to find a confidant.
I'm like river flowers and river grasses;
as the autumn arrives, the sorrow of parting takes form.
Recall the days when I shot arrows with infallible precision below the
cold barbarian clouds;
brandished my sword, its tip as if drawing lotus flowers, under the
autumn moon of my hometown.
I've been in misery for three months,
dreaming about the lost land,
counting the days before I can finally return home.
I'm a thousand miles away,
tears welling up in my eyes.
Who, in the west wind, will receive my letters?

前腔
新寒入敝裘
想霜韉駿馬
飄零難偶
江花江草
秋來翦出離愁
想著我弓開楊葉胡雲冷
劍拂蓮花漢月秋
愁三月
夢九州
歸期數盡大刀頭
人千里
淚雨眸
西風雁字倩誰收

To the Previous Tune

I managed to keep silent, my tears still falling.
A regrettable scene—a deserted ferry crossing
lined by withered willows.
In this quiet, sleepless night,
aimlessly I dive deep into my past—
I used to lash with a treasured whip that rendered the winds soft, my
arms covered in gold brassards;
used to wear brocade armbands, and wield a fine sword whose blade was
cold as frost.
Gusts of wind sweep by,
the dew's dissipating;
in the cell next to mine, someone's singing 'Song of Yizhou'.
A cup filled with wine,
my temples flecked with grey,
I'm jolted from a dream, awakened from drunkenness, only to see the
moon over a forlorn tower.

夢 鬢 杯 隔 露 飄 寶 珊 漫 清 衰 悵 吞
回 上 中 牆 影 威 劍 鞭 將 宵 蒲 荒 聲
酒 秋 物 人 流 駛 霜 風 往 無 殘 煙 哭
醒 月 唱 小 錦 軟 事 寐 柳 古 未
空 伊 臂 金 追 求
樓 州 鞢 條 脫

前腔

To the Previous Tune

I am but a prisoner,
gazing at the clouds and ranges stretching out,
who can never bear to look back.
The water clock strikes morning,
my brow furrowed, my heart aching.
Several times, alone behind the blinds, listening to the midnight drizzle,
I dream—
I'm about to ride the wind above the sea, travelling ten thousand miles!
The rain passes by in vain,
the water, carefree, flows away;
a lonely boat released down the cold river amidst the thick fog.
A shadow in the air,
bubbles in the waves;
where's the Yumen border pass for me to fight and earn recognition?

前腔

南冠客楚囚
望雲山萬里
那禁回首
丁丁曉箭
難為心坎眉頭
幾番的空簾翦雨三更夢
我待要望海乘風萬里游
雨空逝
水自流
寒江積霧放孤舟
空中影
浪上漚
玉關何地覓封侯

Coda

Oh, where are you, my beloved?
I'm writing this in Jinling,
you, asleep in your boudoir;
in the same west wind, we share sorrow in two separate places.

餘音
我那人呵影何方
書在金陵
客夢西樓
一樣西風兩地愁



Landscape by unidentified Ming or Qing artist. Courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art

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Four Landscapes (No. 3) 山水四屏(三) by Feng Sizuo 馮斯佐
Hanging scroll, ink and colour on paper, 64 x 24 cm
Collection of Art Museum, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Gift of Mr Ho Iu-kwong, Mr Huo Pao-tsai, Mr Lai Tak, and others
Acc. no. 1973.0387