

PICTURING *GUQIN* MUSIC: MIN QIJI'S AND OTHER'S ILLUSTRATIONS OF "YINGYING LISTENS TO *QIN*" FOR *XIXIANG JI*

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How was *qin* 琴 (zither) music pictorialized in traditional China? This is the core question of this paper, which is part of a bigger project to investigate how Chinese paintings and illustrations suggest the presence of *qin* music. In our technically advanced age, the visualization of music is a branch of science that attempts to map the notes, the tempo, and the acoustic dynamics of music through graphics. Western music notation is first and foremost a visualization of music, and a MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) is a modern device to further capture the nuances of music in visual terms (Fig. 1). However, in traditional China, music was not perceived as a science, and both the music notations of *jianzipu* 減字譜 or 'partial-character tablatures' for *qin*, and of *gongchipu* 工尺譜 or 're-mi score' for other instruments make no attempt to visualize the music (Fig. 2).¹ The tablatures for *qin* show neither the pitch nor the tempo of the notes but the methods and the positions of the fingerings on the instrument. The tablatures show little concern about the essential musical elements of 'time' (the duration of each note) and 'sound' (the dynamic of music), notating neither 'beat' nor 'volume.'

Traditional Chinese music notation rejects any attempt to turn it into a science, insisting that music is essentially an expression of human-oriented subjectivity as musicians must interpret the notation based on their own experience and emotion. The notation of music was complemented by the attempt to visualize the music in pictures, and it was Chinese painting and illustration that assumed the burden of capturing and expressing in visual terms the essence of the musical idea.

¹ The *gongchi* music notation began in the Tang Dynasty. It uses Chinese characters to indicate the names of the notes. The characters and their corresponding Western names of the notes are: *he* 合 (low sol), *si* 四 (low la), *yi* 一 (low ti), *shang* 上 (do), *chi* 尺 (re), *gong* 工 (mi), *fan* 凡 (fa), *liu* 六 (sol), *wu* 五 (la), and *yi* 乙 (ti). The earliest extant score in the form of *gongchipu* notation dates from 933 and was discovered in Dunhuang. See Yang Yinliu 1986, vol. 2, p. 70.

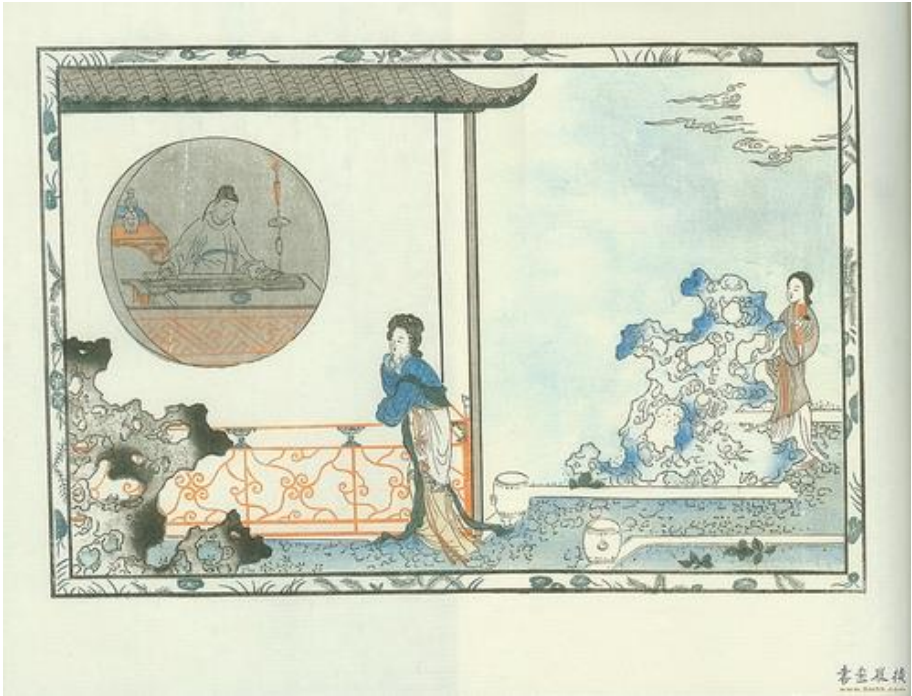


Fig. 3. Min Qiji, “Yingying Listens to *Qin*”, the ninth illustration of the twenty-one color illustrations of *Xixiang Ji*, Cologne.

This paper explores just such aspects in the visualization of music through the illustrations of “Yingying Listens to *Qin*” (Yingying Tingqin 鶯鶯聽琴) produced by Min Qiji 閔齊伋 (b. 1580) and other late Ming illustrators for Wang Shifu’s 王實甫 (fl. 14th century) famous play *The Story of the Western Wing* (*Xixiang Ji* 西廂記, Fig. 3).² This paper explores these illustrators’ methods as exemplifications of how music was pictorialized in traditional China. In her article “Picturing Listening: The Sight of Sounds in Chinese Painting”, art historian Susan Nelson engages in the same effort, exploring how abstract sound is captured in visual terms.³ She proposes that the tensed and attentive gestures of the depicted figures suggest the presence of sounds. This effect is clearly featured in many famous

² Many scholars have attempted to understand Min’s twenty-one color illustrations as a whole. See Purtle 2010, pp. 54-73; Xu Wenqin 2010, pp. 63-160; Ma Meng-ching 2006, pp. 181-191; Wu Hung 1996, pp. 243-259; Kobayashi 1988, pp. 32-50; and Delbanco 1983, pp. 12-23. My Chinese article titled “Embedded Realities in Wang Heng’s Play *Zhen Kuilei* and Min Qiji’s Illustration of a Puppet Performance” was the first study to focus on the nineteenth of Min’s twenty-one illustrations. See Hsiao Li-ling 2007c.

³ Nelson 1998/1999, pp. 30-55.

paintings in China. One of the most famous examples is *Quietly Listening to the Pine Wind* (*Jingting Songfeng* 靜聽松風) a painting dated before 1246 (Fig. 4) and attributed to the Southern Song artist Ma Lin's 馬麟 (dates unknown). Following Nelson's example of examining the presence of sound as suggested by bodily gesture, this paper further aims to explore how the individual pictorial motifs, the colors, the arrangements of these motifs, and the composition depict the presence of music on the silent page.

"Yingyin Listens to *Qin*" (Fig. 3) illustrates the female protagonist Cui Yingying 崔鶯鶯 as she listens to the male protagonist Zhang Gong 張拱 perform on the *qin*. According to the text, the deep feeling of his music reveals his love. The illustration to be considered here is a bit unusual. Most late Ming illustrations of this scene, like the one from a 1614 edition of *Xixiang Ji* (Fig. 7), lack any formal decorative border. The *dramatis personae* appear in the environment of daily life. Min Qiji presents this dramatic scene as a painting inside a decorative border ornamented with motifs of grass, bindweed flowers (i.e. morning glory), and wheat stalks. Min further embeds the scene, the music, and the *dramatis personae* in multiple framing devices. This is a clear example of what the Chinese art historian Wu Hung calls a 'metapicture', in which a picture is embedded within another picture.⁴ I would add that this 'metapicture' not only embeds a picture within a picture, but embeds a chain of pictures in a chain of frames. The multiple framing devices highlight the *qin* music, which is the dominant theme, while multiple contrasts and echoes of pictorial motifs are created within and across the multiple frames. This paper aspires to unravel the meanings of these complicated multilayered framings, and to investigate how *qin* music is present and accentuated in an essentially silent medium—illustration—through the subtle contrasts and echoes of pictorial motifs.

The idea of contrast and echo is perfectly exemplified by a unique *qin*-playing technique called *yinghe* 應合, which literally means 'to answer' and 'to match.' *Yinghe* technique consists of the simultaneous contrast and echo between a sliding movement (lit. glissando) up to a specific note and the simultaneously plucking of the same note. The glissando note is produced by the remnant of the previous note by moving the left finger up and down a string after the sound is made, and it is echoed and matched by the same note created simultaneously by plucking a different string. The sound effect of the *yinghe* is the echo of the two identical notes and the contrast between a "solid" (*shi* 實) and a "virtual" (*xu* 虛) note. This paper thus adopts the term *yinghe* to connote the idea of simultaneously contrasting and echoing. The following section will discuss how *qin* music relies on the principle of *yinghe*.

⁴ Wu Hung 1996, p. 237.

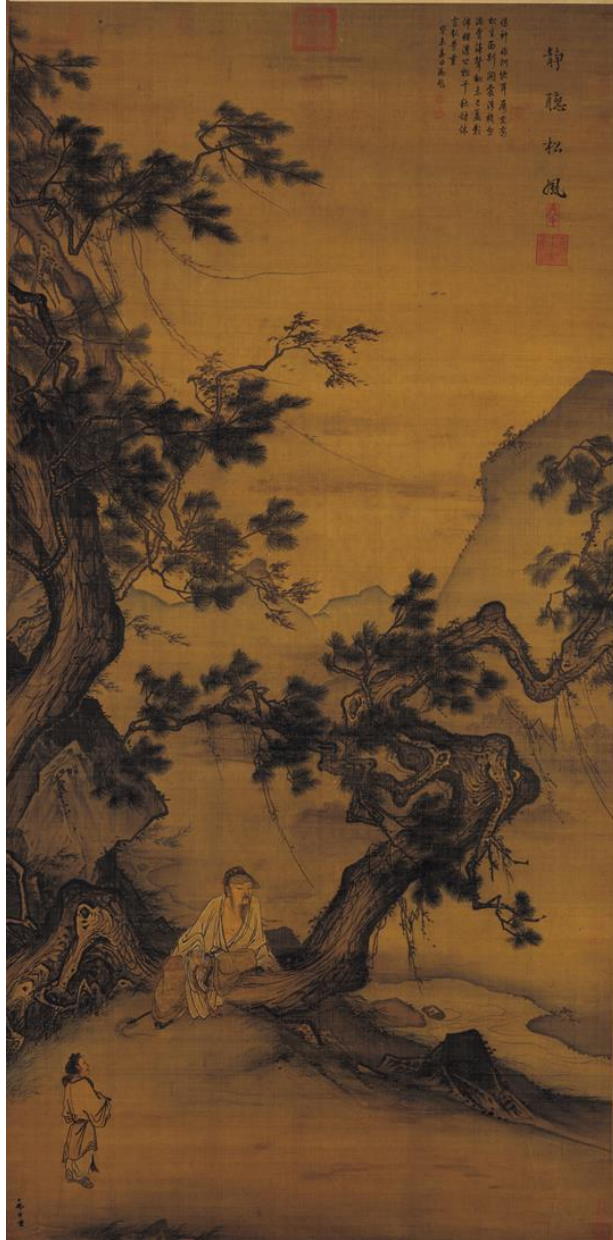


Fig. 4. Ma Lin 馬麟, *Quietly Listening to the Pine Wind* (*Jingting Songfeng* 靜聽松風), dated before 1246. In the collection of National Palace Museum, Taipei.

1. Man in the Cosmos: The Qin as Physical Instrument

Contrast and echo are the essential principles used to create the *qin* instrument. The body of the instrument is designed to contrast and echo nature itself (Fig. 5). The length of the instrument is set at 3 *chi* 尺 9 *cun* 寸 1 *fen* 分, which begins with the number 3, culminates in the number 9, and returns to the number 1. The width is 6 *cun*, which symbolizes “the cosmos” as represented by the proverbial term “Six Directions” (*liuhe* 六合), i.e. north, south, east, west, up, and down. The width of the tail is 2 *cun* 4 *fen*, which symbolizes the twenty-four solar phases of the Chinese calendar. The width of the head is 4 *cun*, which represents the four seasons. The “yueshan” 岳山, the wooden bridge that supports the seven strings at the head of the instrument, symbolizes the mountains, while its width of 3 *fen* the “three compendia” (*sancai* 三才), i.e. sky, earth, and people.



Fig. 5. *Qin*, in the style of “phoenix wing.”

The string length has the traditional measurement of 3 *chi* 尺 6 *cun* 寸 6 *fen* 分, which echoes the approximate number of days in a year. Its curved top mirrors the dome of the sky (*tianyuan* 天圓), and its flat bottom reflects the flat land (*defang* 地方), which together embodies the Chinese traditional cosmology encapsulated in the dictum “the sky is round and the earth is square” (*tianyuan difang*). The two sound holes on the bottom side epitomize water—the larger middle hole is called “dragon pond” (*longchi* 龍池) and the square hole at the end is called “phoenix swamp” (*fengzhao* 鳳沼). The thirteen dots (*hui* 徽) marking where the “harmonics” are on each string echo the twelve months and the leap month, while the original

five strings—King Wen of the Zhou Dynasty allegedly invented the seven-stringed *qin* instrument at a later date—symbolize the five elements (gold, wood, water, fire, and soil) that comprise nature.⁵ The shape of the instrument further corresponds to the shape of a human body: head (*shou* 首), neck (*xiang* 頤), shoulder (*jian* 肩), waist (*yao* 腰), bottom (*wei* 尾), and feet (*zu* 足). The body of *qin* thus ingeniously metaphorizes the human amidst the natural world or what I term “man in the cosmos.”

The *qin*'s tones likewise embody the concept of *yinghe*. The tones belong to three basic sound types: the ‘natural tone’ (*sanyin* 散音) of the strings when plucked or strummed; the ‘pressed tone’ (*anyin* 按音) produced by a left finger pressing on a string while a right finger plucks or strums the pressed string; and ‘harmonics’ (*fanyin* 泛音) produced by the left fingers lightly touching one or two spots indicated by the thirteen dotted markers while the right fingers pluck or strum the strings to form partials of the fundamental tones. The three tonal qualities stand respectively for the sky (*tian* 天), the earth (*di* 地), and the human (*ren* 人).⁶ The ‘harmonics’ are light and floating like the sky, the ‘natural tones’ are low and deep like the solid earth, and the ‘pressed tones’ are mild and tender like ‘the murmurings of boys and girls’ (*nini ernü yu* 呢呢兒女語).⁷ These three tonal qualities contrast and echo each other to enrich the monophonic character of *qin* music. An important echoing feature of *qin* music is the dominance of the ‘harmonics’, and especially the contrasts between the ‘harmonic’ and the ‘natural tone’ or the ‘pressed tone.’ The compositional principle of *qin* music is to create contrast and echo—the *yinghe*—of musical motifs played in high and low pitches and in different octaves, as well as contrast and echo of two plucked notes, of a plucked and a *glissando* note, and of two *glissando* notes.

The most unique aspect of playing *qin* is to oscillate the left fingers along the strings once a ‘pressed tone’ is produced. Different ways, ranges, speeds, and duration of oscillations create different effects of vibrato—which ethnomusicologist Joseph Lam refers to as ‘melodic tones’⁸—to echo, elongate, and enrich the sound of a pressed tone. Traditionally, these vibratos form the most important aspect of Chinese music ‘*yun*’ 韻, in which the essence, spirit,

⁵ The cosmological correspondences discussed in this paragraph are from *Taigu Yiyin*, 1: 4a-b.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 1: 8a-b.

⁷ This phrase derives from the opening line of a poem titled “Listening to Master Ying Play Qin” 聽穎師彈琴 by the famous Tang poet Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824). In *Quan Tangshi*, 340: 3813.

⁸ Joseph Lam, in his analyses of the *qin* tune “The Lament of the Changmen Palace” (Changmen Yuan 長門怨), employs the concepts of “structural tones” (referring to notes produced by “natural” and “pressed tones”), “melodic tones” (notes that slide toward or away from a structural note), and “percussion tones” (hammering on the strings by the left thumb or left fourth finger). See Lam 1993, pp. 353-385.

and aesthetic of Chinese music lies.⁹ When the finger tips oscillate to create vibrato, moreover, friction between the left-hand fingers and the strings occurs. The sounds produced by this friction are considered part of the essence of *qin* music rather than as an unwarranted noise. These traces of the oscillations echo and contrast the vibrato even when these traces are too faint to be detected. Ethnomusicologist Frank Kouwenhoven describes them as ‘silences’ featuring “not only pauses and interruptions but also the dying away of audible sounds, supported by hand and finger movements that may continue for a while after any audible pitch has disappeared.”¹⁰ An illustrative example of this is the beginning section of the most popular *qin* tune: “Geese Descend on Flat Sand” (Pingsha Yanluo 平沙雁落).

The structure of a *qin* tune, likewise, hinges primarily on contrast and echo, with the same motifs rendered in different pitches and octaves. For example, a music motif might be played in lower octaves and then in higher octaves, and then again in lower octaves, as demonstrated by tunes like “Three Variations on the Plum Blossoms” (Meihua Sannong 梅花三弄) and “The Drunkard” (Jiukuang 酒狂). Another form of contrast and echo involves a motif played on the fifth, sixth, and seventh strings reiterated on the first, second, third, and fourth strings. An excellent example is the third section of “Water Flowing on Rocks” (Jishi Liuquan 激石流泉).¹¹ A final instance of contrast and echo is a recurrent, unifying motif, as demonstrated by “The Mantra of Monk Pu’an” (Pu’an Zhou 普庵咒)—also titled “The Monk Danzhang” (Shi Danzhang 釋但章)—in which the same music motif ends each of the ten sections (excluding the introduction and the coda).

2. *The Conflicted yet Harmonious Image: The Pictorial Music of Contrast and Echo*

Understanding the essence of *qin*, Min Qiji utilizes the same principles of *yinghe* in his visualization of music. Min’s illustration is divided into two contrasting but echoing parts. On the right is a pebbled terrace with a thrice-bended foot-rail marking both sides of a walk, with the moon and clouds floating high above in the upper left-hand corner. A Taihu rockery protrudes beyond the rail of the terrace, with a decorated stone stool anchoring the rail and Yingying’s maid

⁹ Edward Ho discusses three traditional aspects in musical aesthetics prized by *literati*: the idea of *qiyun* 氣韻, the structure of *qi chen zhuan he* 起承轉合, and the musicality defined by *yijing* 意境. See Ho 1997, pp. 35-49.

¹⁰ Kouwenhoven 2001, p. 42.

¹¹ A wonderful performance of the tune by the late *guqin* musician Wu Zhaoji 吳兆基 (1908-1997) is available on Youtube at the link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCepyN6pRuM> (accessed on October 26, 2012).

Hongniang 紅娘 standing immediately behind the rockery. The walk is flanked by an empty chasm on the one side and by a pond in which float a few leaves on the other side. The parallel rails, with their mirror-image stools, contrast and echo each other. This terrace and chasm is framed by the edge of the house and the border of the picture, giving an impression of an independent picture in a frame. On the left is a house partially visible with a roof, a wall featuring a circular window. The window frames musician Zhang Gong, who is seemingly performing in an inner room, as if he is an image painted on a fan. The wall frames both Cui Yingying, who listens to the music, and the round image of Zhang Gong. This left half of the illustration is structured as if a fan painting is embedded inside a rectangular painting. The performance in the round frame is embedded within the frame of the listener. The wall further divides the indoor space occupied by musician Zhang from the outdoor space occupied by the listener Cui and the peeping Hongniang, thereby separating the outdoor sphere into two parts: it frames Yingying within and Hongniang beyond the sphere of the wall, and introduces a sense that the two outdoor characters are situated in different frames rather than in a continuous space. The right and left sides eventually join to form a picture that is further framed by a decorative floral border, which is in turn framed within the page border. Indeed, Min has created a complicated layering of embedded frames.

These multiple framings create contrast and echo. The floral border seems to affirm the whole dramatic scene as a picture rather than a stage performance. However, Min's decision to place Zhang on an elevated plane and Yingying behind a railing invokes the stage. The musician, the audience, and the Taihu rockery form a triangle with the performance symbolically at the vertex, highlighting the main theme of the illustration—the *qin*. The illustration thus creates tensions between its status as a picture and its status as a stage performance, between the stationary and the kinetic, which further recalls the musical contrasts between the sound *sheng* 聲 (the plucked note) and the *yun* (the kinetic glissando note). These tensions show that Min was acutely aware of the complexity involved in creating a musical performance on the silent page. The intrinsic irreconcilability of these opposing media clearly occupies his mind.

The irresolute tensions created by these multiple frames correspond to the principle of *qin* music. These tensions are enhanced by the degree of brightness and openness within each frame. The performance frame is least open and the environment that contains the music playing is darker than the rest of the scene. The attempt to constrict or circumscribe the scene of performance is obvious: the circular window is emphatically enclosing and distancing. It does not invite spectatorship, suggesting that what matters is hearing the music rather than witnessing the musician. The tension created by these peculiar pictorial designs is clearly intentional. It dominates the composition, implying the simultaneous presence of echo and contrast which, in itself, is the very principle of *qin* music.

Tensions likewise arise in the seemingly complete yet divided designs of the picture. Although the illustration is to be viewed as a whole, the right part of the

house and the left part of the terrace seem to be independent of each other. This impression is strengthened by the fact that these two spaces are in perspectival conflict. The terrace progresses diagonally toward the right, while the house sits diagonally to the left. The two spaces form the shape of a ‘V’, again echoing and contrasting each other. This ‘V’ shape is reiterated by the ‘V’ shape formed by the three figures—Zhang Gong at the upper left, Yingying at the bottom front, and Hongniang at the upper right. The ‘V’ composition is further accentuated by the ‘V’ shapes formed by the bending edge of the terrace rail. However, the illustration’s distinct halves are unified by the continuity of the ground, the sightlines of the two female figures, the bluish tone that dominates the illustration, and the many echoing pictorial motifs. The bifurcated yet coherent image thus embodies an impossible tension of simultaneous conflict and harmony. This tension recalls the ‘noises’ or ‘silences’ caused by the friction when fingers oscillate on the strings, creating vibrato. These ‘noises’ and ‘silences’ intrude and conflict with the music, yet forming an important part of the essence of musical harmony. The inevitable tension between the human fingers and the instrument is perfectly echoed and captured by the structural tension of the illustration. The ‘V’ shape of the pictorial structure further echoes the human body as the right hand plucks or strums the strings on the rightmost part of the instrument while the left hand stretches to the left part of the instrument to press the strings. The two stretching arms form a ‘V’ shape above the instrument just like the house and the terrace stretching diagonally in different directions. The illustration is thus a metaphor of the *qin* instrument.

Many *yinghe* motifs define the compositional principle of this picture, and these *yinghe* motifs further resemble the structure of *qin* music. The two Taihu rockeries not only echo each other in shape, color, and texture, but also recall the musical structure as the same motif repeats on both parts of the instrument—first on the left (lower pitch) and then on the right (higher pitch) or vice versa. The darker rockery on the left corresponds to the heavier tone of the lower pitch, while the lighter blue rockery on the right corresponds to the lighter tone of the higher pitch. The *yinghe* of the two rockeries recalls a *qin* tune titled “Happy Harmony between the Divine and the Human” (Shenren Chang 神人暢), in which the long beginning harmonic motif played at the rightmost side of the instrument is mirrored at the leftmost side. The hollow bright moon echoes the circular window of the house and perfectly captures the Shenren Chang’s harmonic motifs which are repeated on different sections of the instrument. The echoing gestures and positions of Yingying and Hongniang likewise invoke the same association with the musical structure. Here an additional musical element is suggested, as musical dynamics (i.e. expressive shifts in volume) are metaphorized by the different sizes of the two depicted figures. The stone stool by the bending edge of the terrace echoes the analogous stool by the pond-like structure. The absolute parallel of the same stools and the same bends evokes the parallelism of music motifs played in different keys and octaves. This echoing recalls the musical structure of the same motif repeated respectively on the

lower-pitched and higher-pitched strings on the same section of the instrument as demonstrated by the tune “Water Flowing on Rocks.” Equally parallel are the railing of the house and the railing-like hanging cloth affixed to the table where Zhang Gong plays *qin*, which elicit the same musical association.

The alternations between rocks and figures suggests an alternation between the natural tone and pressed tone constituting a rhythmic pattern that recalls the tonal and the rhythmic quality of a *qin* technique called ‘*dayuan*’ 打圓 (lit. ‘play circles’, indicated by the 𠄎 notation); this technique consists of seven sounds of the same note produced by repeating a ‘natural tone’ and a ‘pressed tone’, hence following a fixed rhythmic pattern of ♩ (natural) ♪ (press) ♪♩ (natural, press) ♪ (natural) ♪ (press) . (natural). The alternation changes if the pattern begins with a pressed tone. The circle of the window placed right above the rockery echoes the circle of the moon, which likewise is placed right above the rockery standing on the terrace. The circular motifs and the textural quality of this pairing also evoke the ‘*dayuan*’ technique which involves an alternation between a ‘harmonic’ and a ‘natural tone.’ Besides this, other two techniques specific to *qin* are involved: these are the so-called ‘*ruyi*’ 如一 (lit. ‘as one’, indicated by the 𠄎 notation), and ‘*shuangtan*’ 雙彈 (‘double strumming’, indicated by 𠄎). ‘*Ruyi*’ is produced by the right index or middle finger strumming on two adjacent strings with one note of ‘natural tone’ on one string and the same note of ‘pressed tone’ by pushing a left finger on the next string above it. The two notes sound as if one, thus the name ‘as one.’ ‘*Shuangtan*’, instead, is created by strumming consecutively the same note with the right index and middle fingers. The alternate name for ‘*shuangtan*’ is ‘to drum’ (*gu* 鼓) which resembles the juxtaposition of the two stone stools with the shape of traditional Chinese drums. In this case, the intended association of pictorial motifs with music is clear. The echo of the pairings of the circular window/rockery and the circular moon/rockery certainly produces the association of ‘*shuangtan ruyi*’, a playing technique that combines the ‘*shuangtan*’ and ‘*ruyi*’ in which the right index and middle fingers produce ‘*ruyi*’ twice consecutively.

3. The Picture as the Instrument

The pictorial designs further evoke the tonal qualities of the *qin* instrument. The Taihu rockeries echo the clouds in shape and in the convoluted contours, while the circles inside the rockeries represent the moon inside the clouds. Both images recall the ripple effect created by a drop of water, perfectly capturing the vibrations that propagate through the air after a sound is made. The progressively lighter colors, looser textures, and higher positions of the rockeries, together with the moon and clouds, further recall the distinction between ‘natural’ and ‘pressed’ tones, as well as the ‘harmonics’ that define the tonal qualities of *qin* music. On the left, the contours of the rockery echo the twisted

contour of the railing, while on the right the twisted lines of the pebbled ground mimic the rockery. These echoes parallel each other and suggest a musical motif repeated in different sections of a tune and on different parts of the instrument as demonstrated by “The Drunkard.” The convoluted contours and twisted lines inevitably give the impression of a vibrato as the one created by the oscillations of the left finger when playing a pressed note. The lines of the clouds, the ground, the railing, and the rocks help visualize this vibrato.

The *yinghe* motifs of the ground, the rockery, the moon and clouds invoke associations with the earth, the human, and the sky. The analogous couplings of one rockery with Yingying and the other with Hongniang strengthen this association which invokes the three tonal qualities of *qin* with the ground, the human, and the sky. The images of the ground, the rockery, and the moon and clouds hence become symbols of musical sound. The moon and the clouds embody the tonal quality of ‘harmonics’, as the lighter, airier sound seems to echo the fundamental tone. The white rim of the moon resembles the origin of the sound, while the vibratory lines extending from this rim recalls the vibration of “sound” rippling through the air. The solid and heavy sound of the natural tone is conveyed by the solidness and heaviness of the rockery, while the holes and the contorted lines of the rockery create a rhythmic impression and an echoing effect. The echoing effect generated by the instrument’s long strings is captured by the unique pattern and the tonal gradations of the blue of the rockeries. Both rockeries are rendered with many small areas of more concentrated and heavier blues which spread against washes of light blue. The heavy blue circle represents the solid natural tone, while the light blue wash suggests the way the sound propagates through the air. The rockeries’ different shades also convey variations in musical volume.

Similarly, the rhythm of colors and shapes featured in the illustration recalls the rhythm of music. The rockery in the foreground, the rockery in the middle ground, and the moon and clouds together suggest a waltz-like rhythm, which consists of a stressed, an unstressed, and a softer sound. This waltz-like rhythm recalls that of the beginning section of “The Drunkard.” In this tune, the waltz-rhythm consists of the loud sound of a natural note, the medium sound of a pressed note, and the light sound of a ‘*daiqi*’ 帶起 note produced by the pressed finger releasing while simultaneously plucking the pressed string.¹² This music-like pictorial rhythm also introduces the element of time into the picture, allowing the painting medium defined by space to approximate the music medium defined by time. The Chinese music expresses space in time through the idea of *yun*, and the resonance occurring in the space created between a note and the next note, while the painter captures time in space through the rhythm of the pictorial motifs. Min uses this waltz-like rhythm to present the musical time in the pictorial space. The rhythm starts at the lower left corner, courses to the center, and then gradually progresses to the upper right. Moreover, this rhythm

¹² This technique is also called *zhuaiqi* 抓起.

is concluded at the moon that is the symbol of time as the moon moves across the sky while time progresses. Min's moon is particularly time sensitive as the partially visible moon waxes or wanes as time marches. We can thus conclude that Min's pictorial medium of space perfectly reflects the musical medium of time.

The composition of the illustration likewise invokes the *qin* instrument. The house's circular window in the middle of the square wall recalls the 'dragon pond' in the middle section of *qin*. The circle frames Zhang Gong playing *qin* inside the house, which is literally an echo chamber resonating with the music. The dark shadowing within the circle also resembles the 'dragon pond.' The square pond can be associated with the 'phoenix swamp', which is located at the end section of the instrument. The circular window and the square pond thus symbolize the instrument's two echo chambers. By implication, the roof of the house, the main hall and the terrace symbolize respectively the head, middle, and end sections of the instrument. The rockery which in traditional Chinese garden design is associated with the mountains serves here to represent the 'yueshan' (mountain) that supports the *qin* strings. The combination of "mountains and water" plays upon the Chinese term '*shanshui*' (lit. mountains and water) which denotes nature itself. The pattern of circles and squares—window, moon, and house wall—alludes to the phrase "round-sky and square-earth", which, as we've seen, is an idiom indicating both *qin*'s round top and flat bottom and the world in general. The two terrace stools invoke the two feet at the bottom of *qin* to which the seven strings are fastened. In addition, the Chinese word that stands for drum- or *gu*-shaped stools is also a homophone of the verb *gu* 鼓 (to play [the *qin*]). All these symbolisms are not random but represent a concerted effort to associate the picture with the *qin*. Through the symbolism of the world, the instrument and the picture become versions of each another. The picture symbolizes the *qin*, while the *qin* symbolizes the world. The picture, the instrument, and the sound symbolically merge as one.

Min Qiji's illustration is essentially a music of silence. The picture functions as a 'stringless *qin*' (*wuxianqin* 無弦琴), which is an important concept in *qin* aesthetics initiated by the famous hermit Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (ca. 365-427). His silent music influenced the essence, the spirit, and the aesthetic of *qin* music and has been featured also in numerous poems and paintings.¹³ This illustration therefore metaphorically becomes the 'stringless *qin*' through its analogous ability to produce silent music. Although it is silent, it is essentially musical and filled with 'sounds.'

¹³ In *Biography of Tao Yuanming*, Xiao Tong 蕭統 (501-531) notes that "Yuanming does not know about the rules of music, but he had a stringless *qin*. Whenever he drank, he would play it to express his mind." In *Tao Yuanming Ji Jianzhu*, p. 612. *History of the Jin Dynasty (Jinshu 晉書)* also records that "Yuanming does not know about music, but kept a *qin*, which had neither strings nor harmonic markings. Whenever he drank with friends, he would play it to harmonize with the drinking." *Jinshu*, 94: 2463.



Fig. 6. Min Qiji, “Puppet Theater”, the nineteenth illustration of the twenty-one color illustrations of *Xixiang Ji*, Cologne.

4. Chains of Embedded Realities

As discussed above, the separation of the music performance from the audience by a railing invokes an association with the stage. The two railings in front of the indoor table and in front of the house give an impression of an indoor theater, where the musician plays, being embedded in a larger theater. Here Yingying, who acts as the audience, is in turn embedded in another theater, where Hongniang serves as another audience. A chain of embedded performances is thus created: there is the performance of musician Zhang which is embedded in that of Yingying as the audience, the performance of Hongniang as another audience, and a third one comprised within the picture frame with the readers being engaged as the ultimate audience. This chain of embedded performance recalls Min’s picture of the puppet show, the nineteenth of the set of color illustrations of *Xixiang Ji* (Fig. 6). As the puppets are framed by the boundaries of the screen, so are the puppeteers who are enmeshed within the larger stage structure. Placing the musician on a platform beyond the stage emphasizes that the puppeteers’ reality, no less than that of the puppets, is itself part of a larger frame beyond it. What’s more, the puppeteer’s performance is controlled by the

tempo and the rhythm of the music, just as the puppets are controlled by the puppeteers.¹⁴

The gradually enlarged frames recall the invisible rippling effect of the sound: when a sound is made, the waves of the sound ripple outward through the air. The multiple embeddedness—the circular frame of the window embedded inside the rectangular wall, and the wall embedded in the picture frame—create a rippling effect. The rippling of this chained embeddedness resembles the rippling structure of ‘sound.’ In so doing, it further recalls a tune titled “Three Variations on the Yangguan Tune” (Yangguan Sandie 陽關三疊), in which the variations of a music motif are nested one within another.

The illustrations in Fig. 3 and Fig. 6 share not only the same structural embeddedness, but also the complexity of communication and penetration among multiple frames. In the puppet illustration, for example, the offstage puppets hang from the left rafter of the stage roof and the puppeteers’ hands bridge the front stage and the back stage, hence establishing a clear interpenetration and communication between the puppets’ and puppeteers’ realities. In the *qin* illustration, instead, the room where Zhang Gong plays the *qin* is the acoustic box which resonates the sound, while the circular window is the open channel that allows music to be transmitted to the outside where Yingying is listening. The twisting and bending lines that define the contours of the ground and the natural objects outside the house give the idea of musical resonance. The natural world then becomes another acoustic box which recalls Zong Bing’s 宗炳 (375-443) motivation to draw mountains on his wall in order to “empty his mind and contemplate the Way, and to recline and wander among them.”¹⁵ Zong perceives that the painted landscape would resonate with the music he plays, or in the words of ethnomusicologist Frank Kouwenhoven, he perceives “the *qin* as a tool for ‘sounding nature.’”¹⁶ The reality of music awakens the reality of nature, and the two realities perfectly conflate with each other. Music is the mechanism that links all these different frames or realities together.

Music permeates both illustrations but with opposite designs. The music in the *qin* illustration is inscribed in the innermost frame and gradually resonates outward to reach its listeners, while the music in the puppet illustration is placed in the outermost frame that embeds both the puppets’ and puppeteers’ worlds. In the former illustration, the music ripples outward and eventually permeates the whole picture, while in the latter the music controls both the tempo and the rhythm of the puppet performance. The former emphasizes the musical resonance that characterizes *qin* music, while the latter emphasizes the musical domination that characterizes drum music. The musical domination reflects the

¹⁴ For a more detailed discussion of this illustration and the theme of “embedded realities”, see Hsiao Li-ling 2007b, pp. 215-220.

¹⁵ *Lidai Minghua Ji*, 6: 78.

¹⁶ Kouwenhoven 2001, p. 42.

dependency and insufficiency of life, while the musical resonance emphasizes the spiritual resonance between two individuals as exemplified by Yingying and Zhang Gong in this scene where they reach a mutual understanding through musical expressions.¹⁷ In the story, the lovers come to an understanding of each other's love, which they are forbidden to express under the watchful eyes of others, in this case the peeking Hongniang. This illustration depicts the control of tempo and rhythm of life not by music but by the omnipresence of watchful eyes which turn private moments into public spectacles. The music allows autonomous, self-sufficient communication between the two like minds, but those who do not know the music become an impediment that limits musical resonance.

5. Other Pictorial Representation of the Same Scene

As previously highlighted, Min Qiji's *yinghe* pictorial motifs symbolize the presence of music on the silent page. His method is unique in comparison to other illustrations of "Yingying Listens to *Qin*" published during the late Ming period. While Min's illustration is a pictorial symbol of music, the illustrations of his peers are pictorial narratives of the dramatic scene being described. As the text indicates, many illustrations, such as the 1614 edition published by Xiangxue Ju 香雪居 (Fig. 7) and its later adaptations—i.e. the Qifeng Guan 起鳳館 (Fig. 8), the Wenxiu Tang 文秀堂 (Fig. 9), the Luo Maodeng 羅懋登 (Fig. 10), the Cuncheng Tang 存誠堂 (Fig. 11), the Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (Fig. 12), as well as the Sun Kuang 孫鑛 (Fig. 13), the Wei Zhongxue 魏仲雪 (Fig. 14), and the Xu Wei 徐渭 commentarial editions (Fig. 15)—all place Zhang Gong's *qin* playing inside his study. For example, the Xiangxue Ju edition depicts Zhang Gong playing *qin* in a four-sided open pavilion. Zhang is seen playing *qin* either through the door or window in these illustrations. The illustrations in the Wenxiu Tang and Wei Zhongxue editions place the room on the second floor, while the Luo Maodeng illustration places it on a raised platform. In the Ling Mengchu and Sun Kuang editions, instead, the room is by a pond. Some editions place the *qin* playing outdoors in the setting of a garden, such as the Xu Wei commentarial edition, which depicts Zhang playing *qin* on a stone table inside a garden, but leaves Yingying out altogether. Excepting the Xu Wei illustration,

¹⁷ The idea of music connecting lovers' emotions and minds is likewise upheld in many scholars' interpretations of this scene. They propose that Zhang and Yingying successfully communicate their love through the music despite their physical separation. For example, Suiquan Zhang proposes that the *qin* and its music represent an invisible connection between Zhang and Yingying. He argues that Yingying discerns Zhang's despondency and deep love in his music. See Zhang Suiquan 2009, pp. 95-97. Dai Deng has a similar view. She agrees that Yingying listens to the *qin* and simultaneously feels the love that Zhang conveys through his music. See Deng Dai 2001, pp. 31-34.

all of the above portray Hongniang's presence, while the text stipulates her absence. Moreover, in these illustrations Hongniang is not the peeping observer that Min Qiji outlines, but a sanctioned listener like Yingying. The outdoor scenery presents a garden that serves as a backdrop of the scene's narrative, rather than a metaphor for music. However, some does include one or two pictorial motifs that traditionally relate to music.

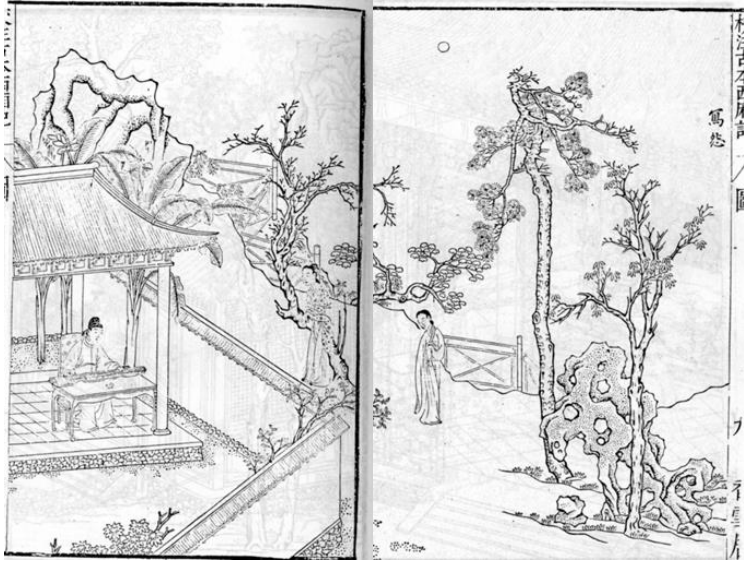


Fig. 7. "Yingying Listens to *Qin*", 1614, Xiangxue Ju edition.

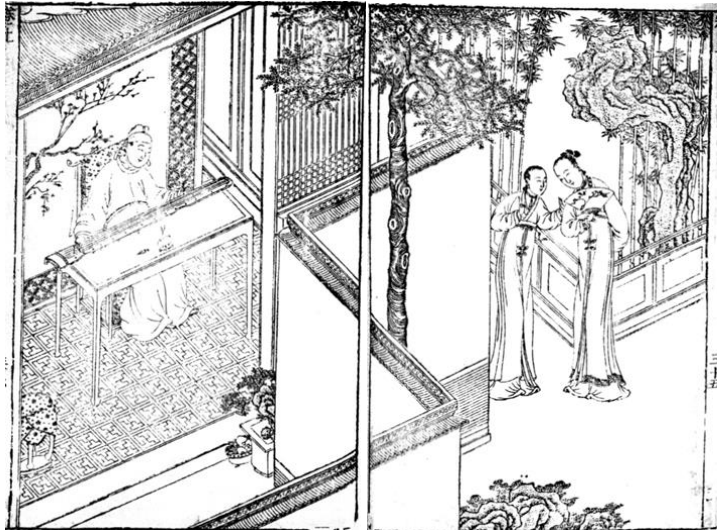


Fig. 8. "Yingying Listens to *Qin*", Qifeng Guan edition.

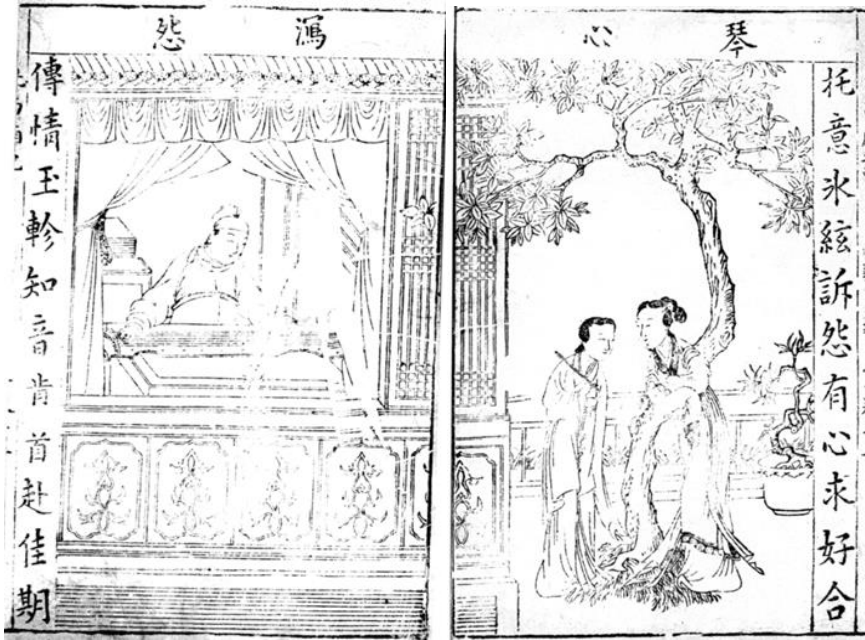


Fig. 9. "Yingying Listens to *Qin*", Wenxiu Tang edition.

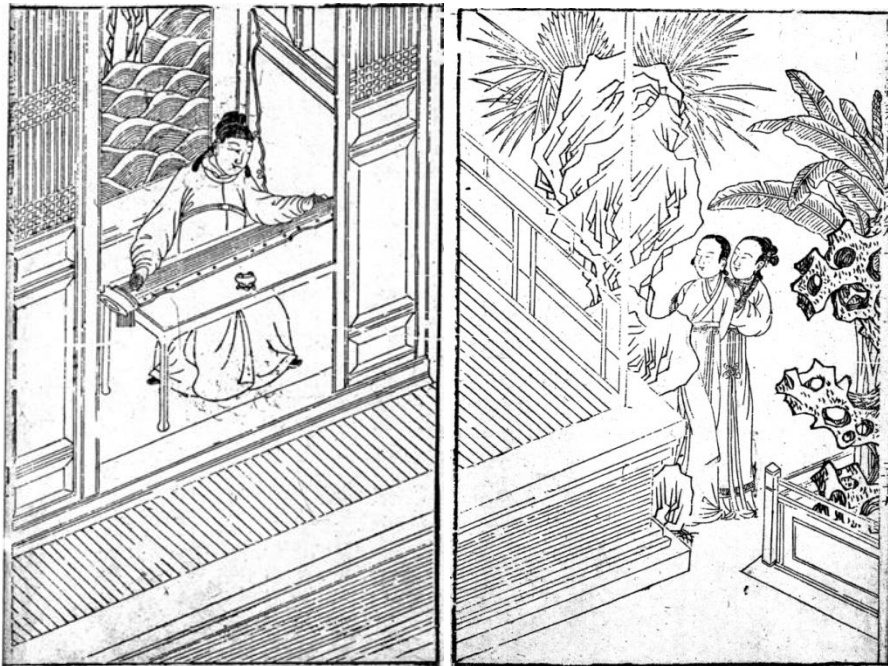


Fig. 10. "Yingying Listens to *Qin*", Luo Maodeng edition.



Fig. 11. “Yingying Listens to *Qin*”, Cuncheng Tang edition.

For example, the illustrations of the Cuncheng Tang, Ling Mengchun, Sun Kuang, and Wei Zhongxue editions contain a classic pairing of bamboo, moon, and *qin*, recalling the famous Tang poet Wang Wei’s 王維 (701-761) poem “Hall Within the Bamboo Groves” (Zhuli Guan 竹裏館), which reads:

獨坐幽篁裏，
彈琴復長嘯。
深林人不知，
明月來相照。

Sitting alone in the dark bamboo groves,
I play the *qin* and sing.
In the deep woods no one knows,
Only the bright moon shines on me.¹⁸

In the poem, the play of light and shadow in the bamboo grove metaphorizes the performance.¹⁹ The association of bamboo with music

¹⁸ *Quan Tangshi*, 128: 1301.

was first broached by Zhuangzi in his essay “Equalizing Discourses on Things” (Qiwulun 齊物論), in which he distinguishes between ‘Heavenly music’ (*tianlai* 天籟), ‘Earthly music’ (*dilai* 地籟), and ‘human music’ (*renlai* 人籟). In his account, humans use bamboo to create music.²⁰ By alluding to bamboo, Wang suggest a harmony between human music and nature. The illustrations below incorporate the bamboo metaphor but go no farther; here music does not resonate through other pictorial motifs featured in the illustrations. As there are no complementary musical metaphors, we can infer that the adoption of bamboo is not intended to symbolize music, but, like the other pictorial motifs, is a realistic detail of the daily garden scene.

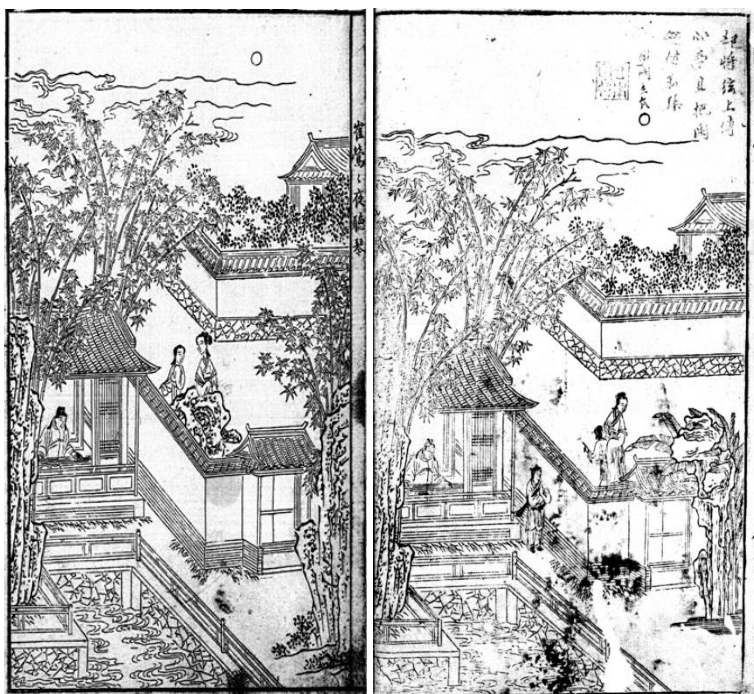


Fig. 12. (on the left) “Yingying Listens to *Qin*”, Ling Mengchu edition, and Fig. 13. (on the right) “Yingying Listens to *Qin*”, Sun Kuang commented edition.

¹⁹ The interplay of lightness and darkness to metaphorize *qin* music is also discernible in another Wang Wei’s poem titled “Appreciating the Moon at the East River” (Dongxi Wanyue 東溪玩月). See *Quan Tangshi*, 127: 1293.

²⁰ Graham 1981, p. 49.



Fig. 14. "Yingying Listens to *Qin*", Wei Zhongxue commented edition.

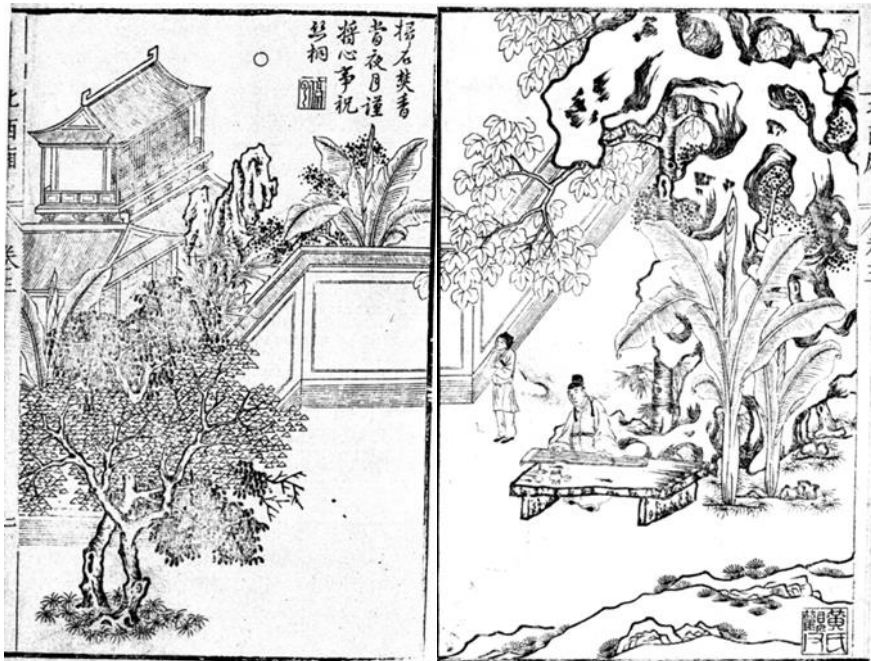


Fig. 15. "Yingying Listens to *Qin*", Xu Wei commented edition.



Fig. 16. Anonymous, 1616, “Yingying Listens to *Qin*.” In Wang Shifu 王實甫, 2005, *Ming Min Qiji Huike Xixiang Ji Caitu/Ming He Be Jianke Xixiang Ji* 明閔齊伋繪刻西廂記彩圖/明何璧校刻西廂記 [The Color Illustration of the Story of the Western Wing Painted and Printed by Min Qiji in the Ming Dynasty / The Story of the Western Wing Edited and Printed by He B of the Ming Dynasty]. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe.

6. Music and the Union of Love in He Bi’s 1616 Illustration

Among the illustrations of the various editions that feature the garden as the setting of “Yingying Listens to *Qin*”, the 1616 edition of *Xixiang Ji* published by He Bi represents the most interesting attempt to expound music on the silent page (Fig. 16). It differs from Min Qiji’s illustration by rejecting the framing devices that reflect the illustration’s status as a medium, but at the same time it resembles Min’s by utilizing pictorial motifs and arrangements to showcase the representation of music in a silent medium. This section will investigate the crucial pictorial elements that He Bi employs to present music, while a more detailed discussion of He’s illustration can be found in the article “Music and the Union of Love: Illustrating ‘Yingying Listens to Zither’ in the 1616 He Bi Edition of *Xixiang Ji*” that I co-authored with Yihui Sheng.²¹

²¹ See Hsiao & Sheng 2015, pp. 20-32.

6.1. The Visible and the Metaphorical Qin

He Bi's version of "Yingying Listens to *Qin*" portrays the moment when the lovers realize their love and exemplifies how the illustrator echoes the editor's perspective. The illustration shows Zhang with a *qin* on his lap. He sits on a mat next to a pine tree and a Taihu rock in a walled garden. Yingying stands on the other side of the wall, listening. Zhang plays the instrument with his right hand plucking or strumming and his left hand pressing on a string. In addition to the actual instrument, the illustrator includes numerous metaphorical allusions to the *qin*, the most obvious of which is the Taihu rocks, a dominant feature in Chinese gardens sometimes called 'fake mountains' (*jiashan* 假山).²² The rocks appear on both sides of the wall, near Zhang and Yingying. On an actual *qin*, the seven strings stretch from the 'mountain' (*yueshan*) on the right at the head of the instrument to the 'dragon's gum' (*longyin* 龍巖) flanked by two 'crown's horns' (*guanjiào* 冠角) on the left at the tail of the *qin* (Fig. 17). The Taihu rock near Zhang is not coincidentally shaped like a rocky mountain. Through nominal and formal analogies, this rock inevitably evokes an association with the 'mountain' of the *qin*. The formal analogy is again detected in the rock against which Yingying leans. This unusual rock is shaped like a dragon's head. This unique shape suggests an intentional design which creates an association with the *qin*'s 'dragon's gum.' Furthermore, the small rocks behind and next to the dragon-head rock jointly form a 'V' shape that recalls the placements of the 'crown's horns' that flank the 'dragon's gum.' In keeping the structure of an actual *qin*, the mountain-shaped rock is taller than the 'dragon-head' rock. The purpose of these nominal and formal analogies is to suggest the presence of an invisible *qin* that connects the musician and his listener no less than the actual *qin*.

This invisible *qin* focuses on the contrast between the lovers' physical separation and their emotional union. In the text, the playwright utilizes the penetrating feature of the music to emphasize that no concrete boundary, in this case the garden wall, can prohibit the lovers' communication. The boundary of separation is thus blurred, and the emotional union is consummated. Similarly, the illustration further redefines the relationship between visible and invisible by suggesting an invisible *qin* that is slightly different from the one on Zhang's lap. On an actual *qin*, the two strings under the 'crown's horns'—which are called 'dragon's feelers' (*longxu* 龍鬚)—are hidden inside. In the illustration, however, the two bamboo stalks between the 'dragon's gum' and the 'crown's horns' which recall the 'dragon's feelers' are actually visible, extending in opposite directions. The illustrator's invisible *qin* is hence attached with two visible feelers, while the real *qin* has invisible ones. On the contrary, when the visible *qin* becomes invisible, the invisible feelers acquire materiality. The play of visibility and invisibility of course cuts to the essential challenge of visualizing

²² Credit goes to Yihui Sheng, who first perceived the invisible *qin* suggested by these pictorial motifs.

music. Music is by nature invisible, but its metaphors are not. This intertwined play conveys the presence of Zhang's music.

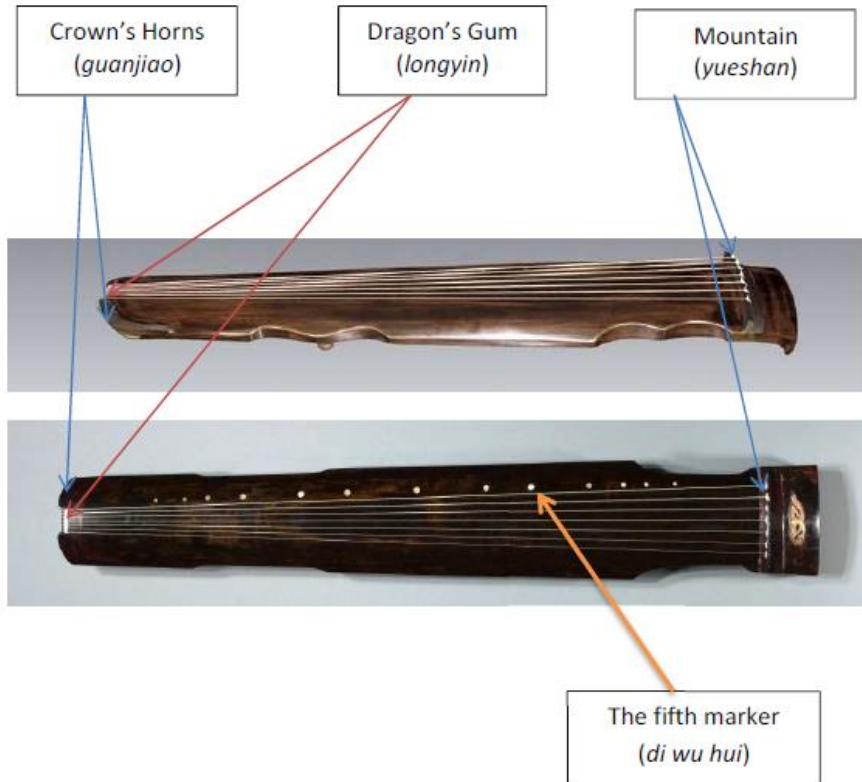


Fig. 17. Name of the Guqin Parts

The visibility of the music, in turn, suggests invisible emotions, in this case, Zhang and Yingying's love. To imply that the music penetrates the wall and connects the lovers, the illustrator puts Zhang and Yingying within the circumference of the metaphorical *qin*. As mentioned above, the *qin*'s seven strings are strung from the 'mountain' to the 'dragon's gum', and in-between the two there are the thirteen fret markers. The musician always sits before the fifth marker (*di wu hui* 第五徽), counting from the head of *qin* instrument, about one third of the string length away from the 'mountain.' It is worth noting that Zhang sits in the space between the two rocks, at about one third of the distance away from the rock representing the 'mountain'—a placement analogous to the fifth marker. This placement implies that Zhang simultaneously plays the *qin* on his lap and the invisible *qin* that connects him and Yingying. In addition, it is meaningful that the listener Yingying leans against a rock shaped like a dragon

head. The seven strings strung from the 'mountain' to the 'dragon's gum' resemble water flowing from the mountain down to the dragon's mouth, as dragons are always associated with water. Yingying is clearly in position to receive the water-like music flowing from the musician. Therefore, the two lovers, though separated by the wall, are implicit in the same instrument and connected in the same music. Yingying's placement to the rear of the rock resembling the dragon-head suggests not only that the metaphorical instrument and its music stop with her, but also that such music is shared only by the two lovers. Neither Yingying's maid nor Student Zhang's servant share the emotional union of the music, which explains why they stand at the perimeter of the metaphorical *qin*. Yingying's maid Hongniang stands close to this perimeter, but she turns her head away, as if to respect the privacy of the music exclusive to the lovers.

To demonstrate that Yingying understands the love that Zhang expresses through his music, the illustrator depicts water running around the Taihu rock on which Yingying leans. The combination of water and the Taihu rockery—including the abovementioned mountain associations—alludes to the legend of 'mountains and streams' (*gaoshan liushui* 高山流水) that defines the aesthetics and connoisseurship of music in China. Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (ca. 290-235 BCE) records this legend in *Lü's Annals* (*Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋):

Boya played the *qin*, and Zhong Ziqi listened. He was thinking about Mountain Tai while playing the *qin*. Zhong Ziqi commented: "How good you are at the *qin*! The majestic quality [of your music] is like the Mountain Tai." Later on, he was thinking about [freshwater] streams while he continued playing. Zhong Ziqi commented: "How good you are at the *qin*! The flowing quality [of your music] is like the streams." After Zhong Ziqi died, Boya broke the strings and discarded his *qin*, and never played again for the rest of his life as he thought that there was no one left in the world to play the music for.²³

Zhong Ziqi 鍾子期 understands the *qin* musician Yu Boya's 俞伯牙 thoughts through his music. As Zhong perceived, Yu's mind dwelled on mountains and streams.²⁴ This story coined the phrase 'knowing the music' (*zhiyin* 知音) as a term for true friendship, while the phrase 'mountains and streams' came to symbolize emotional union in music. The highest achievement in the aesthetics of Chinese *qin* music is the perfect conflation between art and nature, as discussed by Mitchell Clark in an article titled "The Wind Enters the Strings: Poetry and Poetics of Aeolian Qin."²⁵ The nature conceived by the musician and expressed through the music is understood by the listener's mind as being perfectly in sync with the musician's mind. The perfect conflation of nature and music is shared by those who truly know the music. By invoking this tale, the

²³ *Lüshi Chunqiu Jishi*, 14: 6a.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 14: 4.

²⁵ Clark 1995, pp. 16-19.

illustrator analogizes Yingying as Zhong Ziqi and Zhang as Yu Boya. Just like their predecessors, they reach an emotional union through *qin* music.



Fig. 18. Emperor Huizong of the Song Dynasty 宋徽宗. *Picture of Listening to Qin* (*Tingqin Tu* 聽琴圖). Colors on silk, 147.2 x 51.3 cm. In the Collection of Palace Museum, Beijing.

6.2. Music in the Pines

The legend of ‘mountains and streams’ shows that Chinese tend to employ natural imagery to metaphorize music. This tendency has been popular since the beginning of artistic, musical, and poetic traditions. Nurtured by this cultural milieu, the illustrator retains such a habit. The plants that He associates with Yingying and Zhang derive their meanings from these traditions. The most notable natural imagery in the illustration is the pine tree, under which Zhang plays his *qin*. This is not the first depiction of the musician playing his *qin* under a pine tree. The celebrated Northern Song emperor Huizong's famous painting *Picture of Listening to the Qin* (*Tingqin Tu* 聽琴圖) presents just such a pictorial example (Fig. 18). The association of the pine tree with *qin* music is long established in the field of literature. The illustrious *qin* musician of the Jin Dynasty Ji Kang 嵇康 (ca. 224-263) composed a song titled “Wind Enters the Pines” (Fengrusong 風入松) that establishes the analogy between the sound of the wind entering the pines and *qin* music.²⁶ The sound of the pine wind became one of the essential metaphors for *qin* music. Similarly, the famous poem “Song of Wind Entering the Pines” (Fengrusong Ge 風入松歌) penned by the Tang Dynasty monk and poet Jiao Ran 皎然 (ca. 720-804) demonstrates this metaphorical usage. The poem reads:

西嶺松聲落日秋，
千枝萬葉風颼颼。
美人援琴弄成曲，
寫得松間聲斷續。
聲斷續，清我魂，
流波壞陵安足論。
美人夜坐月明裏，
含少商兮照清微。
風何淒兮颼颼，
攪寒松兮又夜起。
夜未央，曲何長，
金徽更促聲泱泱。
何人此時不得意？
意苦弦悲聞客堂。

The west hill's pines under the setting autumn sun reverberate,
In thousands of branches and millions of leaves the wind sibilates.
The beauty takes a *qin* and an air she plays
Inscribing in the pines the sound of staccatos and legatos.
The staccato and legato sounds clear my soul.
How could the flowing waves eroding the hills compare?

²⁶ *Quan Tangshi*, 23: 9267.

The beauty sits at night amidst the moonlight
 That embraces the *guqin*-playing thumb and shines on the pure-souled *qin*.
 How sad the wind is when it blows.
 Stirring the cold pine, she rises again at night.
 The night is still young and what a lengthy tune.
 The metal strings again rush and the sounds are magnificent.
 Who is depressed at this hour?
 We could hear the bitter mind and the sad strings in the guest hall.²⁷

In the poem, Jiao Ran compares the two most common natural metaphors for *qin* music: the windy pine and the flowing water of the mountains. Jiao more highly values the sound of the windy pine than that of the flowing stream as the former registers different durations while the latter scores only one enduring sound. He affirms the pine wind by emphasizing its ability to capture in each note the effect of staccato (*duan* 斷) or legato (*xu* 續), and emphasizes that the sounds resonate in the spaces between the branches and pine needles. It is the hollows that produce the sound of wind, which evokes the aesthetic that governs *qin* music as well as all traditional Chinese music: the ‘resonance’ (*yun*) of music that lies in the space in-between sounded notes. The words *duan* and *xu* in the fourth line show that the poet understands the aesthetics of *qin* music. It is not the sounds per se, but their length (i.e. the space between sounds) that is most important. By so doing, Jiao’s poem establishes the sound of wind entering the pines as the most appropriate metaphor to describe *qin* music.

The idea of music created by the wind derives from the Daoist canon *Zhuangzi* 莊子. In “Equalizing Discourses on Things”, *Zhuangzi* describes the natural rhythm or the music of nature as ‘Heavenly’ and ‘Earthly music.’ Through a conversation between Ziqi 子綦 and Ziyou 子遊, *Zhuangzi* further elaborates his idea of the ‘Earthly music’:

夫大塊噫氣，其名為風，是唯無作，作則萬竅怒呿，而獨不聞之蓼蓼乎？
 山林之畏佳，大木百圍之竅穴，似鼻似口，似耳似枅，似圈似臼，似洼者，
 似污者。激者謫者，叱者吸者，叫者，譁者，突者，咬者；前者唱于，而
 隨者唱喁。冷風則小和，飄風則大和，厲風濟則眾竅為虛，而獨不見之調
 調之刁刁乎？²⁸

That hugest of clumps of soil blows out breath, by name the ‘wind.’ Better if it were never to start up, for whenever it does ten thousand hollow places burst out howling, and don’t tell me you have never heard how the hubbub swells! The recesses in mountain forests, the hollows that pit great trees a hundred spans round, are like nostrils, like mouths, like ears, like sockets, like bowls, like mortars, like pools, like puddles. Hotting, hissing, sniffing, sucking, mumbling, moaning, whistling, wailing, the winds ahead sing out

²⁷ *Quan Tangshi*, 821: 9267.

²⁸ *Zhuangzi Jishi*, pp. 45-46.

AAAH, the winds behind answer EEEH, breezes strike up a tiny chorus, the whirlwind a mighty chorus. When the gale has passed, all the hollows empty, and don't tell me you have never seen how the quivering slows and settles!²⁹

Zhuangzi insists that the wind blowing through the concaves of the natural landscape and through the spaces between leaves and trees is rhythmic and musical. Wind is nature's musician, while the hollows and plants are the nature's instruments.

In this association of music with the wind, the landscape, and the pines, the illustrator naturally places his pine tree and the musician against a background of a ravine that recalls Zhuangzi's words: "the hollows that pit great trees a hundred spans round [...]. When the gale has passed, all the hollows empty [...]." The illustrator further places the *qin* musician at the vertex of the 'V'-shaped ravine, hence suggesting that nature's and *qin* musicians converge with each other. The *qin* music seems to ripple from this vertex into an endless space. The illustrator's hollowed ravine and the pine tree that frame and surround the *qin* musician accentuate and best metaphorize *qin* music.

6.3. The "Banana Leaf *Qin*"



Fig. 19. Banana Leaf *Qin*. Ming Dynasty.
In the collection of Chinese National Academy of Arts.

²⁹ Graham 1981, pp. 48-49.

One of the illustration's most interesting details is the banana leaf straddling the wall and almost touching Yingying's head. It is crucial to note that this conspicuous leaf stems from the banana tree that grows on the side of the garden where Zhang plays, but like the invisible *qin* its leaf crosses over the wall and reaches the listening Yingying. Most particularly, the tips of the leaf reach toward her head as if Zhang's music wafts toward her mind. The design is not accidental and the banana leaf must be seen as another traditional metaphor for music.

The banana leaf is notably associated with *qin* in the manufacturing history of the instrument. In "Differentiating Old and New *qins*" (Guqin Xinqin zhi Bian 古琴新琴之辨), an entry contained in the collection of miscellaneous notes about daily life *Eight Notes on Respecting Life* (*Zunsheng Bajian* 遵生八牋), Gao Lian (高濂 ca. 1573-1620), a famous Wanli playwright, remarks that the *qin* was first shaped like a 'banana leaf' (*jiaoye shi* 蕉葉式) by Zhu Gongwang 祝公望 (ca. 1477-1570), one of the best *qin* makers of the Ming Dynasty.³⁰ Gao further explains that "after he obtained one, he so cherished it that he could not put it down and played it every day."³¹ Zhu Gongwang's 'banana-leaf *qin*' (*jiaoye qin* 蕉葉琴) was admired by Ming scholars and intellectuals, and the popularity of his creation has continued to this day (Fig. 19). The renowned contemporary *qin* maker Wang Peng 王鵬, the founder and owner of Juntian Fang 鈞天坊, a famous *qin* manufacturing company in Beijing, continues to make *qins* in the banana leaf style. Connoisseurs acknowledge that this style is the most difficult to manufacture. A good *qin* of this kind is thus particularly treasured. The banana leaf here recalls exactly such a *qin*, and thereby metaphorizes the music that defeats the wall and joins the lovers. Zhang's music reaches both Yingying's heart through the invisible *qin*, and her mind through this 'banana-leaf *qin*.'

While the banana leaf symbolizes the *qin* music reaching Yingying, the apricot branches that cross the wall in the opposite direction represents her love for him. The image of the apricot tree surmounting the wall invokes the well-known dictum "a red apricot protrudes over the wall" (*hongxing chuqiang* 紅杏出牆) which typifies a married woman engaged in an illicit affair. The illustrator employs this image to indicate that Yingying is engaged to her cousin Zheng Heng 鄭恒, while her heart yearns toward Zhang like the apricot branch. The dictum is notoriously immoral, but the illustrator cleverly appropriates it to showcase the forbidden love of Student Zhang and Yingying.

The banana leaf and apricot branch not only unveil the two characters' love and union, but also subvert the wall as a physical obstacle. The wall

³⁰ *Zunsheng Bajian*, p. 634.

³¹ *Ibidem*. Thanks to Yihui Sheng for this reference.

represents prohibition against the lovers' union, and, in the play, they are recurrently separated by a plethora of walls. The famous image of Zhang climbing over the wall represents the struggle against the impediments of a forbidden love. By showing the banana leaf and apricot branch crossing over the wall in opposite directions, the illustrator questions the wall's ability to prohibit love, as its communicues advance right under its guard. The wall can separate physically but not emotionally or spiritually.

6.3. The Union of Love in Music

Inspired by the aesthetics of music, the illustrator defines the spaces on both sides of the wall in terms of 'sound' and 'resonance.' On the right side where the music is made, the banana tree, the Taihu rock formation, the pine, the ravine, the *qin*, Zhang himself, and even Zhang's servant Qintong 琴童, whose name literally means '*qin*-boy', are all in one way or another figuring the music that emanates from the instrument. Together they mark the right side of the wall as a music-making space. The illustrator's inclusion of Qintong is peculiar insofar as the text does not mention his presence in the garden, and illustrations of the scene in most other editions naturally omit him. The illustrator clearly wanted to invoke the connotations of Qintong's name in an effort to define the garden space as musical. Zhang occupies the center of his half-garden. Rocks, pine tree, servant, ravine, and the banana tree surround him. His music resonates through the surrounding elements in all directions. While the right side of the wall is a music-making space, the left side is a space of music connoisseurship. The banana leaf, dragon-head rock, flowing stream, and Yingying all represent the receiving end of the music. Yingying stands at the centripetal focus-point toward which the banana leaf gravitates and the stream flows. Zhang's music spreads through the natural elements and concentrates again on these elements to finally reach its listener. Nature embodies both the centrifugal and centripetal forces by which the music is emitted and absorbed. Inspired by the legend of Yu Boya and Zhong Ziqi, the illustrator attributes 'music-knowing' (*zhiyin*) connoisseurship to nature.

Superficially the lovers seem to be separated by an unconquerable wall, but the symbolic images of music and love form a circle that encapsulates their union and renders the wall's prohibition futile. In the illustration, the Taihu rocks and the pine tree rise from the ground on the right side and tilt leftward. The parallel movements of the pine and rock emphasize the upward and leftward directions. The viewer's eye is drawn to the top of the pine tree. Its biggest and darkest branch continues to draw the sight to the left, reaching toward a banana leaf rising above the wall and extending further to the right. The pine branch and the banana leaf seem to yearn toward each other and connect by an invisible line. The pine tree and banana leaf form a

half-circle that encloses Zhang. Another banana leaf, occupying the center of the illustration, reaches over the wall toward the listening Yingying. The leaf, Yingying's body, and the dragon-head shaped Taihu rock forms part of another half circle. The line continues in two directions: first, from the mouth of the dragon rock to the tiny 'dragon feeler'-like bamboo tree that tilts right to reach the left-leaning branch of the apricot tree; second, from Yingying's feet to the small 'crown's horn'-like rocks and toward the apricot tree's left-leaning branch. Both eventually join to connect with the apricot branch. The circular line follows the apricot tree over the wall and joins the root of the pine tree. This circle encapsulates not only Zhang and Yingying but also the *qin* music. Hongniang and Qintong stand close, but are both outside of the circle and excluded from this musical encapsulation. They hear the music, but they do not participate in the emotional union shared by the lovers, as this is a private moment. The final element to round and perfect the circle is the apricot, the emblem of love. Love in turn defines this circle of music, which breaks the obstacle and prohibition imposed by the wall, and thereby enfolds the lovers' union.

7. *The Allusions of Music in Yan Ge's 1630 Illustration*

Like Min's illustration, Li Tingmo's 1630 illustrations of the same scene feature multiple frames. The scene is first framed by a circle, then by the rectangular half-folio page. Li designs two illustrations for the scene. The first one depicts a bended wall that separates Zhang Gong from Yingying and Hongniang (Fig. 20). Zhang's study is located right outside the wall, and contains a table with a *qin* on it. But this illustration does not portray Zhang playing the instrument, and music is not its primary concern. The image narrates the plot of the lovers' verbal exchange after the music playing when Hongniang returns to summon Yingying. Li adds another illustration that is empty of human figures (Fig. 21); it depicts a pine forest on the edge of a cliff as water flows down the high mountain, while the moon is surrounded by clouds. The water recalls the structure of the *qin* instrument: the seven strings flow from the 'yueshan' (mountain) down across the body and are traditionally called the 'flowing stream.' So the sounds produced by these strings remind those of a flowing stream. The clouds not only echo the flowing water, but also suggest the presence of the wind. The combination of moon, pine forests, and flowing water recalls one of Wang Wei's poems titled "An Autumn Night of the Mountain Dwelling" (Shanju Qiuming 山居秋暝), which includes the pertinent lines: "The bright moons shines in the pines / The clear spring flows on the rocks" (明月松間照，清泉石上流).³² The poem presents the rhythm of nature,

³² *Quan Tangshi*, 126: 1276.

and characterizes human activities as part of the natural rhythm. The pine, wind, and mountain moon further recalls another Wang's poem, namely "A Response to Vice Prefect Zhang" (Chou Zhang Shaofu 酬張少府), which reads: "Pine wind blows the loosened belt / The mountain moon shines on the *qin* playing" (松風吹解帶, 山月照彈琴).³³ Li's illustration utilizes this combination of pictorial motifs to metaphorize *qin* music. While Li's first illustration rejects the presence of music, his second one is completely devoted to visualizing it.

Li's second illustration depicts both sounds of the windy pine and of the flowing stream pouring down the mountain. The flowing stream pouring down from the mountain of course gives an image of 'mountains and streams', which as discussed above, came to define the *qin* aesthetic through the legends of Yu Boya and his friend Zhong Ziqi. The allusion to Yu and Zhong also figures in He Bi's illustration of "Yingying Listens to *Qin*", and appears quite frequently in Chinese paintings. For example, the famous Ming painter Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1523) in his *Picture of the Qin Musician* (*Qinshi Tu* 琴士圖) employs the image of mountain and stream as the setting of Yang Jijing 楊季靜 (ca. 1477-1530) playing the *qin* (Fig. 22). Tang clearly alludes to Yang as Boya and, by implication, alludes to himself as the 'music-knowing' friend Ziqi. The same formal arrangement governs the renowned *Spring Saunter on a Mountain Path* (*Shanjin Chunxing* 山徑春行, Fig. 23) by the Southern Song court painter Ma Yuan, in which the musician scholar is placed between a distant mountain and the near stream, while his servant carries a *qin* following behind.³⁴ This arrangement gives a hint about Zong Bing, who plays music to animate or actualize the painted mountain, and the legend of Boya and Ziqi. In these two paintings, the theme of mountain and stream not only metaphorizes music, but is used also to praise musicians and painters as true connoisseurs.

In addition to the allusion to the legend of 'mountain and stream', Li alludes to the pine and wind, which become a symbol of *qin* music. As discussed in detail above, the poet Jiao Ran celebrates the pine wind's ability to capture the dynamics of music, while Li utilizes both the water and pine wind to capture both the sustained and staccato sounds of *qin* music. Rather than distinguish them, Li combines the two metaphors to present the music with the fullest benefit given by both. A landscape of river and pine woods on a mountain thus is not a landscape painting but a pictorial metaphor of *qin* music. The image of pines likewise occupies the essential part of Tang Yin's picture of Yang Jijing. In addition to the surrounding 'mountain and stream', Tang depicts two big pine trees looming over the musician, while the pine branches extend over the

³³ *Ibid.*, 126: 1267.

³⁴ For a discussion on Ma Yuan's painting in Chinese see Hsiao Li-ling 2007a.

musician's head. Yang is literally surrounded by music-metaphorizing images on all sides.

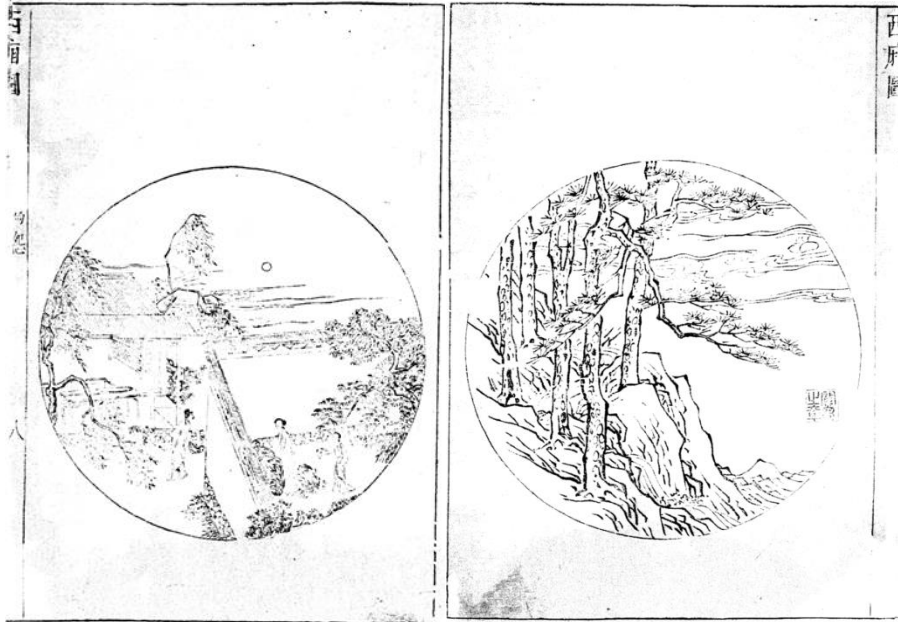


Fig. 20. (on the left) “Yingying Listens to *Qin*-1”, Yan Ge 延閣
1630 edition, published by Li Tingmo 李廷謨.

Fig. 21. (on the right) “Yingying Listens to *Qin*-2”, Yan Ge
1630 edition, published by Li Tingmo.

Li adopts images with musical connotations from literary and historical sources, but also utilize these allusive images to pictorialize music. The combination of mountain/stream and pine/wind in Li's illustration establishes a parallel between the solid and flowing: the solid elements are the mountain and the pine trees, while the flowing ones are the stream and the wind. The flowing of wind in the space between pine trees and that of the water from one mountain rock to another bear resemblance to Joseph Lam's ‘melodic tones’, which connect one solid ‘structural note’ to the next. Or to understand this in Chinese musical aesthetic terms, the *qi* 氣 flows in the space between the strings and, by extension, the notes. The contrast between the solid and flowing constitutes the essential musicality of *qin* music. In Li's illustration, the water pours down from the mountain left to right, the clouds run alongside, and the wind blows backward into

the pine trees. These alternate directions resemble the music flowing from the left hand as it moves left and right on the strings.



Fig. 22. Tang Yin 唐寅 (1470-1524), detail of *Picture of the Musician* (*Qinshi Tu* 琴士圖). Colors on paper, 29.2 x 197.5 cm. In the collection of National Palace Museum, Taipei.



Fig. 23. Ma Yuan 馬遠 (active 1180-1224), *Shanjing Chunxing* 山徑春行 (*Spring Saunter on a Mountain Path*). Color on silk, 27.4 x 43.1 cm. National Palace Museum, Taipei.

The association of the windy pine and flowing stream with *qin* is abundant in literature and art. The poetic amalgamation of *qin*, windy pine, and stream provides the best pictorial allusions to visualize music in a silent media. Li Tingmo's second illustration of the mountain stream amidst the windy pine forest must be understood in the context of these musical and poetic traditions. Although it is silent, Li's illustration is filled with the 'sound' of music.

8. Illustration as Commentary in Xu Wenchang Commentarial Edition

The Xu Wenchang commentarial edition also features multiple frames. The scene is built within a circle in which the musician and the audience are separated not only by a wall but by vantage points: Zhang Gong plays *qin* in front of a wide-open window on the upper floor, while Yingying and Hongniang stand in a garden amid flora and Taihu rocks listening from under a window (Fig. 24). Like Min's series of framings, the musician is placed in the innermost frame of the window overlooking the garden. This scene is further encased within a square border decorated with twigs of flowers at the four corners and a window-like circular cut-out that reveals the scene. The border resembles a painting mat and presents the scene as a work of self-conscious artistry. An upper frame is inscribed with a poem titled "Open Stream" (Kaiqu 開渠) that summarizes the content of the act and provides a commentary on the scene. The poem reads:

晚逐嬌紅倚曲闌，	哀似離鸞求別鳳，
絳紗籠燭半燒殘。	清如流水瀉高山。
始排香案風前拜，	暗疑多是張君瑞，
忽聽絲桐月下彈。	訴盡幽情宛轉間。

Night marches, the beauty leans on the bended balustrade
 In the crimson silk lantern, the candle is half burnt.
 She arranges the incense table and worships before the wind.
 Suddenly she hears the silk-corded *qin* playing under the moon.
 The sadness sounds like the departed phoenix seeking his estranged mate,
 And the pureness sounds like water pouring down from the high mountain.
 She suspects that it is Zhang Junrui
 Who pours all his secret love into the delicate music.³⁵

³⁵ Pudong Cui Zhan Zhuyu Shiji, 1: 16b-17a.



Fig. 24. "Yingying Listens to *Qin*", Xu Wenchang 徐文長 commented edition.

This poem is from an anthology of 141 poems by Zhang Kai 張楷 (1399-1460) titled *Poetry Anthology of Pearls and Jade of Cui and Zhang of Pudong* (*Pudong Cui Zhang Zhuyu Shiji* 蒲東崔張珠玉詩集) on the subject of *Xixiang Ji*. In the anthology, “Open Stream” appears under the different title of “Yingying Listens to the Qin” (Yingying Ting Caoqin 鶯鶯聞操琴). The illustration depicts Yingying leaning against a pergola under the moon and constellations, which interprets the first line of the poem “night marches, the beauty leans on the bended balustrade.” Behind the pergola, a partially visible table alludes to the burning incense described in the third line. Zhang Gong’s *qin* playing and the moon portrayed in the screen present the fourth line, which tells about how the music is suddenly heard. The repetition of the moon image suggests that the illustrator’s designs are informed by the poem.

If on the one hand the image narrates the first part of the poem quite clearly, on the other it demonstrates no attempt to visually interpret the music described in the second part of the poem. One might argue that the water depicted on the screen behind the musician represents the water mentioned in the sixth line. But the sixth line—“And the pureness sounds like water pouring down from the high mountain”—emphasizes the sound created by the water that pours like a waterfall, while the water on the screen seems to flow smoothly and quietly. Thus, although the illustration is a representation of music-playing, it does not carry any acoustic connotations that indicate the music itself. The picture is essentially a soundless representation of musical activity. Through concrete images, its aim is to interpret the scene narrated in the poem instead of the visual implication of the abstract music.

The device of multiple frames emphasizes the materiality of the illustration. It recalls the typical manner in which Chinese painting and its related poetry are mounted, as exemplified in Qi Baishi’s 齊白石 (1864-1957) painting of “Butterfly and Grasshopper”, which is placed below Chen Banding’s 陳半丁 (1876-1970) transcription of a few lines written by the Yuan era calligrapher Zhang Yu 張雨 (1277-1348) (Fig. 25). These frames echo the configuration of the illustrated books popular during the late Ming, which often included text, commentaries, and illustrations. The illustration is thus a meta-illustration that emphasizes the materiality and visuality of the image and the association of poetry, image, and commentary through the device of juxtaposition.

The illustration’s emphasis on the material and visual aspects of the scene rather than on the abstract music is affirmed by the commentary displayed above the image next to the poem. The comments, attributed to Xu Wei (1521-1593), read:

一不得於心而應於手，
一不喝于心而入於耳。
別恨離愁，
看張一弄。
奈何！奈何！

One could not answer through his hands with what obtained in the heart
One could not enter her ears with what matched in the heart
The regrets of estrangement and the sorrows of separation
Look at Zhang's playing.
Alas! Alas!



Fig. 25. Qi Baishi 齊白石 (1964-1957), “Butterfly and Grasshopper”, with calligraphy by Chen Banding 陳半丁 (1876-1970). Private collection, NC.

Rather than laying stress on the resonance of music and the synchronized hearts of the musician and the listener, the commentary stresses the discordance of the two. The words ‘*bie*’ 別 (estranged) and ‘*li*’ 離 (separation or departure) being used in the phrase “The regrets of estrangement and the sorrows of separation” echo the poetic line “The sadness sounds like the departed phoenix seeking his estranged mate.” The emphasis lies on the sorrow caused by the physical isolation of the two individuals. Yet the commentator does not think the music will solve the problem of separation and estrangement. He prefers to highlight the verb ‘look at’ (*kan* 看) rather than ‘listen to’ (*ting* 聽). While accentuating the sadness as the focus of the scene, the commentary privileges the visual over the aural (i.e. the picture over the music) as the expressive medium. Not music,

but word and image are the media of the commentator and the illustrator, and by extension the publisher. Thus, it is not surprising that the illustration emphasizes the commentarial function of the image and establishes an analogy between commentary and illustration.³⁶

Conclusion: How Qin Music is Pictured?

The above discussions allow us to conclude that *qin* music was pictured through rhetorical devices similar to those used in poetry, in other words through symbols and metaphors. Min Qiji, He Bi, and Li Tingmo all adopt pictorial symbols and metaphors to present music on silent pages, but their ways of utilizing them is quite different. Min and He create images to symbolize the *qin* instrument and its music, while Li borrows famous literary and historical allusions to metaphorize *qin* music. Relying on the long-standing traditions of literature and music, Li employs images of the objects connoting music to present the sound in pictorial terms. He Bi focuses on how the sound and its remnants resonate through space to reach the desired audience. On the one hand, like Li, he borrows the natural image—namely that of pines—to allude to *qin* music; on the other hand, he deftly organizes his natural imagery to create new symbolic meanings. He niftily metaphorizes the presence of an invisible *qin* instrument through the natural landscape of the garden. He Bi excels not only in connoting the presence of music in his natural imagery, but also in presenting the resonance of the music throughout the illustration. In his creation, it is in this resonance that the two lovers' minds are united.

Borrowing terms and ideas from rhetoric to understand the differences of their respective methods, Li Tingmo's pictorial allusions can be said of functioning as a 'simile' whereby popular symbolic images are used to suggest the presence of music, as in the Western equation between rose and love. Some of He Bi's images, of course, function either as a 'simile'—such is the case of the pine—or as a 'synecdoche'—for example, the two Taihu rocks that symbolize the head and the tail of *qin* that in turn metaphorizes the invisible *qin* instrument. If Li Tingmo and He Bi rely on the literary and artistic allusions to visualize the 'sound' of music, Min Qiji, however, consciously rejects this allusive effect. Min disassociates his image with any of these obvious pictorial metaphors of music. Thus, we can say that Min completely relies on the rhetoric of 'metaphor' to illustrate his music. For instance, Min metaphorizes the *qin* instrument in the ingeniously organized images of house, round window, ground, and square pond. Through the lines and shapes, the light and dark tones of colors, the sizes and alignments, the echoes and contrasts of each pictorial motif, Min creates an image that is permeated with music.

³⁶ For a study of illustration as commentary, see Hsiao Li-ling 2004.

Min's silent picture is an excellent example of the music of the 'stringless *qin*.' The brush and paper are his instruments; the colors, lines, and shapes are his notes; the illustration is his music. This pictorial music is his alone. He derives no inspiration from others, and no one else can play his pictorial music.

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