

**Playing for Profit: Tracing the Emergence of Authorship through Li Yu's (1611-1680) Adaptations of his *Huaben* Stories into *Chuanqi* Drama**

by

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## CHAPTER I

### Marketing Genius in Different Genres

The seventeenth century in China witnessed an unprecedented commodification of culture.<sup>1</sup> This dissertation focuses on how Li Yu 李漁 (1611-1680), in his adaptations of his own *huaben* 話本 (vernacular short stories) into the most important dramatic genre of his day, *chuanqi* 傳奇 drama,<sup>2</sup> reacted to the commodification of literary production in his day. Li Yu was a prolific writer—his collected works include ten *chuanqi* dramas, several *huaben* collections, a volume of essays with several chapters that constitute a veritable manual for writing drama, and lots of poetry— but this study concentrates on the four surviving pairs of his *huaben* originals and the *chuanqi* adaptations he made from them, because this is the best way to show how he approached these two genres differently. I will show that in his *huaben* stories Li Yu took advantage of the newly

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the commodification of culture in early modern China, see Clunas, *Superfluous and Empire*, and Brook.

<sup>2</sup> *Chuanqi* is not a readily translatable term. *Chuanqi* are long, typically composed of between 30 and 55 scenes, and have an equally long cast of characters. Plots typically revolve around the male and female leads, the *sheng* 生 and *dan* 旦. Also typical are primary and secondary plotlines that develop concurrently and are resolved at the end of the play, which concludes in a *tuanyuan* 團圓 finale that reunites the cast, ties up loose ends, punishes villains, and rewards heroes. *Chuanqi* can further be characterized by its varied entertainments, ranging from high to low brow. Arias are a highlight of *chuanqi* and can be sung by any member of the cast, although the *sheng* and *dan* typically sing the most. *Chuanqi*'s popularity spread in the Ming as it adopted the melodious Kunshan 崑山 musical style. *Chuanqi* plays are marked by controlled variety, cycling through slow languorous and romantic scenes, battle and action scenes, and comedic ones. This dissertation is largely a consideration of Li Yu's adaptations of his *huaben* into *chuanqi* plays, reading these *chuanqi* as texts. We consider performance only to the extent that Li Yu envisioned for his *chuanqi*, as you will see below, a wider audience than for his *huaben*, composed both of readers and non-readers alike. Apart from a consideration of this imagined non-reading audience of *chuanqi*, our discussion does not essay to address issues of performance, with the exception of an understanding of what little we know about the circumstances of Li Yu's small acting troupe.

stratified reading audience of the late Ming (c. 1550-1644), an audience composed of not just the traditional literati, but also including the upwardly mobile mercantile class eager to buy their way into elite culture. In those stories Li Yu creates a flattering space for these readers to purchase and inhabit, a place where this select audience could consume the display of his literary genius performed for them. In his plays, however, Li Yu targets a broader, more neutral audience, whom he nonetheless also invites to appreciate his literary skill, but less exclusively. The creation of these audiences for his stories and plays was not an idle matter for Li Yu. He made a substantial proportion of his income from his writing, directly in terms of book sales and the like, and indirectly as part of campaigns to win patrons. This would not have been possible without certain important changes with regard to the publishing and consumption of literary works in Li Yu's time, changes that spurred comparatively unrestricted circulation and dissemination of literature in ways that worried social conservatives in terms of the problems they saw that causing in society, and for Li Yu in terms of his ability to control and profit from his literary endeavors. One of the tasks of this dissertation will be to show how deeply the literary economy of the time affected Li Yu's work.

Li Yu is not an awfully well known figure in the West or even in China,<sup>3</sup> but there have already been four book-length studies of him in English,<sup>4</sup> several in other European languages,<sup>5</sup> and scores in Chinese. It is not my aim, however, to overturn this work, but

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<sup>3</sup> Although, the noise about the premiere of a new production of one his plays, *Liangxiang ban* 憐香伴 (Women in Love), in Beijing this year (2010), might begin to change this a bit.

<sup>4</sup> See Hanan, *Invention*; Chang and Chang; Liu and Mao; and Henry.

<sup>5</sup> In European languages, see Dars, Martin, Pohl, and Stocken. Note that Dars and Stocken, as many studies of Li Yu in Chinese, concentrate primarily on *Xianqing ouji* 閑情偶寄 (Random Repository of Idle Thoughts) and Li Yu's art of living, and not his oeuvre as a whole.

rather to build on it. This dissertation will add depth to what we already know about Li Yu by recontextualizing his work within the concerns of the literary market and the reactions of Li Yu and his contemporaries to that market.<sup>6</sup> Generally speaking, I have essayed to trace the commodification of cultural products, and their circulation as pervasive motifs in Li Yu's *huaben-chuanqi* genre adaptations. By taking account of how the concerns of the literary market are inscribed in Li Yu's literary products, we can gain a fuller understanding of the seventeenth-century literary economy, which can inform our appreciation, not only of the works themselves, but of larger cultural trends.

Li Yu was born in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) but wrote most of his oeuvre under the Qing (1644-1911). He experienced the print boom of the late Ming, and the explosion of the production and consumption of all kinds of fiction and drama in the late Ming that carried over into the early Qing that was made possible by that boom.<sup>7</sup> In this fiercely competitive literary market, in which it was common to falsely publish fictional and dramatic works in editions in which the text or commentary was attributed to famous men of letters in order to increase sales, and in which commercial publishers produced knock-off copies under new titles of works published by the competition, Li Yu responded to this crisis of the "authority" of the "author" by self-fashioning himself as the "Author" of his works, presenting himself as a "hot commodity," a unique genius (*caizi* 才子), whom the reader could get to know within the pages of his works. This is

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<sup>6</sup> While scholars general acknowledge Li Yu's professionalism and entrepreneurialism (see Hanan, *Invention*; Chang and Chang; Mao and Liu; G. Chen), none have thus far attempted to systematically uncover themes of the literary market in his fiction and drama.

<sup>7</sup> This dissertation does not attempt to offer a history of publishing or book culture in China. Standard works in English on that subject include Brokaw, *Commerce*; Brokaw and Chow, *Printing*; Chia; and McDermott.

how he claims a share of the market, a market to which he sells both literary and performative representations of his authorial persona.<sup>8</sup>

The first prohibition of a novel in China occurred in the late Ming. Prohibitions of popular literature in China typically described the material being prohibited as *yin* 淫 (wanton, excessive). Although the primary reference in such usages was more often to sexual content, anxiety over excess in literature in the late Ming was produced both by its content and its increased circulation. That is to say, the massive and uncontrolled circulation of books produced *yin* literature, and *yin* literature, in turn, fueled the mass circulation of books. Anxiety over excess and uncontrolled circulation structured the literary economy of the late Ming. Further, the tension between circulation and containment produces both the value of these books as material objects, and further inscribes structures of meaning within their literary representations.

Fears over unchecked circulation, and of the moral and cultural degradation thought to be a byproduct of the printing boom are manifest in vernacular literature through regimes of bodily containment. In a genre as unacceptable as vernacular fiction was in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and especially during the decadence of the late Ming, we might expect writers, especially those protected by anonymity, to explore boundaries of morality and vulgarity, and there certainly was much of this, but it was met by the equal and opposing anxiety to then contain that which has been allowed to run

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<sup>8</sup> When I refer to “persona” in the singular here, I am by no means suggesting that Li Yu only performed, or fashioned one persona in his literature and life. Li Yu was a performer, and as such played many roles, defying attempts to be pinned down. When I use “authorial persona” in the singular sense, I’m referring to a specific set of strategies that unite around his interests as a professional author. That is to say that I believe authorial concerns were a motif in his self-fashioning. Chang and Chang’s *Crisis and Transformation* and Hanan’s *Invention of Li Yu* each try to get at Li Yu, albeit in different ways. In his review of the former, Robert Hegel presents a brilliant discussion of the difficulties in capturing Li Yu (Hegel 180-82).

rampant. Keith McMahon describes the double-sidedness of vernacular fiction of the seventeenth century:

The critical energy of these writers culminates in a productive period around the 1620s and 30s. By this time the *xiaoshuo* (the Chinese word for narrative fiction, short or long) reaches a new stage of sharpness in detail; and, after the leaping start of sixteenth-century works like *Golden Lotus*, takes obscenity and eroticism in as many directions as it can. At the same time these stories and novels carry a didacticism that promotes temperance and model behavior, and chastises those who exceed their lot. The attention to detail contrasts sharply with the very non-detailed conformism of the didactic theme. This capacity to be on two sides at one—almost a sleight of hand—is the sign of a polemic that is basic to late Ming fiction. In simple terms the argument is between the orthodox tradition and the heterodox form of literature that the *xiaoshuo* has grown to be. The fiction writer is both moralist and trickster. Using detail and obscenity he makes his stories as wayward as possible before he returns, at the end, to the decorum of the moralist's mode. His role is to embarrass orthodox morality by proving that states of correctness and equilibrium must be continually tested by the vicissitudes of waywardness. (McMahon 1-2)

What is missing from this discussion is the attribution of this phenomenon to the literary market. When we understand issues of containment in literature as a response to the rapidly expanding and poorly regulated literary market, we can begin to appreciate how integral a part the print boom of the late Ming played in shaping strict regimes toward gender and sexuality in the Qing.

### **Publication of Primary Sources**

Before proceeding any further into our discussion of how the literary market inflected Li Yu's work, we will turn briefly to the publication history of our primary

sources.<sup>9</sup> I use the word brief not because this information is not highly relevant, but simply because we know relatively little about the actual circulation of Li Yu's fiction and drama. Patrick Hanan cites Li Yu as the "best-selling author of his time," but the information that would concretely substantiate such a claim is lacking (Hanan, *Invention* 1). We can deduce his popularity to a certain degree from the rapid succession of the publication of his collections of *huaben* stories, and to a lesser extent his *chuanqi* dramas, and also by a handful of clues, such as his complaint that his work was pirated as soon as it was published (Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 42), and his amazement that his *chuanqi*, *Huang qiu feng* 凰求鳳 (The Female Phoenix Chases the Male) was being performed in far away Pingyang 平陽 only shortly after its completion (Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 49), but we have no way of tracing the number of imprints made of his work, or of knowing precisely how much of his work was sold at market, and how much was appreciated primarily by his friends and patrons.

Deciding on precisely how many collections of Li Yu's *huaben* stories were published is more complicated than one might expect. His first collection, *Wusheng xi* 無聲戲 (Silent Operas),<sup>10</sup> containing twelve *huaben* stories, came out in 1656 while Li Yu lived in Hangzhou (Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 28). This collection was quickly followed by a sequel entitled *Wusheng xi erji* 無聲戲二集 (Silent Operas Second Collection), published in 1657 (Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 30). It is no longer extant but contained at least six stories. The speed with which it appeared hints at the popularity of the original collection. The

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<sup>9</sup> For more on the publication history of Li Yu's work, see Hanan, *Invention* 15-30.

<sup>10</sup> Translation borrowed from Hanan, *Silent*, which contains translations of five stories from the original and one from the sequel.

six stories of *Second Collection* that we know about were preserved in a later, combined collection of stories from both works, *Liancheng bi* 連城璧 (Priceless Jade).<sup>11</sup>

No doubt due to the popularity of the first and second collections, Li Yu asked his friend, the poet Du Jun 杜濬 (1611-1687), to compile an anthology of stories from them, which was published under the title of *Wusheng xi heji* 無聲戲合集 (Combined Silent Operas) in 1658 (Shan, “Li Yu nianpu” 32). It contained twelve stories, seven from the first collection and five from the second (Hanan, *Invention* 22; Xiao, “Liweng xiaoshuo” 1). The old woodblocks were used for the stories but their order was changed without regard for how carefully the stories had been paired in the original collection, and without bothering to make sure that the references in those stories to other stories in the collection still worked. This sloppiness seems to argue that the goal of the publication was to make a quick profit. In this comparatively shoddy edition of the stories, Du Jun refers to their author as “Master Li” and “Liweng,” tying the stories to Li Yu personally (Hanan, *Invention* 22). Finally, *Liancheng bi*, also edited by Du Jun, appeared a little later. It contains a total of eighteen stories, with twelve in a main section entitled *Liancheng bi quanji* 連城璧全集 (The Complete Priceless Jade), and six in a supplementary section entitled *Liancheng bi waibian* 連城璧外編 (Priceless Jade, Supplement).<sup>12</sup> Li Yu’s last collection of *huaben* stories is best known under the title *Shi’er lou* 十二樓 (Twelve Towers,<sup>13</sup> each story has a *lou* 樓 or multi-storied structure, in its title), but also had an

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<sup>11</sup> Also Hanan’s translation. See Hanan, *Invention* 23.

<sup>12</sup> For more details related to the publication history of *Wusheng xi* and *Liancheng bi*, see Hanan, *Invention* 220n. 75; and Itō, “Ri Gyo no shōsetsu.”

<sup>13</sup> Hanan’s translation, see Hanan, *Invention* 23.

alternative title, *Jueshi mingyan* 覺世名言 (Famous Words to Awaken the World<sup>14</sup>). It was published in 1658 (Shan, “Li Yu nianpu” 32).

Li Yu’s ten *chuanqi* plays were each published separately, and then together as a collection of ten, called, *Liweng chuanqi shizhong* 笠翁傳奇十种 (Ten *Chuanqi* by Liweng), the earliest extant edition of which was published in the Kangxi 康熙 (r. 1662-1722) reign period by the Yingshengtang 翼聖堂 publishing house in Nanjing (Hanan, *Invention* 220n.74; Xiao, “Liweng chuanqi” 1). With regard to his *chuanqi*, publishing them might have been somewhat secondary to Li Yu’s, his first concern being perhaps to provide acting scripts for his small troupe (Xiao, “Liweng chuanqi” 1). It appears that some of his *chuanqi* may have circulated on the stage and/or in manuscript form before being published, and that there is also the possibility that some were not published at all and are no longer extant (Hanan, *Invention* 20; Xiao, “Liweng chuanqi” 1).

Let’s turn our consideration specifically to our primary texts. Counting only extant texts, Li Yu adapted five of his *huaben* stories into four *chuanqi* plays. The first of these was *Naihe tian* 奈何天 (You Can’t Do Anything About Fate,<sup>15</sup> or What Can You Do?<sup>16</sup>), published in 1657 (Shan, “Li Yu nianpu” 30). It was adapted from the first story in *Wushengxi* (first collection), “Chou langjun pa jiao pian de yan” 醜郎君怕嬌偏得艷 (An Ugly Husband Fears a Pretty Wife but Marries a Beautiful One<sup>17</sup>; hereafter “Chou langjun”). In the table of contents of *Wusheng xi*, immediately after the title of the story,

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<sup>14</sup> Hanan’s translation, see Hanan, *Invention* 23.

<sup>15</sup> Hanan’s translation, see Hanan, *Invention* 17.

<sup>16</sup> Henry’s translation, see Henry xiii.

<sup>17</sup> Chu and Hanan’s translation, see Chu and Hanan 3.

there is the announcement, “this story has a *chuanqi* version that will immediately appear” 此回有傳奇即出 (Li, “Wusheng xi xiaoshuo mucu” 3). In the same table of contents, the title of the second story, “Mei nanzi bi huo fan sheng yi” 美男子避惑反生疑 (A Handsome Youth Tries to Avoid Suspicion But Arouses it Instead<sup>18</sup>; hereafter “Mei nanzi”) and that of the last, “Qiqie bao pipa, meixiang shoujie” 妻妾抱琵琶梅香守節 (Wife and Concubine Lose their Chastity [lit.: Embrace the Lute] but the Maid Preserves Hers; hereafter “Qiqie bao pipa”) was followed by the announcement, “this story has a *chuanqi* version that will subsequently appear,” 此回有傳奇嗣出 (Li, “Wusheng xi xiaoshuo mucu” 3). We can expect that when *Wusheng xi* was published in 1656 (Shan, “Li Yu nianpu” 28), a completed or nearly completed version of *Naihe tian* already existed. Of these three announced *chuanqi* adaptations, only the first, *Naihe tian*, is extant today. Li Yu either never completed the *chuanqi* versions of “Mei nanzi” and “Qiqie bao pipa,” or they are no longer extant. For our purposes here, what is noteworthy is Li Yu’s promotion of his work. He hoped that readers of his short stories would be returning customers and also want copies of his plays as they became available.

The next play he adapted from his *huaben* was *Bimuyu* 比目魚 (Sole Mates<sup>19</sup>), which first appeared in 1661 (Shan, “Li Yu nianpu” 40). This *chuanqi* is an adaptation of the *Wushengxi erji* story “Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing, Liu Miaogu quzhong sijie” 譚楚玉戲裏傳情, 劉藐姑曲重死節 (Tan Chuyu Finds Love on the Stage, Liu Miaogu Dies for

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<sup>18</sup> Translation from Hanan, *Silent*.

<sup>19</sup> Hanan’s translation, see Hanan, *Invention* 18.

Chastity at the Play's End; hereafter "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing"), which was preserved as the first story in *Liancheng bi*.

*Huang qiu feng* 凰求鳳 (Female Phoenix Chases the Male Phoenix) was completed in 1665 (Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 49), and is a *chuanqi* adaptation of the *huaben* story "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang, zhongmei qixin duo caizi" 寡婦設計贅新郎, 眾美齊心奪才子 (A Widow Plans to Install a Groom, a Bevy of Beauties Unite to Sieze the Talented Beau; hereafter "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang"), originally a *Wusheng xi erji* story, surviving as the sixth story in *Liancheng bi*.

Finally, the last surviving adaptation of Li Yu's *huaben* into *chuanqi*, and the latest of his *chuanqi* to appear, *Qiao tuanyuan* 巧團圓 (The Amazing Reunion, The Ingenious Finale<sup>20</sup>) came out in 1668 (Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 65). This *chuanqi* was primarily adapted from "Sheng wo lou" 生我樓 (Birth Home, Tower of My Birth), the eleventh of *Shi'er lou*'s twelve stories. Because in "Sheng wo lou" the main female character is a little "thin" compared to what is needed for the female lead of a *chuanqi* play, Li Yu fills her out a bit by borrowing elements from the fifth story of *Wusheng xi*, "Nü Chen Ping ji sheng qichu" (The Female Chen Ping Saves her Life with Seven Ruses;<sup>21</sup> hereafter "Nü Chen Ping").

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<sup>20</sup> Patrick Hanan's translation of the title, "The Ingenious Finale" and Eric Henry's translation of it, "The Amazing Renion" together convey the double meaning of the title that refers both to the ingenuity of the *tuanyuan* ending of the play (the "finale"), and the climax of the play's plot in which a son is reunited with his aging parents after being separated from them since he was still a child.

<sup>21</sup> Hanan's translation, see Hanan, "A Female Chen Ping" 76.

## Li Yu Responds to a Diversified Literary Market

While elite printing in the Ming tended to be centered in Jiangnan, alternate printing centers emerged serving the growing market for books of varying quality. Jianyang and Sibao publishers were more likely to produce mass quantities of lower-quality editions, responding to the demand for more affordable texts.<sup>22</sup> While the earliest extant editions of Li Yu's fiction and drama are high quality, illustrated editions, we can observe through his deployment of genre his effort to respond to the stratified literary market<sup>23</sup> of his day. Li Yu's genre adaptations, the primary focus of this dissertation, demonstrate his strategies to maximize his profits in a diversified literary economy. To achieve that goal, he adapted certain of his *huaben* stories, which were intended primarily for his *zhiji* 知己,<sup>24</sup> those capable of truly apprehending his genius, into *chuanqi* dramas, which he intended to more broadly entertaining.<sup>25</sup>

There have been very few studies that attempt to analyze Chinese fiction and drama as literary commodities and mine them for information on book culture itself.<sup>26</sup> A great deal of work has been done on the emergence of authorship and elite anxiety over

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<sup>22</sup> See Browkaw, *Commerce*.

<sup>23</sup> See Browkaw, *Commerce*, and *Printing*.

<sup>24</sup> A *zhiji* (lit.: someone who knows me), sometimes translated as "soul mate," refers to someone who has the proper temperament and training to perfectly understand what one says or means (verbally or otherwise), even in the face of impediments such as separation in time, space, or social status. It was originally used by clients to talk about how their patrons appreciated them.

<sup>25</sup> This is not to say that Li Yu did not intend for his *chuanqi* to be entertaining to literati. Li Yu's *chuanqi* operate on multiple registers, some of which could be apprehended only by learned members of the audience. What I would like to emphasize is the fact that, in contrast to his *huaben*, Li Yu made an effort in his *chuanqi* adaptations to appeal to both high and low brow tastes.

<sup>26</sup> Jing Shen's *Playwrights and Literary Games* approaches this sort of inquiry by focusing on the intertextuality of *chuanqi*. To my knowledge, there have been no studies that attempt to deconstruct frameworks of containment related to gender and sexuality as being more broadly related to the unchecked circulation of texts.

the mass circulation of print materials in Europe, especially with regard to early-modern England, but as of yet, none of this work has been brought to bear on the Chinese cultural context, and I hope that this project will open the door for further study. In her, “On the History of the Book in China,” in *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China*, Cynthia Brokaw succinctly summarizes the gap in scholarship:

What is the need, in the face of this voluminous body of work on Chinese books and printing, for another study of books in China? The scholarship briefly outlined above provides fundamental information on the general history of Chinese printing and essential bibliographic guides to rare books. But it does little to analyze the *culture* of books and the social history of print in China: the ways in which print technology and the structure of publishing concerns shaped book culture; and the impact that books—as commodities, as sources of information—had on intellectual life, social interaction, literary communication, and the dissemination of cultural, political, and scientific information and religious beliefs.  
(Brokaw, *Printing* 5)

My own research has convinced me that literary analysis of fiction and drama of the Ming-Qing transition, and in particular the intersection between literary and performative genres, reveals a great deal about the climate of the contemporary literary economy.

One of the questions that this project seeks to explore is the relative ideological weight ascribed, respectively, to *chuanqi* and *huaben*. The project began as an inquiry set up to test the proposition that *chuanqi*, as a performative genre and one that had attained a greater degree of legitimacy, would adhere to a stricter regime of hegemonic ideology with respect to *huaben* fiction, a genre written primarily for private reading consumption. This supposition was made both on the basis of the actual changes introduced in Li Yu’s adaptations of his fiction, and what Li Yu himself says about the imperative of maintaining certain levels of propriety when it came to drama, a genre that he stressed included in its audience women, children, and illiterates—persons with a potentially

weak moral foundation.<sup>27</sup> In consideration of this supposition, Li Yu's oeuvre has a great deal to offer. By examining the changes he introduced to his *huaben* stories in the process of adapting them into *chuanqi*, we are able to not only define the contours of both genres, but to further interrogate those changes made in the service of readying the work for a broader, stratified audience. While this comparative work will be the subject of the following chapters, it is the task of this introduction to contextualize this work within the cultural milieu of seventeenth-century China.

While my study devotes itself to parsing out the differences between *huaben* fiction and *chuanqi* drama, in particular differences that can be attributed to the supposition of a broader, more general audience for *chuanqi*, it is important to note that fiction and drama were considered to be inseparably linked in the eyes of the state, as can be seen how they are regularly spoken of in the same breath in proclamations about prohibited works. As Ding Shumei argues in her dissertation, “Zhongguo gudai jin hui xiju shilun” 中國古代禁毀戲劇史論 (A History of Theater Prohibition in Pre-Modern China), the prohibition of fiction and drama was fairly typically handled together.<sup>28</sup> On lists of prohibited works, many items cannot be precisely identified as either fiction or drama, as they were listed without regards to this distinction, and the same titles could be used for both fictional and dramatic renditions of the same stuff material. Fiction and drama were grouped together on lists of prohibited books because they were both

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<sup>27</sup> For instance, in the “Ji tiansai” 忌填塞 (Avoid Overstuffing [with allusions]) section of *Xianqing ouji*, Li Yu contrasted the audiences for essays and plays: “Essays are written for men of letters, so it's no wonder they're deep. Plays are written for both the literate, as well as the illiterate, and for, among the illiterate, women and children, and therefore, value simplicity over depth.” 文章做與讀書人看, 故不怪深; 戲文做與讀書人與不讀書人同看, 又與不讀書之婦人小兒同看, 故貴淺不貴深 (Li, “Xianqing,” 24).

<sup>28</sup> Because of its public nature, prohibitions tended to focus on performance.

generally rejected by culturally orthodox elites as *su* 俗 (popular, common, vulgar) literature.<sup>29</sup> Ding Shumei further notes that fictional works were popularized through theatrical adaptation, as dramatists traditionally turned to fiction for source material for their plays, and that dramatic works also influenced fiction. One outcome of prohibition, one that while expected is no less noteworthy, is that there was nothing better for a book's popularity than an appearance on a list of prohibited books (Ding 356). Ding Shumei further points out the prohibition of theater began long before the prohibition of fiction, again, because of the public nature of performance.

The milieu within which Li Yu emerged as an Author,<sup>30</sup> writing, publishing, staging and advertising his work, is characterized by increasing competition and consumption within the literary market. Li Yu used an array of strategies to capture his share of the market, attempting to protect his work from the piracy and forgery occasioned by unregulated circulation, deploying genre to target different strata of a newly stratified market, and consolidating his various literary products under the umbrella of his genius, branding his Authorial voice.

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<sup>29</sup> That a work was characterized as *su* was not alone enough to lead to prohibition. As we will see below in chapter two, for example, there was a general expectation among critics of *chuanqi*, including Li Yu, that the genre ought to contain a mix of both *su* 俗 (common, vulgar) and its opposite, *ya* 雅 (refined, elegant). This is to say that *su*ness was valorized in moderation.

<sup>30</sup> When I capitalize "author," I am making a distinction between someone who merely writes a work, an "author" and someone, such as Li Yu, who develops an authorial persona, closely tied to him/herself, and who promotes this persona in his/her literary commodities and life in an effort to brand his/her work as distinct (and superior) from that of others' in a competitive literary market.

## **Itinerancy as a Motif in Publishing, Mirrored in Li Yu's Authorial Persona**

Li Yu's life was punctuated by an exhausting amount of travel. His tours in search of patronage compete with his publishing venture to form the backbone of his professional career. Recent work on commercial publishing by Cynthia Brokaw, Lucille Chia, and Kai-Wing Chow remind contemporary readers that early modern Chinese publishing depended heavily on the ability to deliver texts to readers. A lion's share of the work was done on foot, with book merchants pedaling their wares from the back of carts over established routes. Cynthia Brokaw points out that in contrast with the printing boom in the Ming, the expansion of publishing in the Qing<sup>31</sup> depended far more on making books available to new and emerging markets. She explains,

Qing publishing was not simply a continuation or intensification of the Ming boom. The Qing-period diffusion of commercial printing in the hinterlands and through all social and educational strata, from highly literate elites to petty merchants and peasants, exhibits a pattern of production different from that of the late Ming. The boom in publishing from the sixteenth century to the fall of the Ming dynasty was dominated at the point of production by just a handful of extremely important commercial publishing sites: the Jiangnan cities of Nanjing, Hangzhou, and Suzhou (and to some extent Yangzhou, Huzhou, and Huizhou); and Masha and Shufang in Jianyang county in northern Fujian. (Brokaw, *Commerce* 8)

Whereas during the Ming, the publishing industry was more centralized in Jiangnan, home to the largest concentration of cultural elites, the market for reading materials exploded during the Qing, requiring publishers to continuously expand into new markets to fuel commercial publishing's rapid expansion. This is to say that, while the market for

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<sup>31</sup> The fall of the Ming is typically dated to 1644, but it was not until 1661 that the Qing completed their conquest of the Ming, with Jiangnan and southern China being the last to accept Qing rule. In Li Yu's life, however, the most poignant effects of the dynastic transition occurred in 1645, when he fled his home to the mountains to avoid the chaos. See Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 15.

elite cultural productions may have remained relatively stable, the market for entertainment and educational guides promising the possibility of upward social mobility, such as exam preparation, soared. Commercial publishing in Jiangnan did not experience the many-fold increase that was seen in more outlying markets in the Qing, precisely because the printing boom in the Ming, centered in Jiangnan, had already established a commercial publishing industry large enough to fill the demands of the region.<sup>32</sup>

In the Jiangnan region it became more important for publishers to target particular audiences within the market. In “The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou,” Ellen Widmer looks at the roles three men surnamed Wang played in the Huanduzhai publishing business and finds that the primary link between the books published by the publishing house under different editors was that they all yielded to the demands of the market. “The Huanduzhai of Hangzhou and Suzhou” is a valuable reference for comparison with what we know about Li Yu’s publishing efforts. Two of the Wangs, Wang Ang 汪昂 (1615-1699) and Wang Qi 汪淇 (“born around 1600 and retired in 1668”) were contemporaries of Li Yu in Jiangnan (Widmer 79). Widmer argues,

For, despite many differences between Wang Qi’s and Wang Ang’s periods of prominence, the books of Huanduzhai tell a consistent story. That story, the subject of this essay, is one of an increasing accommodation to the perceived needs and tastes of readers on the part of all three Wangs. (Widmer 79)

This newly competitive market, increasingly yielding to the demands of consumers, saw an enormous increase in the printing of fiction and drama from the early to the late Ming.

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<sup>32</sup> For data related to the number of publishing houses in various regions, see Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture*, 8-19; and Zhang Xiumin, *Zhongguo yinshua shi*, 343-48.

In the Jianyang publishing industry, for example, imprints of fiction rose from zero in the early Ming (1368-1505), to over 100 in the late Ming (1506-1644) (Chia 187).

The mere act of circulating books deeply inflected the publishing trade during Li Yu's time, depending on the ability of publishers to deliver printed materials to an expanding market. Travelling book vendors circulated popular published materials directly to readers. When we bring Li Yu's travels into this context I think their import becomes clearer. As I will discuss at length in chapter 4, Li Yu's final *chuanqi* drama, published in 1668 (Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 65), *Qiao Tuanyan*, and the story from which it was primarily adapted, "Sheng wo lou," employs the trope of discovering one's identity over the process of a journey. In this case, parents and son, reunited after a long separation caused by a childhood kidnapping, were again separated by the chaos of war, but the son, through a string of coincidences, is reunited with both his parents and his true identity. The son performs a search for his identity, and thereby inscribes his identity through itinerancy occasioned by business and the chaos of war. Itinerancy plays a large role in Li Yu's performance of his authorial persona, which, I would argue, is his enactment of the circulation of his literary commodities in the market.

In the compelling opening to his *The Invention of Li Yu*, Patrick Hanan narrates the story of one of Li Yu's later tours to the capital. He begins, "At the approach of winter in 1673, Li Yu, the best-selling author of his time, found himself stranded in Beijing with no money to stay and scarcely enough money to leave" (Hanan, *Invention* 1). As the episode unfolds we learn that Li Yu had undertaken this journey only after a long delay. After the publishing of his collections of essays, *Xianqing ouji* 閑情偶寄 (Randomly Repository of Idle Thoughts) in 1671, Li Yu sent off copies by courier to

former patrons in Beijing, with the hope of securing invitations to come to the capital. This initial attempt yielded no results, so he resorted to more direct means, writing pathetically plaintive letters to apply more pressure on his past benefactors. Once he made it to the capital, he found that his patrons were living more meagerly than he. Their access to additional income over their official salaries that they had enjoyed in their provincial posts had disappeared with their appointments to the capital, so there was no point for Li Yu to stay on there. His departure was only delayed, he claimed, because transportation was prohibitively expensive. Either by providence or shrewd planning on Li Yu's part, Grand Secretary Songgotu 索額圖 (1636-1703), urged by Li Yu's friends, ordered that Li Yu stay on in the capital, and arranged a year's salary for him (Hanan, *Invention* 2-6).

Li Yu traveled so much for the purpose of supplementing his income that he likened himself to an itinerant monk going out with his begging bowl (Hanan, *Invention* 1). His travels were accompanied by the hope that his hosts would recompense his sharing his genius with them in close and restricted quarters. Li Yu cultivated and advertised his genius and his impoverished patronage tours, inscribing his authorial persona with the concerns of the contemporary literary economy. Li Yu's entrepreneurialism has been the subject of interpretation by Hanan and others,<sup>33</sup> but while a good deal of work has been to re-represent Li Yu's persona for contemporary readers, his authorial persona has not been read as his primary means of agency on the literary market, a means through which to represent his professional concerns. Patrick Hanan

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<sup>33</sup> For more on Li Yu's entrepreneurialism, see Hanan, *Invention* 1-30; Chang and Chang 129-92; and Liu Qing.

contextualizes the episode with which he begins his book in terms of Li Yu's originality and commercial interests, but does not relate these interests to the emergence of professional authorship in early modern China:

This episode has little intrinsic importance—Li Yu's major works were all in print by this time—but it does illustrate certain recurring themes in his life. The letters amply demonstrate his pride both in his originality and his ability to stimulate talk and provoke laughter—unusual goals for a writer in traditional China. They reveal also his consummate ability at playing a part, on outrageous part if need be, in literature as in life. And most of all, of course, they show his lifelong capacity for making ends meet, a fact that conditions most of his best writing. (Hanan, *Invention* 6)

Here, in evoking “recurring themes” in Li Yu's life, and “his consummate ability at playing a part...in literature as in life,” Patrick Hanan describes the process through which Li Yu fashioned his authorial persona without referencing it as such. I think the idea of authorial self-fashioning is a useful category for understanding both the content and circumstances of Li Yu's oeuvre. By playing a part, in literature, as in life, by the way his goals were “unusual for a writer in traditional China,” and by evoking the trope of the impoverished wayward genius, Li Yu fashioned himself as a professional Author.

Most studies on Li Yu have fallen back on the model of traditional single-author studies—exploring the biography of the man to better understand his work. What has yet to be done, and what my project will attempt to do is to contextualize the content of his work within the rest of his professional activities. That Li Yu successfully fashioned and performed an authorial persona in his writing and through his personal and written communications with patrons, makes the sort of scholarship that finds his biography in his literary oeuvre and his literary oeuvre in his biography seem quite natural and obvious. And while exploring Li Yu's personae as he enacted them in his life (as opposed to in

his literature) and then comparing these to his personae in its literary representations, is a fertile field of inquiry; until we recognize his angling for patrons, his fashioning of an authorial persona, his publishing enterprise, and his tours performing with his family troupe as a complement of strategies to reach a widening and increasingly stratified and competitive market, we lose sight of how these strategies are suggestive of social and cultural changes.

Judging from his extensive and frequent patronage tours (Shan, “Li Yu nianpu” 1-127), Li Yu’s professional career was largely grounded in travel. His extensive tours, following established trade routes, during which he traveled from place to place, securing invitations and entertaining patrons, were a large source of income, one that he used to fund his small publishing venture, for instance. I am going to turn this around when I look at Li Yu’s adaptation of his stories as drama. What role does travel play? How does travel displace, shape, and characterize the identities of Li Yu’s characters? Building an authorial persona united Li Yu’s work around his creative genius, his authorship. He launched this persona as a brand, not only through the circulation of his printed texts, but through his own physical circulation. Li Yu’s travels along commercial trade routes offer a parallel to the wider circulation of books along those same routes, and like book sellers, Li Yu traveled with samples of his notepapers, and in some instances, his writing. Looking at Li Yu’s patronage trips in the context of the publishing industry shows their relationship to the highly competitive nature of the rapidly expanding literary market of his day.

### **Re-representation of a Performed Identity**

A great deal of the secondary literature on Li Yu triangulates his biography, historical narratives, and his literary oeuvre. Because this vein of criticism grew out of the emergence of authorship, Li Yu is in some ways perfectly suited to this type of study. Li Yu created and performed an authorial persona, and secondary scholarship has largely been preoccupied with reconstructing this persona, albeit without identifying it as such. That is to say that, in triangulating Li Yu's history, biography, and literary oeuvre, critics are able to identify and re-represent facets of Li Yu's self-fashioned identities, but they have so far failed to apprehend his self-fashioning as a symptom of the literary economy of the time. By failing to understand Li Yu's performed identity and self-proclaimed genius as a means of distinguishing himself in an increasingly competitive literary market, critics further fail to see the broader impact of the emergence of Authorship in vernacular fiction, a ripe field for further study. Finally, because Li Yu's strategies within the literary market seem largely a response to his perception of its demands, with the exception of a smattering of poetry he largely falls outside of the early Qing trend to represent the trauma of the Ming-Qing transition in literature.<sup>34</sup> Understanding his literary oeuvre and his deployment of his authorial persona as an attempt to negotiate a competitive literary marketplace allows us to reconcile his representations of himself, and to place him within the larger context of the literary economy of the period in a way that explains his condition more thoroughly than the always erroneous notion that he was "ahead of his time."

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<sup>34</sup> The proportion of depictions of the trauma of the Ming-Qing transition in early-Qing literature is magnified by a focus on these depictions in secondary scholarship.

While secondary scholarship may have trouble locating Li Yu's work within the historical background of the Ming-Qing transition, it underscores and re-represents the fictional identities that Li Yu performed in life and literature. Generally speaking, Li Yu's enacted identities defy the coherence that Butler stresses below. In the case of his authorial persona, however, I perceive coherence in his enactments both in his literary oeuvre and his life. Among the motifs that unite his constructed authorial persona, as we'll discuss in further detail below, are insistence on his own genius, his impoverished circumstances, and the necessity of travel.

According to the understanding of identification as an enacted fantasy or incorporation, however, it is clear that coherence is desired, wished for, idealized, and that this idealization is an effect of corporeal signification. In other words, acts, gestures, and desire to produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body, through the play of signifying absences that suggest, but never reveal, the organizing principle of identity as a cause. Such acts, gestures, enactments, generally construed, are performative in the sense that the essence or identity that they otherwise purport to express are fabrications manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means. (Butler 171-72)

If we understand the legacy of representations of Li Yu, inclusive of both his self-fashioned identity, and historical and critical representations of this identity, through the lens of discourse on self-fashioning and the emergence of Authorship in a newly competitive and stratified literary market, we are able to resolve the issues and problems latent in secondary scholarship on Li Yu up to this point. In other words, without apprehending Li Yu's self-fashioning in his literature and life as an enacted fantasy with its coherence centered around Li Yu's strategies in the literary marketplace, critical, historical, and biographical accounts of Li Yu seem to me to each be separate attempts to re-enact/re-represent his identity that lack the coherence (with regard to his authorial

persona) that I believe Li Yu cultivated. Li Yu's strategies in the literary marketplace involved his enactment in literature and in life of a self-fashioned identity, organized around his self-proclamation of genius and conditioned by the itinerancy of his life.

Without understanding Li Yu's representations of himself through the discourse on the emergence of authorship in a period of increased literary production, representations of his identity remain fractured. The ideal of coherence within re-representations of Li Yu's identity can only emerge if we understand his own representations/enactments of his identity as strategies in the literary marketplace. This is not to say that Li Yu, as a historical person, never enacted identities unrelated to the literary marketplace, but the representations of his identity that are left to us—letters to former and prospective patrons, his literary corpus, and characterizations of him by contemporaries—cohere and unite around discourse on the strategies of the emergent Author.

### **Deploying Genre to Target a Stratified Market**

New market demands provide a space for the emergence of new literary genres, which in turn serve to stratify the market. Here, Lee Erikson argues that genres grow out of market demands:

One can view genre formation, then, as the creation of new products by publishers and authors designed to entertain a growing market. The resulting range of products tends to stratify the reading market and so target particular segments of it more effectively than before. From this perspective, every literary work will be in some sense a mixed genre as writers seek to accommodate their writing to the demands of the marketplace and to suit part of it. (Erikson 14)

This dissertation, by understanding Li Yu's differential deployment of genre as a way to take advantage of a widening and newly stratified market, brings a whole body of scholarship related to the emergence of authorship to bear on the literary market of seventeenth-century China.<sup>35</sup> Studying Li Yu to unveil his authorial persona yields interesting results, informing in a small way our picture of seventeenth century China, and the literary economy of that period in particular. Looking at Li Yu's life and oeuvre within the context of the emergence of authorship reveals, I think, that the double-sided coin of containment and excess that characterizes vernacular fiction is a response to the increased literary production and consumption of his day. Li Yu's *chuanqi* represent his attempt to cater to a newly stratified market, specifically inclusive of the uneducated and illiterate. In step with his ideating and precipitating the collapse of the gulf between the non-reading and reading public, Li Yu simultaneously subjects his *chuanqi* to a new level of containment relative to his vernacular fiction. His eagerness to open his *chuanqi* to consumption by mass audiences is coupled with a simultaneous attempt to create a restricted field of consumption within his own literary oeuvre. That is to say he offered up his *chuanqi* for popular consumption, but sought to protect his *huaben*—which are constructed to simulate a dialogue between the Author and his *zhiji*—from the vulgarization engendered by uncontrolled circulation.

Concurrent with the rise of a mass readership was a growing unease and a sense of doom on the part of the previously privileged, highly educated classes. The general trend towards the popularization of literature led to efforts on the part of certain

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<sup>35</sup> This is not to say that approaches and findings from scholarship on the emergence of Authorship in early modern Europe can be taken wholesale and applied to China, but that in certain instances, facets of this work may be applicable. This has been my experience with regard to an understanding of Li Yu and the literary culture of the early Qing.

producers to cordon off their work from the vulgarity of popularization. What an analysis of Li Yu's adaptations of his *huaben* into *chuanqi* show are his efforts to play to both sides of this equation. On the one hand his *huaben* give their audience a promise of exclusive communion with his genius, while his *chuanqi* attempt to reform a genre that he felt had become too pedantic into one that could have a more broad appeal and longevity as a performance genre. Generally speaking, the case of *chuanqi* stands as evidence of attempts to recreate a restricted field, with Li Yu's *chuanqi* being an exception. However, through his *huaben* narrator we can apprehend Li Yu's efforts to communicate intimately with his *zhiji* through his authorial persona, promising the privileged reader unique access to his genius. This intimate and supposedly exclusive connection between a reader and the Author's creative genius can emerge from his effort to offer a unique product in a climate of increased literary circulation, thereby setting his work above that tainted through popular appreciation. Bordieu's assertion below, that the claim to the authority of the Author, by virtue of his creative genius, arises as a field of restricted production gains autonomy, jives with Li Yu's insistence on his creative genius in the field of restricted production created through the supposed exclusivity of the relationship between his *huaben* narrator and reader.

As the field of restricted production gains in autonomy, producers tend, as we have seen, to think themselves as intellectuals or artists by divine right, as 'creators', that is as auctors 'claiming authority by virtue of their charisma' and attempting to impose an auctoritas that recognizes no other principle of legitimation than itself (or, which amounts to the same thing, the authority of their peer group, which is often reduced, even in scientific activities, to a clique or a sect). (Bourdieu 124)

In this way producers of *chuanqi* have employed various strategies to piggyback on more legitimate arts such as poetry and aria composition. Because of the perpetual potential for

the corruption of *chuanqi* by a widening and less exclusive audience, some among *chuanqi* producers attempted to restrict their fields of cultural production, making *chuanqi* more esoteric and pedantic, but Li Yu, assured in the singular authority of his own genius, felt the freedom to offer his *chuanqi* up to the widest audience possible.

Li Yu's differential employment of genre reflects his effort to, as Erikson says, "stratify the (reading) market and so target particular segments of it more effectively than before." With his *huaben* fiction, Li Yu attempted to increase its value through restricted circulation and insistence on the genius of his literary persona. Through communion with his *huaben* narrator, his *zhiji* are granted privileged and restricted access to his unique and immortal genius. Li Yu's *huaben-chuanqi* adaptations reveal his attempt to target new segments of the market. His strategic deployment of originality and genius remain consistent in his marketing strategies for both genres, but through his *huaben* he attempts to increase value through restrictive circulation, and through his *chuanqi* he attempts to open up the same material to a much wider segment of the market, namely the non-reading public.

Li Yu's *chuanqi* dramas mark a self-reflexive turn in the development of the genre. Li Yu's antecedents made a point to restrict circulation of *chuanqi* to exclusively elite audiences, but this restricted circulation ultimately tested the viability of the genre. By Li Yu's time, the performance of complete *chuanqi* (they were very long) had largely been abandoned in favor of the performance of *zhezi xi* 折子戲 (extracted scenes). *Zhezi xi* reflect the popularization of the genre in the performance tradition. Li Yu's response to this situation was to call for making the plays accessible to all audiences and to trim their lengths so that they could be performed in their entirety in one sitting. Li Yu's *chuanqi*

are all around 30 scenes long, and represent his concerted effort to reign in *chuanqi* plots, whilst still conforming to its generic requirements.

Towards the end of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644), primarily through the work of Feng Menglong (1574-1646), the genre of the vernacular short story or *huaben* achieved a mature state of generic identity and was raised from a position of comparative obscurity and disrepute to one of fairly widespread public acceptance and consumption. Although *huaben*, as a subgenre of vernacular fiction, remained an officially unsanctioned genre outside the more orthodox (and exclusive) modes of literary expression (such as poetry, essays, the classical tale, and drama), and its content was continually under suspicion as being morally corrupting and heterodox, the printing boom (especially in the Jiangnan area) of the late Ming and the increase in literacy and diversification of the audience for written fiction that it fostered created a niche for this new literary genre. Feng's three short story collections of the 1620s, each with 40 stories and collectively known as the *San yan* 三言 (Three Words),<sup>36</sup> are credited with bringing the genre out of obscurity and setting standards for a higher degree of generic conformity than had earlier been the case.<sup>37</sup> In contrast to Li Yu, however, Feng distanced himself from the stories that he published by presenting himself as merely their publisher and did not directly

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<sup>36</sup> The names of the three collections end in same character, *yan* 言 (words).

<sup>37</sup> The first collection of "vernacular" short stories to be published, *Liushi jia xiaoshuo* 六十家小說 (Sixty Stories), appeared around 1550 and is no longer extant in its complete form, but the surviving stories exhibit a high degree of generic anarchy. In it literary language tales (*wenyan xiaoshuo* 文言小說) appear together with vernacular stories.

acknowledge the fact that a substantial number of them had been written (using earlier source material, to be sure), by himself.<sup>38</sup>

*Huaben* shares with Chinese vernacular fiction in general the use of what Patrick Hanan first defined as the “three coordinate modes”: the modes of commentary, description, and presentation, as well as the use of a simulated professional oral storyteller as the narrator. The first mode allows the narrator to butt-in with comments and poems that comment on the story, while the second allows him to insert stop-time general descriptions (typically in parallel prose) of the characters, settings, or objects, while the third mode is basically the direct presentation of action by the narrator and is less specific to the genre of Chinese vernacular fiction.<sup>39</sup> The *huaben* narrator, in his guise as professional storyteller addressing us, his presumed oral audience, guides the reading of the stories by addressing readers directly as a storyteller would—interjecting didactic lessons, building suspense, and bridging transitions. As David Rolston argues, the pretense and simulation of this kind of oral storytelling in Chinese vernacular fiction is a literary convention that grew out of a need to “naturalize, by reference to the familiar situation of hearing stories told in the vernacular by professional storytellers, the unfamiliar process of writing and reading fiction in vernacular Chinese. It can also be seen as a functional attempt to deal with the absence of the “author” in early vernacular fiction” (Rolston 232).

Among the fully developed conventions of *huaben* as a genre prior to Li Yu, conventions that Feng Menglong sometimes retroactively inserted into the stories that he

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<sup>38</sup> He only acknowledged his authorship of one of the stories, and that acknowledgement seems only to have “slipped out” when he was discussing a play based on that story (see Hanan, *Chinese* 116, 230 n45).

<sup>39</sup> For a discussion of these modes, see Rolston 229-42.

edited and published, can be counted the need for prologues and epilogues (which can be brief or quite complex), plus a “teaser” that closes off the prologue section at the same time that it raises interest in the main story by stressing some common point or contrast between it and the prologue.

I would be remiss not to point out that the discussion of *huaben* above by no means fully encapsulates the complexity or evolution of the genre. Below in chapter three, I will go on to discuss the “evolution” of the genre’s narratorial practices, and again, this discussion will perhaps leave readers with the impression that the “evolution” of the genre was more simplistic, or more linear than it in fact was. My discussion below seems to stress a linear progression with regard to the personalization of the *huaben* narrator, moving from the guise of the storyteller to Author, and while this progression did occur, it was far more complex than my brief discussion makes out.<sup>40</sup> The take-away point is that conventionally, *huaben* had a space that Li Yu inhabited with his authorial voice to a greater extent than previous *huaben* editor-writers had done. The personalized nature of his *huaben* narrator, relative to those previous to him, to my mind, marks his emergence as an Author.

### **The Theatricality of Self-Fashioning**

Li Yu’s reputation was tarnished by his proximity to performance. Scholars have noted the condemnation of him by some of his contemporaries for his pandering. If we understand Li Yu’s performance of his authorial persona as integral to his self-fashioning,

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<sup>40</sup> For more comprehensive studies on *huaben*, see Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, *The Chinese Short Story*; and Lévy.

we can relocate his enactment of this persona within the larger context of his authorial practice. To my mind, the accusation that Li Yu was an actor hits the mark, not simply for his association with performance, but for the theatricality of his self-fashioning. To my mind, Li Yu's self-mythologizing and reputation for being a performer resonates with the quote below.

But it needs to be said too that the term [self-fashioning] has now entered critical jargon with respect to any period in which individual artists choose to self-mythologise, to, that is, construct an identity in and through language and represent it 'before an audience'. The theatricality involved in the latter aspect of self-fashioning, as well as the stress on the role of language in the process, provides an immediate link with Judith Butler's concept of performativity. (Demoor 13)

That Li Yu was regarded by some near contemporaries as an actor interests me not because it is incongruous with the legacy that I believe is owed him, but because this assertion is so in keeping with his deployment of an authorial persona to navigate the vagaries of the literary marketplace. Li Yu fashioned and performed an authorial persona to unite and increase the value of his literary commodities.<sup>41</sup> As Greenblatt argues is the general case in self-fashioning, Li Yu employed this persona "without regard for a sharp distinction between literature and social life" (Greenblatt 3). That Li Yu has been "belittled" as an actor points directly to his disregard for the distinction between literature and social life in his deployment of an authorial persona as a market strategy.

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<sup>41</sup> A sidelight, one that further evidences the capital bound up in Li Yu's branding of himself as author, is the possibility that the author of *Hejin huiwen zhuan* 合錦回文傳 (Palindrome), pen-named Tiehua Shanren 鐵華山人, falsely accredited the work to Li Yu in order to capitalize on the popularity of his name. Earliest extant editions of the story date to 1798 and 1826, long after Li Yu's death, and further, the work does not match with Li Yu's stylistically. That a writer would append Li Yu's name to his work in order to increase its capital substantiates the emergence of Authorship as a category surrounding Li Yu's oeuvre, in which the identity of the author becomes a primary category under which to market a work. For more on the false attribution of *Palindrome* to Li Yu, see Wang Ying 151.

## Deploying Genius as a Marketing Strategy

Li Yu incessantly insisted on his genius and singularity. In the prefatory matter to *The Invention of Li Yu*, Patrick Hanan includes a quote exemplary of Li Yu's self-mythologizing: "Is it not astonishing that the world had to wait for Liweng to invent this?" (Hanan, *Invention* xiii). Patrick Hanan surely selected this quote for the prefatory material of his study on Li Yu because it encapsulates Li Yu's insistence on his own originality. Seeing assertions such as these as part of a complement of strategies to differentiate his own work in an increasingly competitive marketplace brings a whole new understanding of the role of self-fashioning to Li Yu's representations of his identity. Below, Higgins explains how Authorship emerges as a mark of quality in a period of increased literary production:

Thus while it is no doubt true that, as so many critics have argued, the 'romantic myth of the Genius Author...rose to obscure the reality of the literary marketplace', representations of genius also played an important role in the way in which that marketplace operated. The essence of genius is its claim to distinctiveness – it stands out from the crowd – and it was offered to consumers by publishers, critics, and authors as a mark of quality at a time of increased literary production. (Higgins 8)

Here David Higgins mentions publishers, critics, and authors as persons engaged with creating representations of genius in the field of literary production. The fact that Li Yu was all three of these—publisher, critic, and author, suggests that the Authorship began to hold authority in the early Qing literary marketplace in response to the vacuum of authority produced by increased literary production. Li Yu negotiated the market, investing in his literary creations by undertaking their composition and publication. Further he negotiated himself within the patronage system, staging his plays to entertain his hosts, and sending them copies of his latest publications. Li Yu's insistence on the

genius and originality of his work was one of his strategies for increasing its value in the market, a strategy particular to the competitive and commodified literary marketplace of the time.

### ***Ya/Su Discourse and the Crisis of Literary Authority in Chuanqi***

As chapter two will discuss in further detail, contemporary critical discourse on *chuanqi* drama is dominated by discussion of the categories of *ya* and *su* within the form. The standard narrative represented in secondary scholarship suggests that *chuanqi*, arising from the more popular *nanxi* 南戲 (Southern Drama), is distinguished from the former by its appropriation by the cultural elite and its use to treat themes and material of interest to elites in ways comfortable to them. Through its appropriation by elite culture, *chuanqi* became a vehicle for the delivery of suites of erudite arias. By piggybacking on literary forms with relatively higher cultural stature, *ci* poetry for example, *chuanqi* became an acceptable mode of expression despite its proximity to acting and performance.

To my knowledge, no one has thus far attempted to understand the formation and development of *chuanqi* within the larger context of the literary market. I would argue that *chuanqi* became more and more *ya* in response to its increased popularity and the spread of Kunshan music as a dominant elite cultural form. Literati, in crisis over the narrowing gap between the reading and non-reading public, sought to restrict the field of cultural production of *chuanqi* by producing and giving their critical attention over to increasingly *ya*, arcane, and erudite *chuanqi* to the point that by Li Yu's time playwrights and critics apprehended a need to popularize the genre, at least to the extent that it could remain a viable performance art. Tang Xianzu's 湯顯祖 (1550-1616) *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭

(Peony Pavilion), 55 scenes long and packed with obscure and allusive arias, represents the height of the *ya*-ification of *chuanqi*. Had this trend continued, as Li Yu warned, *chuanqi* plays would cease to be performable, and in fact, as Lu Eting argues, had the performance tradition not turned from the performance of complete plays to *zhezixi*, it would not have remained viable as a performance tradition (Lu Eting 30). Li Yu's dramatic criticism is largely preoccupied with the need to open the field of production of *chuanqi* to the extent that it could be understood not only as writerly reading material, but also remain a viable performance genre. As such he suggested that *chuanqi* plots be reigned in and unified, and that content be available and appropriate for both readers and non-readers. So while some elites responded to the expansion of the reading public by carving out newly restrictive fields with respect to *chuanqi*, Li Yu fostered, as much as he could, its popularization.

Chapter Two below, "Role Type, Parody, and Li Yu's Effort to "Popularize" *Chuanqi* through his Adaptation of 'Chou langjun' into *Naihe tian*" looks at Li Yu's efforts to make *chuanqi* available and comprehensible to readers and non-readers through a comparison of the *chuanqi* play *Naihe tian* and the story from which it was originally adapted, "Chou langjun." By noting the way in which the characters from the *huaben* story are adapted into *chuanqi* role types we are able to tease out with more clarity how characters are developed in both *huaben* fiction and *chuanqi* drama. Further, by taking into account Li Yu's explicitly stated intentions to popularize the genre, we can understand the genre adaptation of "Chou langjun" into *Naihe tian* as a record of this effort. As will be shown, according to Li Yu, beyond making the content easy to understand, popularization meant adding slapstick humor and lively martial scenes. With

his “Chou langjun”-*Naihe tian* adaptation, Li Yu consistently and persistently implements the marketing strategy of insistence on originality, ingenuity and innovation.

Chapter Three, “An Enterprising Author: Li Yu’s Narrator in ‘Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing’ and *Bimuyu*,” develops a characterization of Li Yu’s authorial persona and traces that persona through Li Yu’s adaptation of “Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing” into *Bimuyu*. As has been evidenced in this introduction, the implementation of an authorial persona was one of Li Yu’s primary means of positioning himself within an increasingly competitive literary marketplace. Searching for Li Yu’s narrator in his *chuanqi*, we predictably find his voice muted relative to his *huaben* fiction. Li Yu deployed genre as a means to reach different strata of the literary market. In his *huaben* fiction, through his self-fashioned literary persona, Li Yu markets communion with his own genius. His *chuanqi* drama, still touted for its originality and innovation, he markets to a wider field of consumption. In marketing to a more popular audience, Li Yu’s *chuanqi* give audiences less a sense of communing with genius, and rely much more heavily on being immediately and broadly entertaining.

Chapter four, “Performing Gender Inversion: Feminized Authenticity Valorized as a Counter to Forgery in ‘Guafu sheji zhui xinlang’ and *Huang qiu feng*,” uses Judith Butler’s notion of performativity to tease out new meanings engendered by the reversal of gender roles in this story-play pair. Changes made to the story of the *huaben* in the *chuanqi* adaptation indicate a valorization of the feminine in response to the professionalization and commodification engendered by the commercialization of culture in seventeenth-century China.

Chapter Five, “Displaced Identities: Reclaiming Authenticity through Circulation in ‘Sheng wo lou’ and *Qiao tuanyuan*,” examines the role that itinerancy and travel play in constructing the identity of the hero, Yao Ji. What does looking at the construction and constructedness of Yao Ji’s identity through his journey have to tell us about Li Yu’s construction of an authorial persona through his own itinerancy? To what extent does the theme of itinerancy reflect the trauma of the Ming-Qing transition, and to what extent does it reflect anxiety over the uncontrolled circulation of literary products?

### Conclusion

Li Yu’s *chuanqi* adaptations of his *huaben* stories reflect the popularization of literature. On the one hand, his *chuanqi* adaptations show a clear and explicit effort toward popularization of *chuanqi* drama. On the other hand they exhibit a stricter regime of containment vis-à-vis gender and sexuality relative to their *huaben* precursors. Even within Li Yu’s work, popularization precipitates crisis of literary and cultural authority, and attempts toward containment. This crisis of literary and cultural authority manifests itself within and without Li Yu’s literary productions. His fashioning of an authorial persona rests on a repetition of three ubiquitous themes, travel, financial insecurity, and genius as a commodity. Through his authorial persona Li Yu vents his concerns over piracy and uncontrolled circulation of texts. Further he expresses the need to wander all over the empire with his begging bowl in order to support his household by his genius. By claiming literary authority, by his professionalism and entrepreneurialism, Li Yu attempts to exercise control over his literary property by inscribing it with his authorial persona. His travels, his physical circulation, represent his enterprise and his anxiety over

the crisis of literary authority as forerunner of the process through which authorship or (auteurship) moves in to assume a position of literary/cultural authority.

CHAPTER II

Role-Type, Parody, and Li Yu's Effort to "Popularize" *Chuanqi* through his  
Adaptation of "Chou langjun" into *Naihe tian*



Figure 1: A Magical Bath Transforms the *Chou*. After Li,  
"Liweng chuanqi shizhong," xxv.

Li Yu's adaptation of "Chou langjun" for the stage, *Naihe tian* 奈何天, involved a conscious and flagrant breach of the generic expectations of *chuanqi* drama. Placing a *chou* 丑 (usually translated as clown), as the male lead of the play, Li Yu forefronts comedy, and his intention to popularize a genre that had become too abstruse. Conventionally, the majority of *chuanqi* dramas are built around a conflict or a series of conflicts that separate, or creates an impediment to the coming together as man and wife, the male and female leads, the *sheng* 生 and *dan* 旦. The *sheng* and *dan* are not only the two most central characters to *chuanqi* plotlines, but are also dignified and refined in their singing and demeanor. Their primacy in *chuanqi* plays coincides with that genre's historically close association with the cultural elite as the authors of its texts and the most important patrons (with the court) of its performance. As one would expect, the *sheng* and *dan* reflect the shared values and cultural background of the literati of Jiangnan, the homeland of *chuanqi*.<sup>1</sup> The arias sung by the *sheng* and *dan*, filled with literary allusions, hail a dialogic response from their shared readership—a writerly aspect of *chuanqi* dramas. As Jing Shen points out, "by recycling pre-existent literary texts, *chuanqi* plays reinterpret earlier social and cultural values to suggest new views of current ideology," and it is through this discursive level that playwrights call out to their intellectual peers in *chuanqi* dramas (J. Shen, *Playwrights* 13).

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<sup>1</sup> See J. Shen, *Playwrights* 18-49.

### Summary of *Naihe tian*, “Chou langjun,” and their Divergences

Both “Chou langjun” and *Naihe tian* center on the rich, but ugly, dim-witted, and repulsive Que Lihou 闕里侯, who marries three beautiful wives in succession. Que, nicknamed “Not-Quite Que”<sup>2</sup> (Que *buquan*, 闕不全), was born into wealth, and became the head of the family estate when his parents died while he was still young. Educated for over ten years, he is almost completely illiterate. His illiteracy is just one in a long list of defects, each severe, but not enough so to render him completely useless.

All Que is looking for is a basic level of conjugal harmony, but the comedy insues as each of his three wives find their marriages to him hard to accept. His first wife bars herself in Que’s study shortly after their marriage, renouncing all worldly ties—namely her conjugal duties to Que—in her supposedly wholehearted devotion to the Buddha. The second wife, even prettier than the first, though not as intelligent, soon joins the first in hiding, where the two form a bond of partnership in the face of common adversity. The third wife, both as clever as the first and as beautiful as the second, plans suicide as an escape, but as with the other two, cannot avoid her fated marriage to Que.

The original *huaben* version of the story, “Chou langjun,” ends with all three women compromising by agreeing to each tolerate Que on successive nights (on the understanding that it will be for the shortest time possible), spreading the burden of his companionship equally among the three of them. The *chuanqi* adaptation of “Chou langjun,” *Naihe tian*, ends quite differently. In it, Que has a servant, Que Zhong 闕忠 (Loyal to Que), who performs an act of generosity for the benefit of the state and Que’s

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<sup>2</sup> Translation from: Chu and Hanan 7.

debtors on Que's behalf. Que Zhong travels to the border with provisions for the impoverished imperial troops and local citizenry. Then, he colludes with General Yuan Zhuobing to defeat the bandits, who are led by a pretty fantastic brother-sister duo. In one of the play's most exciting scenes, Que Zhong seduces the bandit chieftainess, lures her out of the way into her tent, and beheads her at the sound of Yuan's signal that his troops have arrived. In reward for Que Zhong's service, both he and Que are given titles of rank, and Que is transformed by members of the heavenly bureaucracy into a handsome and educated man by means of a magical bath. With Que transformed and entitled, the three wives are not only eager to be his spouse, they fight to be ranked as his main wife. At the end of the play, once that problem is taken care of, there appear to be no impediments to the four of them living in perfect harmony.

### **Complicating the *Ya/Su* Paradigm in Contemporary and Current Drama Criticism**

Scholarship on *chuanqi* has traditionally been dominated by the two terms *ya* 雅 (elegant, refined) and *su* 俗 (vulgar, common). These terms were used to refer to both the content of the plays and audiences for them. The ideal was a blend of both *ya* and *su* that people who are either *ya* or *su* could both enjoy (*yasu gongshang* 雅俗共賞). It was recognized that to be too *ya* would restrict the audience for a play by shutting out *su* people, while being too *su* would do the same by turning off *ya* persons. This dialectic was not only prominent in *chuanqi* criticism, but also inscribed into *chuanqi* composition as well. Li Yu's program for *chuanqi* can be generally characterized as an attempt to reform a tradition that had become too literary, restricted in appeal, and *ya* into something

that was more performable, accessible, and *su*. Although the exact terminology might have been alien to him, I think we can largely understand his program as an attempt to widen the field of cultural production and reception of *chuanqi* in the wake of a long course of development that had basically gone in the opposite direction. As noted in the introductory chapter above, *chuanqi* has been defined as a genre through its appropriation by elite culture. This appropriation was concurrent with increasingly exclusive intended audiences for *chuanqi*, to the point that by Li Yu's time the genre could have easily disappeared from the stage and died on the desktops of the literati. As can be witnessed through his adaptations of his *huaben* into *chuanqi*, Li Yu sought to enliven the genre and save whole plays from a performance tradition increasingly centered around the performance of selected scenes.

My own encounters with *ya/su* discourse in drama criticism brought me to the conclusion that the terms are too problematic for me to use in my own interpretation, despite the attraction of using critical terms native to contemporary dramatic criticism. After the arduous encounter with these slippery, but ubiquitous terms that led me to draw this conclusion, I rediscovered that Catherine Swatek had also grappled with them fairly extensively, and come to an entirely different conclusion. And, while I still would not deviate from my position that the terms are too unstable and totalizing to be useful categories of analysis, Swatek's treatment of *ya* and *su* brings a lot of clarity to the discussion. She explains,

In a recent article Lu Eting, the foremost historian of Kun opera as a performance art, renews his defense of the tradition of performing Kun operas as extracts. He singles out the combination in *zhezixi* of both elegant (*ya*) and common (*su*) elements as an important factor in Kun opera's success at winning a larger audience, surviving as a theater, and exerting influence on other performance-based arts that emerged after it

had achieved its dominant position. In the first period of its glory, from the late Ming period to the early Qing, Kun opera was a quintessentially “*ya*” form of theater, which prized elegant and allusive language and made prosodic exactness the *sine qua non* of musical interpretation. Movement was another cornerstone of this high aesthetic, and its standards were as exacting as those for singing arias. Just as every syllable had to have a head, belly, and tail when sung, even at the expense of intelligibility, so too the performer had to bend the waist so many inches, the hands so many, and place the feet just so. Movement that was precise (*you chicun*) created the aura of cultivated refinement (*shujuanqi*) prized by connoisseurs as the essence of Kun style (*Kunwei*). These qualities were nurtured in the environment of household performances that brought playwright, actor, and audience into close proximity. In this milieu the cultural level of all the participants was high, and there was little divergence between playwright and actors when it came to interpreting the play text.

However, as performances of Kun opera moved to other venues and urban-based professional troupes entered the picture, the situation became more confused aesthetically. Troupes sought to inject “liveliness” (*re’nao*) into their performances and to create a stage reality that more closely approximated the mentality of an audience no longer limited to scholar officials, wealthy merchants, and their household members. While they did not abandon elegance, professional actors sought to achieve “commonness in elegance” (*yazhongsu*), and this amalgamation of hitherto antithetical qualities became the dominant aesthetic standard for performances of Kun opera in the post-Kangxi period.

Catherine Swatek engages in this discussion in order to clarify her own use of the terms in interpreting *Mudan ting*.<sup>3</sup>

*Ya* and *su* have so inscribed the composition and criticism of *chuanqi* that it seems difficult to unpack the terms in a satisfactory way. For our purposes here, it is important

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<sup>3</sup> As for her own use of the terms *ya* and *su*, Swatek explains, “In applying the categories *ya* and *su* to the language and performances of Kun opera I have employed terms used by Chinese scholars as both aesthetic and descriptive categories. *Ya* can refer both to literature written in elegant and allusive language and to works that have restricted (“highbrow”) appeal, *su* to literature written in simple and often crude language and to works that have wide appeal (in the case of opera, works widely performed in public as well as in private). These categories have been part of the aesthetic vocabulary of drama criticism for at least the late Ming, especially in the former sense. In adopting them to discuss the transformations that *Mudan ting* underwent, do I clarify the nature of its appeal or only betray my own biases?”

In her consideration of the *su* side of Kun opera, Lu Eting reminds the modern reader habituated to think of Kun opera as “highbrow” that at one time it was more truly popular because it had a wide audience (Swatek 194).

to recognize that the discussion of *ya* and *su* in contemporary *chuanqi* criticism needs to be seen both in the context of elite attempts to protect elements of *their* literary culture from the degradation of mass circulation, and attempts by playwrights such as Li Yu to open the genre up for wider consumption, and especially to resuscitate the tradition of the performance of whole plays.

Li Yu's attempts to popularize and enliven *chuanqi* drama are prominent topics in the secondary scholarship on him. Huang Qiang 黃強 notes the popularization of *chuanqi* drama, evidenced by the performance of *zhezixi*, in *Bimuyu*:

During Li Yu's time, *zhezixi* had long since come into vogue. Li Yu said, "I constantly see that when patrons select plays, they select miscellaneous single [scenes], not entire plays". So-called "miscellaneous single [scenes]" are the titles of single scenes—namely programs consisting of a collection of *zhezixi*. In Scene 15 of *Bimuyu*, "Xiewang" [Together in Death], the actress Liu Miaogu proposes to "not perform the entire play, but selected scenes," and she further says that "*Jingchai ji* [The Thorn Hairpin] has a scene "Baoshi toujiang" [Embracing a Rock and Plunging into the River] that I have revised and is unlike the original version." What she's referring to is a *zhezixi*.

在李漁的生活的時代，折子戲早已盛行。李漁說他“嘗見貴介命題，止索雜單，不用全本”。所謂雜單，即單出戲目，也即折子戲戲目的匯集。《比目魚》劇第十五出《偕亡》中，戲曲之藝人劉藐姑曾提出“不演全本，要做零出，”並聲稱“《荊釵記》上有一出‘抱石投江，’是我簇新改造的，與舊本不同，”所指也是折子戲了。(Q. Huang 39)

Eric Henry long ago pointed out that Li Yu tried to protect *chuanqi*'s longevity as a genre through attempting to popularize it. According to him, Li Yu and Kong Shangren 孔尚任 (1648-1718) both sought to renovate the genre, Li Yu by aiming at a broader audience, and Kong Shangren by targeting a more specialized, niche audience:

But Li Yu did as much to alter the nature of the genre as he did to carry it on. While breaking none of the codifiable conventions of *chuanqi* drama, he evinces a sharply distinctive sensibility, supported in his theoretical

writing by certain consciously and combatively maintained ideas on how *chuanqi* plays should be composed. A just description of his work must therefore differ somewhat, in respect of emphasis and content, from a description of the genre to which it belongs.

The main technical source of this difference is the predominance in his work of narrative, as opposed to lyric, elements. Li Yu is a writer who things through story. He makes his points through arrangements of events. (Henry 11-2)<sup>4</sup>

Part of Li Yu's attempt to make *chuanqi* more viable and accessible as a genre included an emphasis on comparative unity of plot development and less emphasis on the composition of allusive arias. According to Henry, "In Li Yü's work, the song lyrics are not as central to the total experience of a play as in most *chuanqi* plays" (Henry 13).

Drawing from Li Yu's writings on drama, Nathan Mao and Liu Ts'un-yan assert,

Throughout much of Chinese history, the Chinese audience usually went to the theater to listen to fine music and embellished lyrics. Sometimes they just went to hear and see their favorite actor or actress perform the incredible feat of singing forty to fifty arias. Few actors and still fewer members of the audience understood what the arias were about, and even fewer playwrights cared to correct this situation. They went on writing fine lyrics without any regard either for the actors or the audience. Perhaps this grave error resulted from their ignorance rather than from a deliberate effort to bedazzle the audience. This unfortunate situation was very common during Li's time, and he wanted intensely to draw the attention of other playwrights to it: "All in all, drama is not the same as other literary genres which are meant exclusively for the literate class. As such they are justified in being a little abstruse. Drama is meant to be performed before the literate and educated as well as before the illiterate and uneducated women and children. Therefore, immediate comprehensibility is much preferable to intellectual challenge."<sup>5</sup> (Mao and Liu 120)

Enlivening and making *chuanqi* more widely accessible are the larger aims of Li Yu's dramatic criticism. His efforts to popularize the genre have been linked to his overall

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<sup>4</sup> Here and below, the Romanization of Chinese by systems other than *pinyin* has been converted to the latter for sake of consistency.

<sup>5</sup> Please see my reference to and translation of the same quote above on p. 13.

entrepreneurialism, but so far no one has examined the representations of authorial anxiety produced in his *chuanqi* as a result of his attempt to expand its circulation. Here, Du Shuying asserts popularization as an imperative for Li Yu with regards to *chuanqi*.

Li Yu placed an extraordinary value upon the accessibility and popularization of dramatic language. When discussing “Rhetoric,” the first thing he brings up is his proposal that “What should be honored is clarity and simplicity.” That is to say, Li Yu demanded that stage language must be popular in tone and easily comprehensible, that it should be as clear as ordinary speech, and should not be “abstruse and obscure.”

李漁非常重視戲劇語言的通俗化, 群眾化. 在論述“詞采”的時候, 他首先就提出“貴顯淺”的主張. 也就是說, 李漁要求臺詞一定要通俗易懂, 明白如話, 而不可“艱深隱晦.” (Du 112)

Scholars have pointed out Li Yu’s advocacy of performative considerations with regards to *chuanqi*. Of course, the earliest extant editions of his plays are expensive and high quality, but Li Yu did not want his *chuanqi* to be relegated to the desktop. As such his *chuanqi* are relatively short, and offer varied entertainments, both in terms of pacing, tone, and content.

### **The Fallacy of Characterizing *Chuanqi* as an “Elite” Form with Respect to Li Yu’s Contribution to the Genre**

Li Yu stands apart from other *chuanqi* dramatists in drawing the material for some of his *chuanqi* plays from stories of his own creation. While his plays contain meaningful layers of intertextuality, it is only one of the modes of expression he uses to reach out to what he hopes will be a broad and varied audience. As noted above, *chuanqi* drama is commonly characterized as evolving from the more “popular” *nanxi*, becoming

*chuanqi* as a result of its appropriation by literati culture. At the end of this teleological narrative are plays like Kong Shangren's *Taohua shan* 桃花扇 (*Peach Blossom Fan*; 1699), and arguably *Naihe tian*, which signal the upcoming waning of the genre's popularity by their self-conscious use of the genre for their own ends. Kong Shangren's *Taohua shan* takes what is already a sprawling and complex genre and explores the fall of the Ming dynasty through the lives of Li Xiangjun and Hou Fangyu and a long cast of characters.<sup>6</sup> Li Yu pokes fun at romantic *chuanqi* heroes by installing a buffoon at the center of *Naihe tian*.

Scholars of *chuanqi* typically characterize the genre as an elite form, although not without reservations. Certainly, the problem of placing *chuanqi* on a spectrum of popular and elite culture has been one that many scholars trip over before dismissing. The mere fact that the characterization of *chuanqi* as an elite form is one that scholars make with reservations and caveats, signals that the topic merits our attention. As the story goes, *chuanqi* evolved from *nanxi* when literati began adapting *nanxi* plays and other stories to meet new expectations and audiences. Scholars admit that the genre still contains “popular” elements in its most elite form, and further that *chuanqi* plays were an exceedingly popular form of entertainment in the seventeenth century, but then persist on characterizing the genre as elite, precisely because it is the genre's “elite” qualities that have been and still continue to be the most frequent subject of scholarly attention. That is

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<sup>6</sup>Tina Lu gives this description of the play: “In its account of the fall of the Ming dynasty, *Taohua shan* focuses its attention on a young couple, Li Xiangjun and Hou Fangyu, and their experiences in this time of political turmoil. But they are only two figures in a large cast, consisting mostly of real-life historical figures who range from the most exalted—the Hongguang Emperor and powerful ministers of state—to the humblest entertainers and courtesans. Yet despite the disparity of their backgrounds, many of these characters know each other, and all of them are tied together through complex emotional, economic, and political bonds” (*Persons* 147).

to say, commentaries on *chuanqi*, especially contemporary ones, have concentrated in large part on the composition of arias and their intertextuality. Certainly, a focus on allusion-filled arias weights our perception more heavily towards the genre as being “elite,” “writerly,” or “bookish.” An attempt to focus on slapstick, acrobatics, comic repartee, and the more “popular” and performative aspects of the genre is difficult if not impossible, due to the problems of reconstructing performance. Textual allusions lend themselves naturally to scholarly commentary, but the makeup of live *chuanqi* performances at the height of the genre remains shadowy at best. *Chuanqi* scholars do the best they can, perhaps referencing the genre’s more popular qualities, then moving on to detail its more writerly nature, but my view is that *chuanqi* scholars should stop trying to place *chuanqi* on a spectrum of elite—popular culture and instead pay heed to what the genre clearly tells us—that it defies characterization as either “popular” or “elite.” Neither of these categorizations add to our understanding of the genre and their fundamental place in its characterization merits serious reconsideration.

Let’s look briefly at how some *chuanqi* scholars choose to handle the problem of characterizing *chuanqi* as being a product of “high” or “low” culture. In *Scenes for Mandarins*, Cyril Birch defines *chuanqi* as coming into existence as literati took up the composition of plays: “By the year 1600 the composition of plays had become more popular among men of letters than in any previous age. The primary ingredient of these plays, after all, was lyric and verse to be sung as aria, and the mandarins had been used to reading and composing verse from childhood on” (Birch 10). His study, confined to “elite theater,” assumes the production and consumption of *chuanqi* by “men of letters.” Painting a portrait of what it was like to view a *chuanqi* play as an audience member,

(and fellow mandarin) is one of the primary tasks of *Scenes for Mandarins*. Early on, Birch provides a caveat to his sketch of a private performance at an official's residence, saying, "Of course I am deliberately exaggerating the contrast—there were other ways to watch theater in China, more crowded and sweaty by far. Historians of the drama have described the Ming period as a time when the entire nation was mad about the theater" (Birch 6). Still, he finds no recourse but to reify the notion of *chuanqi* as an elite genre that evolved from a folk genre. Discussing the evolution of the *White Rabbit* (*Baitu ji* 白兔記), Birch explains,

Between the folk version and the late Ming elite version of the "Birth at the Mill" scene from the *Drama of the White Rabbit* we can sense something of the evolution of southern drama over the centuries from the thirteenth to the seventeenth, and we shall devote some of our commentary to tracing details of this process of development, the growth of what we might loosely call the poetic at the expense of melodrama and a good deal of rather grotesque slapstick. (Birch 22)

The process Birch traces is one in which Xie Tianyou's elite rendition of *The White Rabbit* gentrifies and inscribes earlier versions of the story with elite cultural values, writing these values in particular on the body of the play's heroine, Sanniang. Birch characterizes the process of the development of *chuanqi* as "the growth of what we might loosely call the poetic at the expense of melodrama and a good deal of rather grotesque slapstick," but as we will see later on in the chapter, in his conversion of "Chou langjun" to *chuanqi*, Li Yu saw a necessity to *add* a "good deal of rather grotesque slapstick." How can we account for this discrepancy? According to his dramatic criticism, Li Yu saw slapstick and jokes (*kehun* 科譚) as one level of entertainment that *chuanqi* plays should offer in incremental doses.

What my study of Li Yu's genre adaptations of his *huaben* into *chuanqi* clearly reveals, is that slapstick and coarse humor are generic elements of *chuanqi* drama that Li Yu felt he needed to *add* to his already comical *huaben* stories as part of their conversion into the genre. I believe the reasons for this discrepancy are two-fold. Firstly, in defining the genre as being a product of the appropriation of a more rustic, "primitive," and low-end form of theater by elite culture, scholars are then invested in emphasizing markers of elite culture in the genre. Secondly, I believe that Li Yu stands apart from other playwrights of the genre in his emphasis on performance. While Li Yu does not draw a clear picture of what type of performance venue he imagines in his dramatic criticism, he does underscore the fact that in being a performance genre, *chuanqi* must serve all audiences—literate and illiterate, children and adults. I will show that his belief that *chuanqi* should be accessible not only to elites, but also to the general public, motivates many of the changes he made when he adapted his *huaben* stories for the genre. It is not my intention to argue that *chuanqi* is not, in fact, an elite genre—our evidence shows it was written and consumed by elite culture. What I will attempt to show through the example of this pair is that Li Yu saw a fundamental difference between his idea of *huaben* and *chuanqi* as genres. For him, *chuanqi*, as a performative genre, needed to make a broad and varied appeal to mass audiences, while his business model for *huaben* centered on their appealing only to a certain kind of literate elite. As such, many of the changes Li Yu made in converting his *huaben* fiction into *chuanqi* are in the service of what other scholars might characterize as "popular" culture, at the expense of "elite" culture, and not the other way around as we might have come to expect.

In one of the three article-length studies of the conversion of “Chou langjun” into *Naihe tian*, Huang Ying 黃瑛 compares changes introduced into the story material during the process of its conversion into *chuanqi* with what Li Yu asserts about *chuanqi* in his dramatic criticism. The thrust of the article is that that Li Yu’s dramatic criticism does not agree with his dramatic practice. In his dramatic criticism, Li Yu gives primacy to structure, entitling the first section “Structure” (Jiegou 結構). Within this section Huang picks out some of the central principles of Li Yu’s dramatic criticism, “establish a core idea” (*li zhunao*, 立主腦) and “one character, one situation,” (*yiren, yishi*, 一人, 一事). Both of these principles concern the unity of plot. *Chuanqi* plays, *Mudan ting* with its 55 scenes being a prime example, had the tendency to become sprawling, unwieldy and impossible to perform in one sitting. The primacy of structure in Li Yu’s dramatic criticism and his emphasis on unity in plot are in response to this tendency. As I said above, in his dramatic criticism and practice, Li Yu is nearly unique in his emphasis on performability. It is within his general concern that *chuanqi* plays be performable that he prescribes unity and cohesion of *chuanqi* plots. Comparing these principles with Li Yu’s genre adaptation of “Chou langjun” into *Naihe tian*, Huang Ying charges Li Yu with violating his own dramatic criticism with the additions he made to “Chou langjun”’s plot. Here Huang addresses Li Yu’s addition to the play of a military subplot:

These story elements undoubtedly pour new life into this *chuanqi*, but closer inspection reveals that the social and human background furnished by the secondary plotline is entirely unnecessary to the primary plotline. Following the development of this secondary plotline, the contents of the eight scenes [that treat that subplot]<sup>7</sup> are disconnected from the primary

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<sup>7</sup> The eight scenes involved in the secondary plotline are scenes 10, 12, 15, 17, 22, 24, 25, and 26 (Y. Huang 120). For scene summaries of the play, see Appendix A below.

plotline, and there is not integral relationship between them and the “one character” and “one situation” of the primary plotline. Although they all possess very strong ‘watchability,’ but with regard to the “core idea” [of the play] they are not important at all.

這些情節內容無疑為傳奇注入了新的活力，但是細緻觀察後卻不難發現，副線中提供的社會人生背景並不是主線所需要的。隨著副線的發展，八出的關目都游離在主線之外，並不能與主線的人和事息息相關，儘管它們具有很強的觀賞性，但是對於“主腦”而言卻無甚緊要。(Y. Huang 120)

Huang concludes that while *Naihe tian* does not follow many of the key principles outlined in Li Yu’s dramatic criticism, the story that originated it, “Chou langjun” does.<sup>8</sup>

I have a couple of points to make in response to Huang Ying’s argument. Firstly, with regard to the fact that the original *huaben* short story follows Li Yu’s dramatic principles more closely than does the *chuanqi* adaptation—this is certainly the case, but what’s more relevant is how *Naihe tian* compares with respect to other *chuanqi*. As Li Yu said in the “Jian touxu” 減頭緒 (Subtract the Number of Plot Threads) section of the chapters on drama in his *Xianqing ouji* (these chapters have been separately published as a *quhua* 曲話 [comments on theater]), “Having too many plot threads is the great illness of *chuanqi*” 頭緒繁多，傳奇之大病也 (Li, “Xianqing” 12). So while the plot of *Naihe tian* may be less cohesive, less unified, and have more elements of the fantastic than the original story, “Chou langjun,” it is certainly more cohesive, more unified, and less fantastic than the typical *chuanqi* Li Yu was writing against. For instance, at 30 scenes,

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<sup>8</sup> The abstract of this article says “When we use Li Yu’s principles of dramatic criticism such as “Establish a Core Idea,” “Lessen Plot Lines,” and “Guard Against the Fantastic,” as criteria, and compare the pre-adaptation short story and adapted *chuanqi*, we will discover that these principles do not apply to the adaptation, *Naihe tian*, but on the contrary apply they do fit the pre-existent [story] ‘Chou langjun pa jiao pian de yan.’” 當我們用李漁的“立主腦”、“減頭緒”、“戒荒唐”等戲曲理論原則來審視、對照改編前的小說與改編後的傳奇，會發現這些原則並不適合改編成的《奈何天》，卻適合改編前的《丑郎君怕嬌偏得艷》(Y. Huang 118).

*Naihe tian*, while long compared to other dramatic genres, is still a relatively short *chuanqi*. And while it does contain fantastic elements, the primary plot still largely revolves around domestic drama. Most relevant to our argument here, though, is that *Naihe tian*'s additional plot elements are all occasions for spectacle—possibly acrobatics and pyrotechnics—which would have been entirely absent from a more mechanical rendering of “Chou langjun”'s plot for the stage.

What Huang's comparison of *Naihe tian* and “Chou langjun” with respect to their adherence to the principles of Li Yu's dramatic criticism reveals is that the additions made to “Chou langjun”'s plot were all made in the service of performance and entertainment. Huang even goes as far as to say that Li Yu made these additions in the service of “popular entertainment”:

“From Li Yu's subjective viewpoint, as for the direct reasons for adding these plot elements, the main ones were to show off the marvelous and pursue the ingenious, and to compose a *chuanqi* that would renew the people's ears and eyes and entertain the masses”

李漁主觀上增加這些情節的直接原因主要是逞奇逐巧，結撰新人耳目目的傳奇來娛樂大眾 (Y. Huang 125).

In conclusion, comparing the original *huaben* story to the *chuanqi* adaptation reveals the extent to which Li Yu prioritized performance, visual excitement, and broad entertainment value as critical elements of *chuanqi*. And, to extrapolate from Huang Ying's argument, *chuanqi* was more intended by Li Yu to be consumed as “popular” culture, than his *huaben* stories.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> This fits with the general argument that Li Yu needed to clean up his *huaben* in the process of converting them to *chuanqi*.

Grant Guangren Shen's book on *chuanqi* drama, *Elite Theater in Ming China, 1368-1644*, also characterizes the genre as elite, as the title indicates. He explains,

Ming *chuanqi*, instead of growing out of Yuan *zaju*, evolved from *nanxi* 南戲, or southern plays, during the Northern Song dynasty (960-1127). *Nanxi* took root in Yongjia (modern Wenzhou) in south-eastern Zhejiang Province. Lacking musical quality and structural unity, *nanxi* failed to attract the literati's attention and remained largely unknown during the Yuan. 260 years would pass before *nanxi* transformed into *chuanqi* and became mainstream entertainment. Three events marked *nanxi*'s rise from its humble beginning as a rustic regional theater performed by itinerant troupes to a sophisticated operatic genre loved by all. (G. Shen 4)

The three events that mark *chuanqi*'s evolution, Shen continues, are the writing of *Pipa ji*, the introduction of Kunshan music as the main musical system for the performance of the genre, and the writing of *Huansha ji* 浣紗記 (Washing Silk) (G. Shen 4-9). What I would like to point out here is the consistency between scholars' characterizations of the genre as evolving from "popular" to "elite." My work with Li Yu's drama has shown me the flaws of this narrative, at least I would argue that Li Yu's work, specifically *Naihe tian*, was expressly written to appeal to a wide audience, with some elements that might appeal only to "men of letters," and other elements that might have the greatest appeal to children.

Of all the scholarly characterizations of *chuanqi* drama I have read, Tina Lu's, in her book, *Persons, Roles, and Minds: Identity in Peony Pavilion and Peach Blossom Fan*, most closely resonates with my own view of the genre. She argues,

The genre to which both plays belong, *chuanqi*, descends from forms of drama originating in the south and represents Chinese drama at its most complex and intricate. *Chuanqi* is at once bawdy and energetic—and yet unmistakably the product of two thousand years of continuous literary tradition. Since at least the Song dynasty, Chinese writers have experimented with embedding and juxtaposing different registers of

language to create different effects.

Nowhere is this more prevalent than in *chuanqi*, where an awareness and deliberate manipulation of linguistic register permeates practically every moment: a character might use a quotation from the classics in the service of a scatological joke, while in the same act another character might follow up an aria in almost opaquely allusive poetic language with a remark in late Ming slang. (T. Lu, *Persons* 5)

What Tina Lu touches on is the conscious interplay between different registers in *chuanqi*.

Certainly, Li Yu played with these different registers in his own *chuanqi*, and self-consciously tries to blur boundaries that separate the elite/cultured/moneyed from the “uncultured.” Over the course of *chuanqi*’s height in the late-Ming-early-Qing, it was consumed both as reading material and performed by household troupes and professional troupes, as both whole plays and selected scenes. Given the broad range in its modes of consumption, I see it as unhelpful to the study of *chuanqi* to try to classify the genre as a whole as either “popular” or “elite.”

### **What Li Yu’s Genre Adaptations Reveal about the Problem of Labeling *Chuanqi* as an “Elite” Genre**

As we saw above in the quote from Cyril Birch’s *Scenes for Mandarins*, one of the primary reasons for labeling *chuanqi* as an “elite” genre is that it relies so heavily on the composition of arias filled with allusions. And, as Tina Lu points out, some of these arias are so “opaquely allusive” that they would most certainly exclude unlettered members of the audience. But *Naihe tian* is less remarkable for its arias than for the fact that it is filled with coarse humor. In fact, Li Yu has been criticized as a *chuanqi* dramatist for the fact that his arias are perceived as being less than they could be. I believe that his comparative lack of attention to his arias is explained by the fact that he is

coming from the point of view of genre adaptation. While he may have paid less attention to the composition of arias, he paid more attention to consistency and unity in the direction of the plot—such as he does in the narration of his *huaben* short stories. As reading material, *chuanqi* dramas are said to be enjoyed first and foremost for their arias, but a reader or audience member of one of Li Yu's *chuanqi* would be in error to try and enjoy his plays for their arias alone. One thing that especially seems to separate Li Yu from other *chuanqi* dramatists is the plot-driven nature of his plays. His *chuanqi* adaptations of *huaben* stories somewhat predetermine their plot-driven quality, and I would argue that overall, Li Yu is more interested in storytelling than in aria composition.<sup>10</sup> As the author of the stories behind his *chuanqi* dramas, one can imagine how Li Yu would be more invested in plot development than would be a playwright tasked with setting to music a story already in circulation.

I am not trying to suggest that Li Yu's arias are not filled with allusions and layers ripe for study, but I would argue that Li Yu's *chuanqi* are not simply an appeal to his literati peers, but attempts to entertain anyone and everyone. The philosophy that comes

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<sup>10</sup> This is not to say that Li Yu did not think that arias were the most important feature of *chuanqi*. Certainly, arias are central to *chuanqi*, and the space Li Yu devotes to their composition in his *Quhua* gives us ample proof that he believed them to be a key component of the genre. However, in comparison to some playwrights, and taking into account common criticisms leveled against Li Yu's *chuanqi*, I would argue that Li Yu was perhaps not as concentrated on aria composition as was Tang Xianzu, for example, whose plays are celebrated for their arias, but criticized by contemporaries for being too bookish and hard to perform. The elements judged as *ya* or *su* in a play were also seen as making it more or less performable. In extracts, a play could be made more "popular," but in its entirety as a desktop play, it could appeal to a more exclusive audience. Swatek explains "They [Shen Jing (1553-1610), and Feng Menglong] found much to criticize in *Mudan ting* and did not hesitate to introduce the changes they felt were necessary if the play was to reach more than a handful of highly literate readers (that is, if it was to be more than an *antouju*, a "desktop play"). Tang vehemently denounced Shen Jing's adaptation, which was made shortly after the play began to circulate, and probably for this reason Feng Menglong cloaked his critique in the arcane details of *qu* prosody. But the changes he made to Tang's text tell a plain tale of artistic appropriation. A debate over *Mudan ting*, which was ignited by efforts to make it performable as a Kun opera, exposed sharp differences of opinion among literati about the proper uses of theatrical texts" (Swatek 10; see also her chapter "Elegance and Commonness Combined," pp. 158-202, and E. Lu).

out of reading *Naihe tian* is one that deeply questions the social hierarchy of the time. As we will see in *Bimuyu* also, Li Yu has a deep mistrust of the undeserving rich. *Bimuyu*'s Qian Wanguan 錢萬貫 (his surname means "money" and his given name means "10,000 strings of cash") is vilified and mocked for having the money to purchase a degree and twelve concubines, but not having the taste or culture to know that he's being publicly scorned through Liu Miaogu's comparison of him to the villain of *Jingchai ji* 荊釵記 (The Thorn Hairpin), Sun Ruquan 孫汝權.

### How Li Yu's Dramatic Criticism Further Resists an "Elite" vs. "Popular" Characterization

As I mentioned above, it is not without reservations that scholars fall into classifying *chuanqi* as an elite genre. For the most part, scholars concede that they have been generally forced to focus on the genre's more literary aspects because the texts of the plays have survived while performances were ephemeral and surviving records sparse.

In Li Yu's *Quhua*, in the section, "Zhong guanxi" 重關係 (Stress Connections), he stresses that in *chuanqi* "The refined should contain crudeness, and refinement should appear within crudeness" 雅中帶俗, 又于俗中見雅 (Li, "Xianqing" 57). Guo Yingde 郭英德 connects Li Yu's effort to combine the refined and the common with his attempt to make *chuanqi* widely understood and broadly entertaining,

When Li Yu wrote ancient-style prose and poetry, he proposed that "the meaning should to be simple, and the diction concrete," and when it came to the language of his *chuanqi* he all the more paid particular attention to making it popular and easy to understand, pursuing "the inclusion of crudeness within refinement, and the appearance of refinement within crudeness."

李漁作古文辭賦, 提倡“意淺而詞近,” 而其傳奇語言則更講究通俗易懂, 追求“雅中帶俗, 又于俗中見雅。” (Guo 407)

When Li Yu prescribes a balance and blending of *su* and *ya* in *chuanqi*, he is warning in particular against an overabundance of *ya*. *Chuanqi* playwrights were far more likely to tend toward preciousness than rusticity, and this preciousness, in being implicitly exclusivist, turns away potential audiences. Li Yu believed *chuanqi* should be accessible to mass audiences, and therefore should not be too *ya*.

The connection that Guo Yingde draws between *su* and a piece of writing's ability to be widely understood points to a ubiquitous problem in Chinese literary and cultural studies: the conflation of “*ya*” with “elite” and “*su*” with “popular” culture. Because *su* literature is more likely to be able to be widely understood than *ya* literature, characterizing a work as “*su*” is similar, nearly synonymous with characterizing it as “popular” (*tongsu* 通俗). Notice that *tongsu*, perhaps the most commonly used word in modern Chinese meaning “popular,” contains the character *su*, so the conflation of high and low culture with elite and popular culture, respectively, begins at the level of language.

Because the distinction between *su* and *ya* is an elemental distinction in Chinese literary criticism, its conflation with popular and elite culture is a pervasive problem in Chinese literary studies. Distinctions between *ya* and *su* were fundamental and at the heart of interpretations of theater and drama during the Ming and Qing. In the abstract of an article, Hu Jianci 胡建次 explains,

Criticism distinguishing the refined and the vulgar is one of the most fundamental forms of criticism or theory in classical critical dramatic

theory. In the Ming it was rather extensively employed and expounded on. Writers on drama, from the points of view of approval of the use of *su* and the strong advocacy of a blending of *ya* and *su*, and from the comparison of the intrinsic differences between *shi*, *ci*, and *qu* [three types of poetry], discussed *ya* and *su*, and this discourse of *ya* and *su* was expanded and developed. When things progressed to the Qing dynasty, distinctions of *ya* and *su* were still one of the most important foci of dramatic criticism. Dramatic writers, with regard to the relationship of *ya* and *su* and genre, of *ya* and *su* and role types, of *ya* and *su* and slapstick and jokes, as well as such topics as the blending of *ya* and *su*, the transformation of *su* into *ya*, and going beyond *ya* and *su*, undertook more broad and timely investigations, and the discourse of *ya* and *su* achieved a progressive deepening.

雅俗批評是古典戲曲的基本批評理論之一,它在明代得到較充分的運用和闡說。曲論家們從肯定用俗、力主雅俗兼融及從文體質性比較詩、詞、曲之別的角度,論及到雅俗,雅俗之論被拓展了開來。發展到清代,雅俗仍然是古典戲曲批評最重要的觀照視點之一,曲論家們對雅俗與文體、雅俗與角色、雅俗與科諢、雅俗與曲作者的關係及雅俗融合、化俗為雅、超脫雅俗等論題進行了更廣泛、切中的探討,雅俗之論得到進一步的深化。(Hu 118)

I believe that the pervasiveness of *ya-su* discourse in early-Qing dramatic theory, and the conflation of *ya* and *su* with “popular” and “elite” might be to blame for scholars’ estimation of *chuanqi* as an elite genre, when it is clear that Li Yu felt that the genre was meant to be widely consumed. The problem with the conflation of these concepts is that popular literature can be “refined”—as Kongzi believed to be the case for the famously popular songs compiled in the *Classic of Odes*, and vice versa. There is no doubt overlap between *ya* and elite culture, and *su* and popular culture, but we should not let the common, but uneasy characterization of *chuanqi* as “elite” give us the false impression that the genre’s representations are more *ya* than *su*. As we have seen in Li Yu’s dramatic criticism, and he has a good deal of company on this account, *ya* and *su* should be intertwined and blended in *chuanqi*. In her “Ming-Qing xiqu ‘yasu lun’ yanjiu pingshu”

明清戲曲‘雅俗論’研究評述 (A Survey of Research on the “Discourse of *Ya* and *Su*” in Ming-Qing Drama), Liu Lingling 劉玲玲 concludes that while there is more focus on drama’s *ya* elements, a survey of *ya/su* discourse in Ming-Qing dramatic criticism clearly demonstrates that a balance of *ya* and *su* was thought to be imperative. She explains,

One could say that the discourse on *ya* and *su* in drama involved every aspect of drama. Regardless of how dramatists called for *su* in drama, the *ya* [in their plays] was always stressed as being of the utmost importance, and people always took *ya* as the main thing and gave it respect. Regardless, drama’s *su* characteristics have always existed; they are what conforms to the characteristics of popular taste. In actuality, the *ya* and *su* of drama are reciprocally mixed, and interpenetrated each other in their process of development. Regardless of the social class of the particular literatus or writer on drama, they all had the cultural trait of possessing both *ya* and *su* and emphasizing both. Therefore, regarding the discourse on *ya* and *su* in drama, I believe that there ought to be both, without placing particular emphasis on either. Only drama possessing both can from many aspects instantiate the many sided nature of drama’s form and the deeper layers of beauty of this art, and only then can it flexibly unfold the social realities that it represents.

可以說，戲曲的雅俗之論涉及了戲曲各個方面，無論劇作家們怎麼樣提倡戲曲的“俗”，其“雅”總是被強調到重要的地位，人們總是以其雅為主體，以雅為尊。無論怎樣，戲曲的俗性總是存在的，它符合大眾審美的特徵。從實際的角度來說，戲曲的雅、俗是相互融合的，而且在其發展的過程中是相互滲透的。無論身處在何階層的文人以及曲學家們，他們總是具有雙重的雅俗兼備的文化品格。因此，有關戲曲的雅俗論，筆者認為是應該雅俗兼備的，而不是側重於某一層面，只有二者兼備的戲曲作品，才能多方面的體現戲曲形式的多樣性以及這門藝術深層次的美，也才能更靈活地展現其所表現的社會現實。(L. Liu 74)

For the most part, the magnification in scholarship of the elite aspects of *chuanqi* drama is more pronounced in Western scholarship than in current scholarship in Chinese, and I think this problem arises directly from a conflation of “*ya*” with “elite.”

*Chuanqi* is defined as elite in comparison to its precursor, *nanxi*, and due to the fact that it was produced and consumed by literati. I think the discussion above is sufficient to suggest that this designation, particularly in being as definitive as it is, deserves prolematization. The characterization of *chuanqi* as elite has become central to our understanding of the genre in relation to others, but I believe it contributes to our misunderstanding of the layering of registers in *chuanqi*, and the painstaking efforts of authors like Li Yu to ensure that *chuanqi* be understood across wide audiences. Standard teleological narratives are invested in the portrayal of *huaben* as a largely “popular” genre, and *chuanqi* as a comparatively “elite” genre. On the contrary, my analysis of Li Yu’s *huaben-chuanqi* genre adaptations show that if anything, *huaben* was reserved for a more exclusive audience than what was intended for *chuanqi*. The conflation of the long discourse characterizing literature as “*su*” or “*ya*” with the discourse that characterizes it as either “elite” or “popular” further blurs the picture to the point where these designations become more detrimental than they are helpful to our understanding of either genre.

### **Que Lihou, the Anti-hero of *Naihe tian***

Certainly, positioning a clown-like figure as the male lead of *Naihe tian* speaks to audiences on many different levels. On one level, giving such a prominent role to a *chou* role provides element of sustained comic relief to a genre dominated by long, meandering

romances, while simultaneously, on another level, Li Yu's parody of the typical young romantic male lead<sup>11</sup> provides more complex enjoyment.

In *Naihe tian*, Li Yu parodies *chuanqi* drama by making a *chou* role its central character. An analysis of the distribution of arias and frequency of appearance onstage across *Naihe tian*'s role types will illuminate the extent and character of Li Yu's innovation, and simultaneously also reveal how role type operates in *chuanqi*. Further, my analysis questions the value of defining *chuanqi* as an "elite" genre. As I will show, Li Yu made every effort to make his *chuanqi* as widely appealing as possible. Certainly, there are elements that will appeal only to those with a cultural education similar to his, but there are likewise episodes that would seem to be most fully to be appreciated by children. What I have concluded through my analysis of Li Yu's employment of the role type system, his generic innovation and parody of the genre, and through a comparison to the specific goals he outlines in his dramatic criticism, is that although it might be difficult to examine the life of *chuanqi* in "popular" performance, *Naihe tian* was most certainly written not for an exclusive audience of cohorts, but for the entertainment of anyone and everyone.

### Li Yu's System of Role Types

While there might be minor variations in the role type systems of different *chuanqi* playwrights, they are relatively similar. What one playwright calls the *xiaodan* 小旦 (young or secondary female), might be another playwright's *tie* 貼 (young or

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<sup>11</sup> The original story has been characterized as a parody of the "scholarly genius and female beauty" (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人) genre (Chan 130).

secondary female). The system was not standardized, but we do see a movement toward greater specialization of role types over time. The following is a list of the role types deployed by Li Yu:

*Sheng* 生—male lead  
*Dan* 旦—female lead  
*Xiaosheng* 小生—younger male, secondary male  
*Xiaodan* 小旦—younger female, secondary female  
*Laodan* 老旦—older female, secondary female  
*Chou* 丑—clown  
*Jing* 净—villain, spirit, supporting role  
*Fujing* 副净—supporting role  
*Wai* 外—older male  
*Mo* 末—male  
*Za* 雜—undistinguished groups (extras)

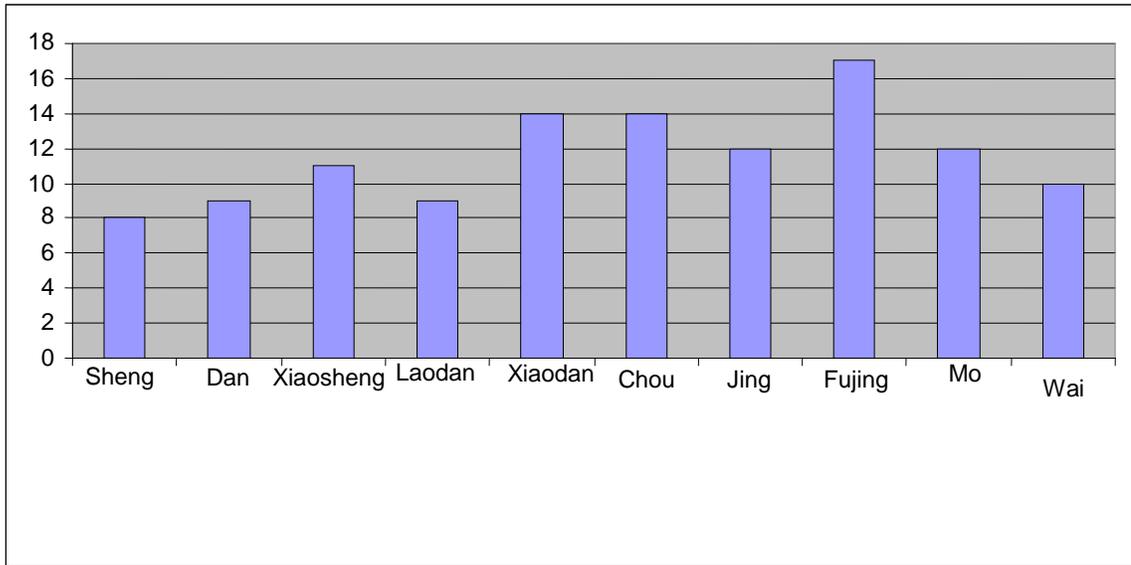
The system of role types in contemporary *kunqu* performance is far more complex than Li Yu's system. The *Dictionary of Kunqu* (*Kunqu cidian* 昆曲辞典) lists 49 separate role types with, for instance, fifteen subcategories of *sheng* and twelve of *dan* (Hong 558-66). As we will see below, my analysis of Li Yu's adaptation of "Chou langjun" as *Naihe tian* itself points toward increased specialization of the role type system.

Let's begin with some raw data collected from *Naihe tian* and continue with a discussion of what it shows. The chart below counts the number of scenes each role type appears in.<sup>12</sup>

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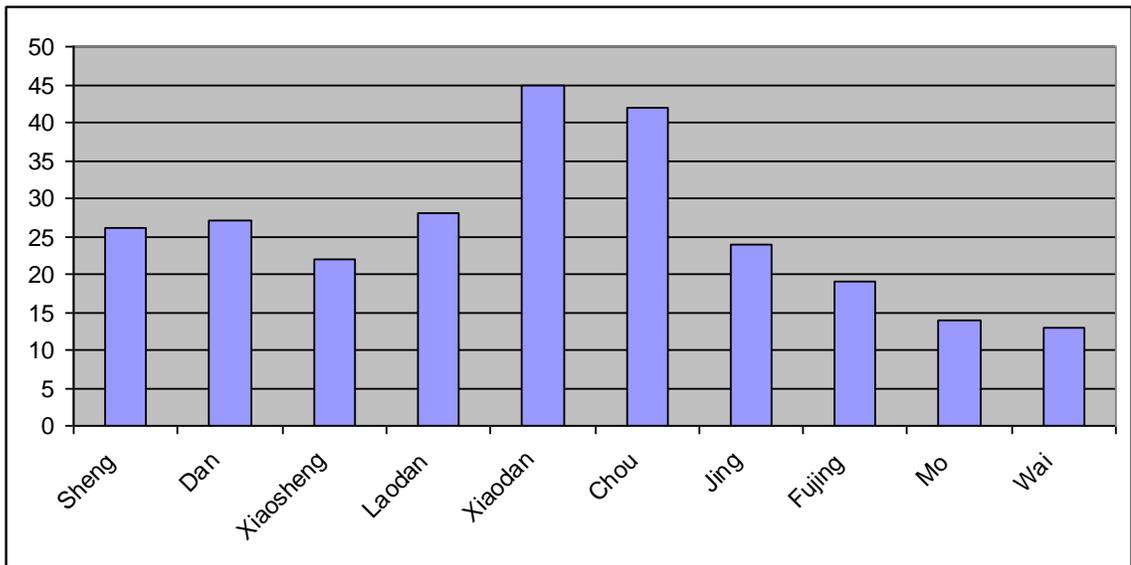
<sup>12</sup> To collect this data I counted once for every player present in a scene. I did not count each entrance and exit onto the stage—this would have resulted in more than one possible appearance per scene.

**Table 1: Number of Scenes per Role Type in *Naihe tian***



The following chart counts the total number of arias sung by each role type:<sup>13</sup>

**Table 2: Number of Arias per Role Type in *Naihe tian***



<sup>13</sup> Note that I counted once for each aria participated in a significant way by a character played by the same role-type (a character's mere participation in a chorus [marked in the stage directions by *zhong* 眾 or *he* 合] is not counted). Because the same aria can thus be counted more than once, the total number of arias on the chart surpasses the total number of arias in the play. If I had instead decided to assign each aria to only one character (i.e., to the character who sings the most lines in it or the one voice or consciousness that seems most prominent in it, etc.), this would have resulted in a larger proportion of the arias being allotted to the *sheng* and *dan*, and a smaller proportion for *fujing*. That is to say, while *fujing* frequently participates in arias, they are not as frequently the main voice in them.

With regards to the chart that graphs the number of scenes appeared in, it might be a surprise to see that the *sheng* and *dan*, the two players at the center of most *chuanqi* plays, appear in the least number of scenes in *Naihe tian*. I see the reasons for this as being two-fold. Firstly, while at the center of *chuanqi* plots, the *sheng* and *dan* each bring a certain aesthetic to the stage that can get worn out over the course of a play without the balance of more lively scenes. As the two most important players, the *sheng* and *dan* are employed strategically. When they do appear they sing more than the other role types—a point that weights their stage presence. In his dramatic criticism, Li Yu paid a great deal of attention to the entertainment value and performability of a play. Part of this performability necessitates that plays present a mix of romance, intrigue, and action, so that the two main singers, the *sheng* and *dan*, can rest their voices, and so the audience is not overwhelmed by the slow, dignified arias that are their specialty.

Given the relative lack of specialization in the role type system employed by Li Yu, it is only logical that the least specialized, more minor roles would be seen more frequently, as they can play a greater range of characters. This is certainly the case in *Naihe tian*. The *fujing*, perhaps the most minor role in Li Yu's system outside the *za*, appears most frequently precisely because of the flexibility of the role type, and the need for supporting roles to set off the main characters.

The second reason for the infrequency of appearances by the *sheng* and *dan* in *Naihe tian*, and the one most worthy of our attention here, is that in *Naihe tian* Li Yu's casting of the male lead as a *chou* displaced the *sheng* from his central and crucial role in the typical play. *Chuanqi* has been characterized as a genre predominated by stories that had circulated in the popular tradition—a genre that takes these stories and adapts them to

literati tastes. With *Naihe tian*, Li Yu asks, as he frequently does, why not do something new? Instead of recuperating the old stories of others, Li Yu begins with an entirely new story of his own making and with it strikes at the heart of everything that has grown tired about the genre, while still servicing most of its generic requirements.

In *Naihe tian*, the *sheng* appears most infrequently because that actor only plays three characters, Yuan Zhuobing, the actor hired to stand in for Que Lihou, and the Fortune-Granting Spirit Official of the Heavenly Realm of scene 27. The qualities with which the *sheng role* is most frequently identified, dignity, loyalty, reserve, and success as a scholar-official, are embodied most by Yuan Zhuobing and by Que Lihou's servant and partial surrogate, Que Zhong, played by as a *xiaosheng*.

For its part, the *dan* appears relatively infrequently in *Naihe tian* because the main *dan* role is Que Lihou's third wife, Miss Wu, the perfect combination of the best qualities of his first and second wives. As the third wife, she does not appear until later on in the play, after Que Lihou has had the chance to marry, and be rejected by, his first and second wives. The *dan* appears earlier on in the play in the role of Que's second wife's mother, a choice that raises questions. Why did Li Yu use the *dan* to play the white-haired mother instead of the *laodan*, who specializes in older distinguished females, and who seems more suited to play that particular character? My guess would be that, having arrived at scene seven without having cast the *dan*, it was time to give that actor something to do. This, coupled with the fact that the *laodan* had already been cast in the relatively important role of Que Lihou's first wife, Miss Zou, makes Li Yu's choice to use the *dan* and not the *laodan* to play this minor part of an older woman makes a bit more sense.

While *Naihe tian* is atypical, it still informs our knowledge of the features of the role type system in *chuanqi* drama during Li Yu's time. Interestingly, the two most important role types, roles that would have been played by the most skilled actors in the troupe, the *sheng* and the *dan*, in fact appear the *least* frequently in the play. Li Yu's innovation partially accounts for the infrequency of appearances of the *sheng* and *dan*, but so does convention. The *sheng* and *dan* play fewer, but more prominent characters. Because they are the leading players, their stage appearances are strategic, and while they may not make the most frequent appearances, those that they do make will be filled with arias. Note also that the *fujing*, one of the most minor roles, appears onstage most frequently. In the particular case of *Naihe tian*, the *fujing* plays Que Lihou's maid, Yichun; the matchmaker, Zhang Yima; and other bit parts. The versatility of the role type explains why it should appear most frequently in *Naihe tian*.

More surprising might be the frequency of the scene appearances by the *chou* and *xiaodan*. The centrality of the *chou* in *Naihe tian* is, of course related to Li Yu's decision to cast the main character as a *chou*, something that will be discussed at more length below. The prominence of the *xiaodan*, while reflecting certain particularities of *Naihe tian*, exposes some of the contours of the role type system at the height of *chuanqi* drama.

The basic reasoning behind the frequency of appearance of more minor role types, such as the *fujing* and the *xiaodan*, is that in playing more minor, supporting roles, these role types cover a broad range of characters. More minor role types play a greater number of characters, in order to balance their time on stage with that of the *sheng* and *dan*. In the case of *Naihe tian*, the *sheng* and *dan* appear infrequently, but when they do appear they sing a great deal. More versatile role types appear frequently, but do not sing as much.

Further, the importance of the *xiaodan* in *Naihe tian* gestures towards the evolution of the role type system of the time. In *Naihe tian* the *xiaodan* is arguably the star of the play, but only because the role type covers two relatively important characters, Miss He, Que Lihou's second wife, and the Ruler of Light, in addition to several other more minor characters such as the uglier of Yuan Zhuobing's two concubines. Unsurprisingly, as the role type system evolved, it grew to accommodate more numerous and more highly specialized role types. *Jingju*, for example, has dozens of role types, making it unthinkable that both the undefeated general the Ruler of Light and the beautiful and demure Miss He would be played by the same actor. Growing specialization of role types coincides with bigger, more professional troupes with large numbers of highly trained actors. A small number of role types, such as in the system employed by Li Yu, indicates smaller, less professionalized troupes in which the *sheng* and *dan* were perhaps the only trained actors.

The first chart illustrates the fact that the importance of a role type is not determined by the number of scenes and actor appears in. Minor roles are more flexible, and are therefore frequently cast. *Chuanqi* drama, with Li Yu being an exception in this regard, is centered around the composition of arias that are to carry the mood of the play up and down through its sprawling plot. While some playwrights and the majority of critics focused the majority of their efforts on arias, Li Yu took a more holistic approach. Being the author of the stories at the center of his *chuanqi* plotlines, it is natural that he would be more invested in doing them justice than would have been a playwright who simply reworked a plot for the operatic stage. Nevertheless, more important role types are still given the most singing parts, so an analysis of the frequency of arias across role

types is still elemental to understanding the extent and particulars of Li Yu's innovation relative to the *chou* in *Naihe tian*.

### **Could Li Yu's Troupe Have Performed *Naihe tian*?**

As for Li Yu's own troupe, the evidence available indicates that it centered heavily on the *sheng* and *dan*, as these are the only two roles mentioned. Gleaning what information we can from Li Yu's extant writings it appears that his acting troupe was primarily active from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> years of the Kangxi reign or 1668-1673 (G. Huang 24). In his "Li Yu jiating xiban zonglun" 李漁家庭戲班綜論 (Comprehensive Discussion of Li Yu's Private Acting Troupe), Huang Guoquan asserts 黃果泉 that the troupe could not have been active before the 5<sup>th</sup> year of the Kangxi reign (1666), because this is when he first acquired a young woman surnamed Qiao 喬 around whom the troupe was formed (G. Huang 24). Qiao had an aptitude for performance and memorization and Li Yu employed an older actor to train her, making it plausible that she began performing shortly thereafter. Soon Qiao became the core of troupe, training a young woman surnamed Wang 王 after the latter came into Li Yu's possession in 1667 (Li, "Yijia yan wenji" 97). Qiao died of tuberculosis at 19, and Li Yu could not bear to hear opera for the following half a year (G. Huang 24). When he traveled to the capital during the summer of the 13<sup>th</sup> year of Kangxi's reign (1674) he brought along both Wang and a young woman surnamed Huang (the concubine that replaced Qiao as *dan*), but by that time Huang was already pregnant and Wang had also developed an illness, so it is unlikely that they would have performed (G. Huang 24). Wang died by the end of the same year,

shutting down any hope Li Yu might have had of reviving his small troupe (G. Huang 24). We can guess that the reason that only Fusheng (the *dan*) and Zilai (the *sheng*), and Fusheng's replacement, Huang, are mentioned is because they were perceived as the most important actors in the troupe. Other role types were perhaps played by untrained servants, and therefore did not merit mention (G. Huang 24). This raises the very interesting question of how Li Yu's troupe would have staged his second play, *Naihe tian*. Certainly, according to extant evidence, Li Yu's own troupe might have been ill-equipped to stage the play, because of the need for a *chou* actor able to perform such a major role. The way I envision it, *Naihe tian* was written as a parody of *chuanqi*, intended to be read by lovers of the genre, but perhaps intended for staging by larger, perhaps professional troupes with specialized actors for every role type, more equipped to stage a play that relies so heavily on players other than the *sheng* and *dan*.

While a lot of attention is given to the fact that Li Yu traveled and performed with his small troupe of actresses, the reality is that the period of his seeking patronage in this way lasted less than four years. As a playwright Li Yu is noted for being fairly close to issues surrounding performance, but I wonder whether he even had the occasion to stage all of his plays. Patrick Hanan details the circumstances of Li Yu's drama troupe:

A common misconception holds that his welcome was due to his little troupe of actress-concubines, notably Miss Qiao and Miss Wang. It is an attractive idea, inevitably suggesting Molière and his players, but it lacks substance. Li Yu received Miss Qiao and Miss Wang as gifts from his hosts in 1666 and 1667, respectively, and each girl died just six years after she joined him, at the identical age of eighteen. Before either could perform, she had to be trained. I suspect that the play they acted for the birthday of their host's wife on New Year's Day, 1668, was among the first performances they gave. Their last must have been in the latter half of 1672, as Miss Qiao's consumption worsened. They were not taken along on Li Yu's Guangzhou journey, which occupied much of 1668 and a little of 1669, and there is only slight evidence that they accompanied him to

Fuzhou in 1670. Therefore the period in which they performed in the Mustard Seed Garden, as well as in Li Yu's lodgings in Suzhou, Hanyang, and other places lasted less than four years. Furthermore, the small, invited audiences before whom they performed seem to have been Li Yu's literary friends rather than his patrons. (Hanan, *Invention* 8-9)

Most of what we can glean about the activity of Li Yu's drama troupe is from his "Qiao Fusheng, Wang Zilai erji hezhuan" 喬復生，王再來二姬合傳 (Collective Biography of the Two Concubines, Qiao Fusheng and Wang Zilai). Naturally it is these two concubines that are at the center of our picture of what Li Yu's troupe was like. In the absence of better information, we are left to conclude that Li Yu's troupe centered around its *sheng* and *dan*, and may even have had difficulty staging *Naihe tian*. In this instance, Li Yu's innovation pushed the limits of his ability to stage his own plays.

### **Role Type and Characterization in *Naihe tian***

The character of Que Lihou is an extreme rendering, through parody and indirection, of the deficiencies of the more typical young male leads of *chuanqi* drama. Li Yu typically creates humor by pushing well-worn conventions to absurd, but logical extremes, or by inverting clichés and following them as they run a formulaic course. The *huaben* story, "Chou langjun" and Li Yu's *chuanqi* adaptation of that story, *Naihe tian*, derive their humor from their inversion of the well-worn idea, espoused by scholar-beauty romances, that talented and beautiful women are destined to marry talented and handsome scholars. In both the story and the play beautiful and talented women are, in fact, fated to marry ugly, stupid men. The more beautiful and talented the woman, the more abject her fate. Li Yu's choice to make the character Que Lihou a *chou* role type

goes against the grain of *chuanqi* conventions and constitutes an expansion of the genre. It is also one of the few instances in which what comes across as being merely humorous in the original story telescopes and takes on a greater meaning when adapted to *chuanqi*. That the male lead of a play would be played by a *chou* actor was, to my knowledge, unprecedented. Li Yu's choice to cast a *chou* actor for the role of Que Lihou not only puts a fine point on the character's outrageously loathsome qualities as they were narrated in "Chou langjun," but further pokes fun at a common strain in *chuanqi* drama, pushing it to a comedic extreme.

As Catherine Swatek points out in *Peony Pavilion Onstage*, one of Feng Menglong's major projects in his revision of *The Peony Pavilion* was to elevate the male lead, Liu Mengmei, so that he could be the equal of Du Liniang, the female lead. It is certainly true that in the original play Liu Mengmei is overshadowed in every respect by Du Liniang, and I would argue that this imbalance is common in *chuanqi* drama. There is often a great deal of exposition devoted to demonstrating the unique and unmatched qualities of the heroine, while those of the hero are taken more on faith or even despite negative evidence. Thinking specifically of *Xixiang ji* 西廂記 (Story of the Western Chamber), *Pipa ji*, and *Baitu ji*, all hugely influential in the development of the *chuanqi* genre, the sacrifices and ingenuity of the heroines go without comparable merit or devotion from their male counterparts. In Li Yu's own plays the *dan* often outshines the *sheng*. In *Bimuyu*, for example, the fact that Tan Chuyu nearly puts his beloved benefactor to death after falling for the bandit king's ruse to hire an imposter is never sufficiently resolved despite the play's *tuanyuan* ending and is completely missing from Li Yu's fictional version of the same story.

## Que Lihou as a Parody of Deficient Heroes of *Chuanqi* Drama

Catherine Swatek asserts that *chuanqi* drama favors equal pairings among the lead roles, but Tang Xianzu's *Mudan ting* instead privileges Du Liniang's subjectivity over Liu Mengmei's, and as such goes against the grain of *chuanqi* convention. Swatek argues,

In *Mudan ting* Tang goes out of his way to confuse any perception that the dream in the Du family garden is one that the lovers share. He appears instead to suggest that it is a product of Liniang's uniquely powerful emotions, which have little if anything to do with those of the dream lover. Here and elsewhere he wrote against the norms for *chuanqi* romantic drama, which favored pairings, such that the representation of one character is part of a dialectic of similarity and difference with respect to the other character. Feng [Menglong] was sensitive to asymmetry in Tang's depiction of the central romantic pair, inasmuch as Liu Mengmei's character is inferior to Liniang and more shallow. Here he labors to restore balance, by portraying Liniang and Liu as equal parties to the dream experience, and equally committed to it. (Swatek 58)

The century between the publications of Tang Xianzu's *Mudan ting* and Li Yu's *Naihe tian* witnessed a croissance of *chuanqi* as a genre. Li Yu's parody of the general deficiencies of *chuanqi* heroes with respect to their female counterparts seems to suggest that what went against the grain of *chuanqi* convention during Tang's time (as Swatek suggests), had become conventional by Li Yu's time, to the point that Li Yu was able to capitalize on this trend by parodying it in *Naihe tian*.

I would like to complicate this picture somewhat. While I agree that *chuanqi* emphasizes balance (musically and through pacing, for example), I do not wholly agree with Swatek's suggestion that *Mudan ting*'s imbalanced pair goes against the grain of *chuanqi* convention. Certainly, the depth of Du Liniang's subjectivity is exceptional, but I don't find the fact of Liu Mengmei's deficiencies to be. I think that because male success, as it is replicated over and over again in *chuanqi*, fits within such a constrained and clichéd narrative, that it often gets overlooked or treated in shorthand in *chuanqi*

dramas themselves. The hero is always a scholar and always passes the exams with flying colors—his “exceptional” qualities are not exceptional at all within the realm of *chuanqi*. Heroines, on the other hand, can confront a range of obstacles—problems with in-laws, neglectful husbands, illness and death, etc.—and because the narratives that ostensibly prove them to be suitable matches to their illustrious heroes are so much more varied, they are that much less likely to be told in simple shorthand and more likely to represent the primary grounds of conflict in the plays. As a result, while the male and female leads in typical *chuanqi* are said to be good matches for one another, a great deal more time is generally spent relating the particularities of the heroines’ hardships, triumphs, and superlative qualities. In addition, the heroes often commit errors that seem contrary to their supposed genius and high-minded morality.

### **Que Lihou’s *Chouishness***

To my mind the most salient quality of Que Lihou’s *chouishness* in *Naihe tian* is the constant indignity to which he is subjected. In the bath depicted above, the Form-Changing Spirit Envoy transforms himself into a maid and scrubs Que Lihou from head to toe. The indignity and vulnerability of bathing, even if only represented (in contrast to the illustration) vaguely or symbolically on the stage, would be unheard of for a *sheng*. This extreme exposure of Que, although it is also the site of his transformation, is the culmination of a long sequence of humiliations to which he is subjected throughout the course of *Naihe tian*. These begin shortly after his introduction into the play in scene two, when his ugly maid, Yichun, refuses Que’s sexual advances, even at the risk of being beaten or sold, on account of his loathsome looks and repugnant smell. This is just a first

of several blows against Que Lihou's masculine identity, and is followed by scenes featuring the shock, horror, and rejection he suffers from each of his three wives. As embodied by Que Lihou, the *chou* role type is defined by humor won through humiliation.

### **Que Lihou's Transformation and the Generic Constraints of *Chuanqi* Drama**

As the employment of role types and the typical assignment of characters in a play to the same role-type throughout the play suggests, *chuanqi* characters should not be expected to go through major developments but instead remain static as they move through the plot's twists and turns. The convention for which *chuanqi* is perhaps best known is its *tuanyuan* 團圓. *Chuanqi* plays are supposed to end with a final scene in which all plot conflicts are happily resolved and as many of the play's characters as possible are reunited on the stage in a lively reunion. Typically, the play's resolution of its major conflicts is either brought about or affirmed by imperial edict. "Chou langjun," as a *huaben* story, is not bound by any such convention, and ends instead with the three wives resigned to sharing the burden of having a monstrous husband so that none of them has to bear it alone. "Chou langjun"'s ending is not grand or joyous enough for *chuanqi* and could not be adapted without major changes. By making a *chou* the male lead in *Naihe tian*, Li Yu has put breaking *chuanqi*'s conventions at the very center of the play, so why might expect him to have his play that break with other conventions as well. But the changes Li Yu makes to the original story with regard to the ending show him instead bowing to convention. In order for the ending of the play to be appropriately joyous, in scene 28, "Changing Form" (Xingbian 形變), Que Lihou is transformed to the point of

being a *sheng* in all but name (the character is still identified as a *chou* even after his transformation). This ends up greatly mitigating the transgression of casting a *chou* as the male lead of *Naihe tian*. The scene opens with the Form-Changing Envoy's self-introduction:

From antiquity up to the present I have wielded skills beyond  
compare,  
But even I must yield before the great Creator of All Things.  
People of the world, do not say that one's body is hard to change,  
If you want to transform your bones, just begin with your mind.

Your humble deity is none other than the Envoy of Transformation on staff in the Supreme Deity's court. I am also called "artisan of humans." Ordinary humans, all they think is that one's five facial features and four limbs and their proportions and style are all made by heaven and earth and brought to fruition by one's mother and father, so that by the time the fetus is born the features and limbs are all set, for better or worse, and cannot be changed again. Little do they know that beyond their perception, I, the Envoy of Transformation, can take even [proverbially ugly folk such as] Quchu or Qishi and turn them into [proverbially handsome folk such as] Pan An or Song Yu, or take Pan An or Song Yu and turn them into Quchu or Qishi. Now, because Que Lihou has done good deeds, the Gods of Heaven, Earth, and Water have memorialized the Jade Emperor [about that], and the Jade Emperor has dispatched me to go down [to the mortal world] to transform Que Lihou's body and face and turn him into an attractive man. Now, if you told this to an ordinary person, who wouldn't laugh at your absurdity?

絕技曾經擅古今，微權造化不能侵。世人莫道形難變，欲變形骸早變心。  
小神非別，乃上帝殿前一個變形使者，又叫做人匠的便是。世上的人，只曉得五官四肢與規模舉動，都是天地生成，父母養就，胞胎落地時節，就定下好歹，以後再一改不得的。那裏知道冥冥之中，有我這個變形使者，能把蘧蔭，戚施變做潘安，宋玉；又能把潘安，宋玉變做蘧蔭，戚施。就如今日三官大帝，為因闕素封行了善事，一齊奏過玉皇。玉皇差我下去，替他改形換面，變做一個美貌男人。你若把這句話去對世上人講，那一個不笑你荒唐？(Li, "Naihe tian" 88-9)

As we will see in greater detail below, *chuanqi* plays conventionally juxtapose domestic and personal duties with obligations to society at large, often placing them in conflict

with each other. Typically, the primary plot revolves around the love and personal drama between the *sheng* and *dan*, and the secondary plot revolves around the *sheng*'s effort to find employment for his talent and fulfill his duty to state and society. In *Naihe tian*, the male lead is not only lacking in talent, he spent ten years of schooling without ever learning to read or write. His transformation in this scene takes place late in the play. This being the case, he cannot himself prove his worth through passing the civil service exams and/or service to the state. Li Yu adds a new character, one who does not appear in the original story, to fill this void.

### ***Sheng: Duty and Didacticism in Chuanqi***

Being a *chou*, Que Lihou has none of the qualities one expects of a *sheng*. He is ugly, stupid, smelly, and is completely lacking in dignity or grace. He is rich, but not through his own efforts. I argue that in his inability to really do anything on his own, he parodies the typically ineffectual heroes of *chuanqi* such as Liu Mengmei of *Mudan ting*, Cai Bojie of *Pipa ji*, and even Li Yu's own Tan Chuyu (see chapter three below). Que Zhong 阙忠 (which could be taken to mean "loyal to Que"), played by a *xiaosheng*, stands in as a surrogate for Que Lihou when it comes to performing acts of duty to the state. What Que Lihou lacks in looks and competence is compensated for by his good-looking, smart, and effective servant, Que Zhong. When Que Lihou and his matchmaker plan to dupe Miss He into marrying him by suggesting that he is someone other than the ugly creature he is, Que Zhong is Que Lihou's first choice, because of his looks and distinguished demeanor. Que Zhong vetoes the idea because it would violate the

distinction between master and servant, and cause more trouble than it resolves. This is the sequence in which Que Li hou asks Que Zhong to stand in for him:

(*Xiaosheng*) Master, what order do you have for me?

(*Chou*) It's not about anything else but I have something top-secret to discuss with you. Mrs. He wants to visually check out her future son-in-law, and as you now, how could my face be "check outable"? I want to ask someone else to stand in for me, but it is too embarrassing, and so I thought of you.

(The *xiaosheng* shakes his head.) How could that be justifiable?! Not only is there the need to keep separate master and servant, but moreover there is the need to distinguish dislike and suspicion. We needn't talk about what if I am not approved of [by Mrs. He], even if I am approved of, once the bride has been brought in over the threshold, there will be all kinds of difficulties. There's no need to worry, master. The man who'll stand in for you, I found him already.

(小生) 大爺有何使令?

(丑) 不為別事, 有句機密話和你商量. 何夫人要相女婿, 你曉得, 我的面龐可是相得的? 要央別人替代, 又不好開口, 只得想到你身上.

(小生搖頭介) 豈有此理! 不但有主僕之分, 又且有嫌疑之別. 莫說相不中, 就是相中了, 娶進門來, 也有許多不便的處. 大爺不肖費心, 這個代相的人, 闕忠已尋下了. (Li "Naihe tian" 28)

With Que Lihou as the male lead, Li Yu takes aim at those whose wealth surpasses their class and culture. On the other hand, he suggests that Que Zhong possesses more merit than his standing as Que Lihou's steward indicates. The ability, in Ming and Qing times, of rich merchants to in effect buy social status was clearly resented by Li Yu and others like him who were practically doomed to failure in the almost impossibly competitive examination system, and who lack the money to simply buy a degree. As we will see in chapter three, in *Bimuyu* the uncultured, pompous, bully Qian Wanguan was able to buy a degree, and he is the epitome of the undeserving and distasteful. Likewise, comparing Que Lihou and Que Zhong, Que Zhong's merits far exceed his master's. Rather than suggesting that Li Yu favored a classless society, I think what this suggests is

dissatisfaction with his own material wealth, something that he brought up incessantly in his other writings.

Que Zhong's positioning as a character in the play merits further discussion. His role lies somewhere in between being a primary role and a supporting one. Primary characters typically give self-introductions on their first appearance onstage. This is not the case for Que Zhong. He appears in both scenes two and eight before he is given a chance to present a self-introduction in scene 10. In it the latter he reminds the audience that it is not for lack of talent or merit that he is a servant of the Que household, but rather the result of the misfortunes of his grandfather. He explains,

I am Que Zhong. I am naturally gifted and my temperament is loyal and honest. It's only because of my grandfather's strained circumstances that he became a servant of the Que household, with the result that generation by generation we have been servants.

自家闕忠是也。賦材敏捷，秉性忠良。只因祖父式微，投入闕家為僕，以致青衣世襲。(Li, "Naihe tian" 33)

It is somewhat unusual for a servant to be cast in such an active and central role. Placing Que Zhong alongside his master, Que Lihou, Li Yu makes the point that merit and substance do not correlate with rank and wealth.

*Chuanqi* plots usually revolve around a main plot thread, usually domestic, and a subsidiary plot thread, civil or military. The domestic plot thread usually involves a threat to the fated love of the male and female leads. The secondary plot usually involves a threat to sovereignty or a civil affair of great importance in which the male lead and usually his father-in-law, benefactor, or mentor, demonstrate their strict adherence to principle and fulfill their duties with regard to the common good. Typically, it is through

the resolution of the secondary plot conflict that the male lead proves himself. In *Naihe tian* Que Zhong fills in for Que Lihou and plays the *sheng*'s part in this.

When all of Que's repulsive qualities are transformed into their opposites in scene 28, "Changing Form," it is really thanks to Que Zhong, despite the envoy's claim that changing one's mind is the fundamental thing. It was Que Zhong's idea to lend help to the campaign on the border, and he that traveled to the border to bring that help. Que Zhong suggested charitable service to Que Lihou with the expectation that Que's merit would be recognized. Because of Que Zhong's ingenuity and generosity on Que Lihou's behalf, they are both awarded official titles.

While Que Zhong functions as the surrogate *sheng*-hero of the play, his status as Que Lihou's steward and his *xiaosheng* role type still allows him more freedom and fewer constraints than would normally be applied to the male-lead of a *chuanqi*. For instance, in scene 26, "Agile Maneuvers," Que Zhong, who has infiltrated the enemy camp and been taken captive to be consort to the leader of the female enemy troops, Ruler of Light, goes to bed with her and beheads her when he gets the signal that Yuan's troops have arrived to launch a surprise attack. Sleeping with a rebel general is not normally the kind of indignity that a *sheng* would be subjected to, but because of Que Zhong's status as servant to Que Lihou, his actions are not as constricted as those of a typical *sheng* would be.

As Jing Shen argues, the early Qing was a period of social instability within the literati class. Li Yu, for example, renounced the traditional path to success through the examination system, and likewise resisted the "amateur-ideal" prominent in the Ming. Li Yu's anxiety over this crisis of literary authority manifests itself in the slippages in *Naihe*

*tian* with regard to classes—Que Lihou is entirely undeserving of his wealth and position, and Que Zhong’s talents are clearly untapped in his role as Que Lihou’s steward. Jing Shen explains the background behind this slippage,

By the Qing, it was difficult for many literati to clearly define their social position, because by being professional scholars or semi-officials, they could be identified with neither scholar-officials nor commoners. Many called themselves “cotton-robed scholars” [*buyi*] 布衣 if they had no post. As the *shi* status symbolically held social significance in spite of its fragmentation, the literati became very self-conscious concerning their social identities and concerned about the authenticity of *shi* construction. This anxiety was written into the world of *chuanqi* drama as a genre of the cultural elite. (J. Shen, *Playwrights* 16)

Li Yu’s innovation in placing a *chou* as the lead in *Naihe tian*, and his deployment of the “servant but not servant” Que Zhong as the vehicle for the fulfillment of his and Que’s public duties are surely related to anxiety over slippages and perceived “injustices” within social identities in the early Qing.

### ***Fujing: Characterization in Chuanqi***

The function, in *Naihe tian*, of Que Lihou’s maidservant, Yichun 宜春, can be summarized in the depiction of her holding a mirror so that Que Lihou can look at himself. Yichun holds a reflection of Que Lihou, and it is by her presence that the audience learns his essential qualities both in his grotesque original form and after his magical bath.

In the absence of the narrator, characters in *chuanqi* are developed through their self-introductions, through their dialogue with other characters, and to a certain extent by their assignment to a role type. We first learn the degree of Que Lihou’s repulsiveness

through his interaction with Yichun in the second scene, “Worrying about the Wedding.” In it we meet Que Lihou, who is trying to think of ways to compensate for his flaws and lack of experience as he prepares for his wedding day. He decides he can make up for his lack of sexual experience by practicing on his maid, Yichun. After noting his bodily flaws, Que Lihou says to himself,

And there’s another thing, in all my life, because my looks are so deficient, I’ve never dared to have anything to do with women, and no woman has ever dared to have anything to do with me. So, in all my 20-plus years I am still completely in ignorance of the ins and outs of romance. Of old it has been said, “Even a steamed bun can be too raw in the middle.” As for consummating the marriage, why not stage a trial run? I have a maid named Yichun. Even though she’s ugly, she’s nice overall. Why not call her out and practice all the moves, then when it’s the right time I can choose which to use. Yichun, where are you?

還有一件, 我生平只因容貌欠好, 自己也不敢去惹婦人, 婦人也不敢來惹我. 所以生了二十多歲, 那些風流機關全然未曉. 自古道, 吃饅頭也有三個口生. 做親的事, 如何不操演一操演? 我有個丫鬢叫做宜春, 容貌雖然丑陋, 情意總是一般. 不免喚他出來, 把各樣風流套數都演一演, 好待臨期選用. 宜春那裡? (Li, “Naihe tian” 10)

Her response to his proposition, as we will see, exemplifies the position she occupies in the play. She is there to tell the audience about Que Lihou, a role that was filled, for the most part, by the narrator in “Chou langjun.” Yichun is not a stand-in for the narrator, and there is no resonance between her character and the narrator’s in the story. In fact, the use of Yichun to “mirror” Que Lihou to the audience is entirely conventional within *chuanqi*, in which supporting roles play maidservants or houseboys in ways designed to reveal and build up the primary roles.

On entering the stage, Yichun says,

Today I was sold, tomorrow I'll be sold,  
Now I have been sold to a Zhu Bajie [Piggy].  
I thought there wasn't anyone as ugly as me,  
Who knew that there could be such a monster among men?

Master, why have you called for me?

今日賣來明日賣，將身賣與豬八戒；只道無人丑似奴，誰知更有人中怪。  
大爺，叫我做什麼？(Li, "Naihe tian" 10).

Que approaches, grasps her and sings his intentions without pretense: "*With her shoulder to shoulder like newlyweds, I will temporarily let her perform the prerogatives of a wife*" 和伊並肩新婚，暫操婦權 (Li, "Naihe tian" 11).<sup>14</sup> Yichun's response to his overtures is unambiguous and highlights, for the audience, how repulsive he is. She shakes him off, backs away and sings: "*In the past I have never needed the man to encourage me [to have sex], but this time I tremble at the sight of this 'young talented beau.'* As for this kind of love making, I can only beg that you will be so kind as to let me off." 我從來不用男人勸，此番怕見財郎，這樣風流，但求恩免 (Li, "Naihe tian" 11). Que is offended and says, "Damn maid, you don't recognize when you are being promoted. It was with good intention that I was favoring you, but you, on the contrary, see fit to play the lady. Do you mean to say that you aren't scared of your master?" 賊丫頭，不識抬舉。好意作興你，反是這等裝模作樣！你難道不怕家主麼？(Li, "Naihe tian" 11). Yichun answers, "Amida Buddha! As for such a master as you, who wouldn't be scared? It's precisely because I was scared so much that I did not dare get close to you" 阿彌陀佛！這樣的家主誰人不怕？單為怕得緊，所以不敢近身 (Li, "Naihe tian" 11). When he asks her what she's

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<sup>14</sup> The text from arias will be put in italics in translation and bold for the characters to distinguish them from unsung dialogue. When quoted in running text rather than block indentation, the line breaks will only be indicated by punctuation and not by slashes.

scared of in particular, she says that it's his face. After threatening to beat, and then sell her, Que Lihou says that he'll do neither, because he'd rather have her stand in as his bride. She says, "If you really won't let me go, I would rather wait until after dark to get in bed and wait on you then. The popular saying puts it well, 'What you can't see is clean'" 你若放我不過, 寧可到晚生間上床, 待我來伏事罷. 俗語說得好: 眼不見為淨 (Li, "Naihe tian" 11). When she tells Que that unless the lights are out, she won't come to him, he sighs, realizing, "This maid is this ugly, still she won't even let me get close to her, and wants to wait until the lamps are blown out until she will humor me; how much more so will this be the case with Miss Zou, who is a beauty. As for this kind of a jam, what can I do?" 這等一個醜陋丫鬟, 尚且不肯近身, 要等吹滅了燈, 方才就我, 何況鄒家小姐是個美貌佳人. 這樁難事, 叫我怎麼做? (Li, "Naihe tian" 11). This sequence has made it clear how much of a problem Que's unacceptability to his bride actually is. His rejection by Yichun, someone who is in his power as his servant, and who is supposedly ugly to boot, allows the audience to imagine how great a rejection Que is in for when it comes to Miss Zou and gives a very concrete sense of just how loathsome he is. We are now prepared for the idea that if he has to take the precaution of waiting for darkness to be intimate with Yichun, this will be all the more necessary when it comes to someone as refined as Miss Zou. This is in contrast to the story, where the fact that Que and Miss Zou first meet in the dark is not prepared for in such an elaborate (or comic) manner. When converting "Chou langjun" into *chuanqi*, Li Yu used interplay with secondary characters to build primary characters.

Shortly after Yichun demonstrates the extent of Que Lihou's repulsive qualities in scene two, she reappears in scene four to inform the audience, and Que Lihou himself, of

his three distinct bodily odors. The kinds of things she says, as a supporting character, allow her to in effect replace the descriptive narration that makes the “Chou langjun” so colorful. When Que explains how she is to help him by making sure that Miss Zou is unable to see him until after their marriage has been consummated, she informs Que Lihou,

This is a really good plan, but there is still one thing that I worry about on your behalf. While you can perhaps cover up her eyes, I’m afraid her nose cannot be plugged up. As for all those smells on your body, how can they be covered over?

你這個計較是極好的了. 我還替你愁一件, 他的眼睛便被你瞞過了, 只怕鼻子塞不住. 你身上那許多氣息, 可有甚麼法子遮掩得住麼? (Li, “Naihe tian” 15)

In the dark about this aspect of himself, Que Lihou responds, “My body doesn’t have any odors” 我身上沒有什麼氣息 (Li, “Naihe tian” 15). So, Yichun is left to describe them to him (and to the audience): “So you yourself are not aware of them. Well you can’t be blamed for that. Your body has three smells.” 原來自己不覺, 這也怪不得你. 你身上有三臭 (Li, “Naihe tian” 15). After Que asks what these three smells are, Yichun explains, “mouth stink, body stink, and foot stink.” 口臭, 體臭, 腳臭 (Li, “Naihe tian” 15). Tellingly, Que replies, “So, that’s how it is. If you hadn’t spoken up, how could I have known?” 原來如此. 你若不說, 我那裡得知 (Li, “Naihe tian” 15). Que’s response gets to the heart of Yichun’s function in the play. Through her speech she is able bring about some of the effects of the narrator’s description of Que in “Chou langjun.”

This is the way the narrator, in the original story, describes Que’s bodily odors as they’re experienced by Miss Zou on her first night with him:

After the lovemaking was over, Miss Zou sensed a disagreeable odour coming from the bed. She sniffed here and there, suspecting that a bedbug might have hidden itself in the bedclothes. Little did she realize that Lihou's body gave off three distinct rare perfumes. There was no need for him to burn sandalwood or benzoin; the scent came directly from his own pores. What were these perfumes? Bad breath, body odour, footrot. (Chu and Hanan 10)

只是雲收雨散之後，覺得床上有一陣氣息，甚是難聞。鄒小姐不住把鼻子亂嗅，疑他床上有臭蟲，那裡曉得裡侯身上，有三種異香，不消燒沉檀，點安息，自然會從皮裡透出來的。那三種？口氣，體氣，腳氣。(Li, "Naihe tian" 10)

Supporting roles, frequently maids, play a vital role in the description and development of characters on the *chuanqi* stage. This function of maids as supporting roles is also adopted in fiction, most famously in *Honglou meng*, in which interplay between the maids and primary characters gives us a window with an intimate view into their characters and their emotion lives.

In the bath scene in *Naihe tian* that we have already looked at above, we are given the reactions of both the third wife, Miss Wu (played by the *dan*), and Yichun. They are the first in his household to see him after his transformation. While Miss Wu's reaction (she doesn't recognize him at all at first) is useful for registering in a general way how much Que has changed, her character is not suitable for getting into the kind of detail Yichun gives us. After clothing himself, Que calls his wife, and she enters with Yichun:

(*Dan* enters with the *fujing*.) Now that you've had your bath, it's time to retire. (She sees the *chou*, and steps back in surprise.) Oh! Which guest are you? Where is Master?

(*Chou*) Mistress, there you go making fun of me again. It's me, your husband. How could there be another?

(*Dan*) Oh! How strange! The voice is the same, but how can the rest of you be suddenly changed? Walk a few steps for me to have a look. (*Chou* walks.) Even more strange! His club feet are gone, and so is his

hunchback. (*Fujing* turns toward the *chou* and sniffs.) (She also grabs his hand to look.) Ma'am, look at his skin, it's so much whiter, and so much clearer. And, all of his three bodily odors are undetectable.

(*Chou*) It's just because of all your scrubbing and washing. Mistress, she spent a tough half-day's work, and washed me from head to toe without missing a single inch.

(*Fujing*) You must have seen a ghost. I just washed for a second, and then ran out. What work did I do?

(*Chou*, very surprised) If that's the case then this really is strange! Quick, go get a mirror so that I can have a look. (*Fujing* gets a mirror, *Chou* looks and is very surprised): Oh! What is the meaning of this?

(*Dan*) It must be the work of spirits. Or, it could be that it is a matter of good luck that has unexpectedly changed your flesh and swapped your bones, and made you a whole new person? It's impossible to say. It's just that the change was so sudden, so it's even more strange.

(旦帶副淨上) 堂前人浴後, 床上夢醒時. (見丑, 驚退介) 呀, 這是什麼客人? 大爺到那裡去了? (丑) 娘子又來取笑, 我就是大爺, 那裡還有第二個? (旦) 呀! 好奇怪! 聲音是他, 怎麼形像竟變了? 你且走幾步看. (丑行介) (旦) 一發奇怪! 連腳也不蹺, 背也不駝了. (副淨向丑身上嗅介) (又取手看介) 大娘, 你看他身上的皮肉, 白也白了許多, 光也光了許多, 連三樣臭氣, 都聞不出了. (丑) 都是你刮洗得到的原故. 娘子, 也難為他費了半日工夫, 替我從頭至腳, 沒有一件不洗到. (副淨) 這等, 你見鬼了. 我只洗了一兩把, 就跑了進去, 何曾費什麼工夫? (丑大驚介) 呀, 這等說起來, 就果然奇怪了! 快取鏡子來, 待我照一照看. (副淨取鏡子, 丑照大驚介) 呀, 這是什麼緣故? (旦) 一定是鬼神之力了. 或者該有這些造化, 竟替你脫胎換骨, 重做一副人身, 也不可. 只是變得太驟, 所以更奇. (Li, "Naihe tian" 92-3)

Here, as Yichun holds the mirror so that Que can appreciate his transformation, we can see the mechanics of how the *fujing* functions as a supporting role. Rather than advancing the plot, the *fujing* provides descriptive content to fill out the main characters.

### **Conclusion: Ideology in *Naihe tian*?**

In the only chapter-length, English-language interpretation of *Naihe tian*, Eric Henry, in his *Chinese Amusement: The Lively Plays of Li Yu*, presents an entirely

unexpected interpretation of the play's primary import. Chapter Five of his book, "Life as Obedience: *What Can You Do?*?" begins,

*What Can You Do?* shares with *The Kite's Mistake* the distinction of being one of the two most well known of Li Yu's plays. It is also the most obviously daring of Li Yu's theatrical experiments. What more fundamental violation of the conventions of Chinese romantic comedy, what graver threat to the equilibrium of the form, could be devised than to put a clown into the role of romantic lead? In this play, Li Yu stakes everything on a single gigantic experiment.

No play by Li Yu sounds sillier or less realistic in summary. A husband is so ugly that his three wives all run away in succession to the seclusion of his library, where they take Buddhist vows and live as nuns. But finally, after the spirits transform the husband into a handsome man, the wives all come running back again and vie for the privilege of being his chief wife. Surely this must be a piece of fluff, a brainless piece of amusement with somewhat less substance than the libretto of *Così Fan Tutte*. How could such a vacuous idea be elaborated into a play as long and detailed as a novel, which took as many days to perform as a Shakespearean play takes hours?

And yet, as we make our way through the play's successive acts, we find ourselves persuaded at nearly every point of the logical necessity, the truth of life, and the underlying moral seriousness of what we are reading. One begins to suspect that Li Yu could write a play on the events of *Alice in Wonderland* that would seem an exercise in the strict realism of presentation combined with orderly sobriety of thought. (Henry 127-28)

Henry goes on to argue that at the center of his interpretation of the play's "seriousness" is its oft-repeated phrase, "beautiful face, slim fate" (*hongyan boming* 紅顏薄命; Henry 130-32). In both "Chou langjun" and *Naihe tian*, the narrator in the former, and the Offense-Pardoning Spirit Official of the Earthly Realm in the latter, argue that contrary to common understanding, the phrase does not mean that beautiful women are cursed with unlucky fates, but instead it means that those who commit sins are punished by being born as beautiful women. Certainly, Henry's assessment that this phrase is one of the operating principles that governs the play is correct, as will be seen in detail below. Li

Yu's reading of *hongyan boming* provides the slightly twisted logic according to which he explains why beauties (*jiaren* 佳人) are not meant to be matched with talented men (*caizi* 才子), as so many other stories might lead us to believe, but are instead cursed to marry loathsome men. As the title of the story indicates, it is not simply the beautiful wives who are cursed in the equation, but their loathsome husbands are also subjected to incessant rejection and humiliation. Handsome and talented men like Yuan Zhuobing do not fare any better, and are cursed to marry ugly, jealous and begrudging wives. In Li Yu's *huaben* stories, he typically takes a well-worn truth, turns it on its head and then follows this inversion through the development of the story. In the case of the story to be looked at in chapter three, "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing," the tale spins off the notion of an unexpectedly chaste actress. In the case of the story to be looked at in chapter five, "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang," the inversion plays out when the hero, an unmarried man, decides to live in sequestration, like an unmarried woman, because women find him so desirable that their attentions have begun to overwhelm him. So, rather than being an admonishment that women ought to accept their lot regardless of how deplorable their husbands, what both "Chou langjun" and *Naihe tian* rail against are hackneyed and formulaic *caizi jiaren* stories.

The "serious" message that Henry reads in the play, however, is precisely that women should obediently accept their marriages, however deplorable those might be. He notes that modern readers might object to this:

But even as the reader's suspicions of unseriousness are laid to rest, he is apt to find other scruples raised, other sensitivities offended. It is bad enough, from the postromantic western reader's point of view, that the story should be intended as a celebration of so hard and uncongenial an attribute as obedience—which, after chastity (a Christian, not a Chinese, virtue) must seem to him the most dubious and inexplicable of the

traditional virtues. But it will impress him as outrageous, if not criminal, that the chief vehicle of the theme should be the submission that a wife owes a husband, particularly when he recalls some of the more inhuman details of that relationship in traditional China. (Henry 128)

Certainly, I agree with Henry's conclusion that Li Yu is more "a man of his times rather than a prophet of liberalism" (Henry 128). However, his conclusion that the play is fundamentally serious and that its overriding purpose is to stress obedience, and in particular, that of a woman to her husband, neglects the overall tone of the play. Firstly, to do so requires us to dismiss the play's comedy as a mere vehicle to sugarcoat the message. Secondly, for seriousness to trump comedy is entirely uncharacteristic of Li Yu's fiction, drama, and the tenor of his authorial persona; that *Naihe tian* would be governed by such harsh moralism would make it stand apart from the rest of his work.<sup>15</sup> The very way that "beautiful face, slim fate" is brought into the play and repeated flies in the face of any notion of seriousness. To substantiate my disagreement with Henry's understanding of the play, but especially to bring readers an understanding of how "beautiful face, slim fate" works as a motif in it, we will devote the following section to

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<sup>15</sup> To those unwilling to accept the play as serious, Henry retorts, "In short, the entire play may be said to advocate the oppression and persecution of women. We may say, in addition, that the oppression and persecution it advocates is much more savage and much more thorough than anything that may be found in plays on the order of *The Taming of the Shrew*. What possible defense or, failing defense, what possible palliation can be found for the advocacy of such an extremely inhumane position? An appeal to the conditions of the author's intellectual environment—to the rudimentary development of certain humanitarian and egalitarian ideas—is totally futile and useless in this case. Such an appeal may excuse unconscious acceptance of inhumanity; it cannot excuse conscious glorification of inhumanity. The argument that the play is, after all, only a comedy and that it is foolish to take at face value a proposition whose only reason for existence is to provide occasion for a series of amusing scenes—this argument is worse than useless because it reduces the play into a condition of utter frivolity and makes the author into sort of a liar. A good comedian means what he says, and means it most of all when it most appears to outrage common sense and experience" (Henry 152).

working out how this phrase operates in the original story, “Chou langjun” and further, how it is transposed into *Naihe tian* and serves as a unitive device in that play.<sup>16</sup>

As mentioned above, Li Yu’s dramatic criticism placed a strong emphasis on cohesive and unified plot development. The phrase *hongyan boming* is a unitive device in both “Chou langjun” and its *chuanqi* adaptation, *Naihe tian*. The phrase occurs a total of four times in the *huaben* story: three times by its narrator, and once when Yuan admonishes Miss Wu to accept her marriage to Que. In the absence of a narrator, in the play the phrase can only be voiced by its characters. Looking at how the phrase gets written into the play will help us shed light on its meaning.

In *Naihe tian* the phrase *hongyan boming* is also mentioned a total of four times and is packaged by the play’s characters much in the same way as the story’s narrator packages the phrase. The first mention occurs in the first scene or prologue of the play, which according to the generic conventions of *chuanqi*, is the place where the *mo* actor comes out, and in the voice not of a character in the play but rather some blend of troupe leader, stage manager, or author of the play, introduces the play, using the first half of the scene to try to channel the audience or the reader’s consumption of the play, and the second half to give a summary of its plot. The function of the *mo* in the prologue has its similarities with those of the narrator in a *huaben* story. In the first half of the prologue to *Naihe tian*, then, the *mo* recites a *ci* 詞 (song lyric) poem. In the opening stanza he talks about how the Creator of All Things tortures beauties, and in the second stanza he says:

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<sup>16</sup> In his discussion of obedience in *Naihe tian*, Eric Henry does compare the play with the original story, but he comes to an odd conclusion. After noting the absence in the story of the political subplot of the play, he continues: “Nor is Li Yu there [in the story] concerned to make any observations on the relation of looks and brains to good fortune. The story is concerned exclusively with the domestic experiences of Que and his three brides” (Henry 143).

“There is a set rule that those with beautiful faces have slim fates,/ Fear not that the women will escape by growing wings./ Even if she should try one hundred ways to deal with her fate,/ In the end there is nothing she can do.” 紅顏薄命有成律, 不怕閨人生四翼. 饒伊百計奈何天, 究竟奈何天不得(Li, “Naihe tian” 7). This is similar to that of the narrator talking about *hongyan boming* in the the prologue of the story, since both are extradiegetic (their jobs, to summarize and set the tone, are also the same).

*Hongyan boming* is brought up for the second time in the play in scene 27, “Auspicious Reward,” when three spirit-officials meet to discuss the appropriate reward for Que Lihou’s (via Que Zhong) generosity. Much like the narrator might do towards the end of a long story, the spirit officials recap what has already happened and impose judgments. In a passage borrowed almost verbatim from the original story, the Offense-Pardoning Spirit Official of the Early Realm explains,

The four words, ‘beautiful face, slim fate’ provide the explanation, but they must be understood correctly. It’s not that a woman has a beautiful face, and is only then cursed with a slim fate, it’s that if she deserves a slim fate, she is punished by being made beautiful.

紅顏薄命’ 四個字, 就是註解了. 這四個字也要看得明白, 不是他有了紅顏, 方才薄命; 只為他應該薄命, 所以罰做紅顏. (Li, “Naihe tian” 88)

In “Chou langjun,” the narrator gives the same explanation,

The old proverb “Pretty face, sorry fate” sums up all that needs to be said, but it has to be understood correctly. It does not mean that a woman receives a sorry fate *because* she has a pretty face, but that if she deserves a sorry fate she will be condemned to have a pretty face. A pretty face at birth is thus a sign of a sorry fate, and no such woman will ever obtain a good husband or enjoy a happy life. (Hanan, “An Ugly Husban” 4)

“紅顏薄命”四個字已說盡了，只是這四個字，也要解得明白：不是因她有了紅顏，然後才薄命；只為她應該薄命，所以才罰做紅顏。但凡生出個紅顏婦人來，就是薄命之坏了，哪裡還有好丈夫到她嫁，好福分到她享。(Li, “Chou langjun” 5-6)

So, in these two instances in *Naihe tian*, the phrase is spoken by figures who recall aspects of the narrator in the story. In the third instance, the phrase is spoken by Yuan, just as in the *huaben*. In the fourth and last instance, it occurs in a direct address to the audience (actually she is calling out to her peers in the audience) by Miss Wu (see the translation below). Such direct address by a character in the play is similar to the way the narrator in the story directly addresses the reader. The phrase *hongyan boming* serves not only as a thread that runs through both the story and the play to give both a unifying element, it also unites characters within the story with the *huaben* narrator.

In parodying the typical *caizi jiaren* story, *Naihe tian* and “Chou langjun” do not throw out, or stretch the categories of *caizi*, or *jiaren*, they simply switch the pairings and outcomes. Yuan, the *caizi* of the common story is matched with an ugly and overbearing wife. Miss Wu, the *jiaren* of the common story, is, of course, matched with Que Lihou. The *caizi*, *jiaren*, and the narrator are, however, united in their acceptance of the idea of “beautiful face, slim fate” (in the particular interpretation pushed by Li Yu). As I argued earlier in this chapter, the *sheng* and *dan* are the two role types that most closely represent literati cultural values (Zhuobing and Miss Wu are played as *sheng* and *dan* roles, respectively). Often the closest identifications are between the author, the *sheng*, the *dan*, and the literati audiences of *chuanqi*, and I will make the case that this is also true in *Naihe tian*, despite the fact that both the *sheng* and *dan* have comparatively diminished roles in the play (see above).

In *Naihe tian*, this is the way Yuan scolds Miss Wu:

Come here and listen to me tell you some words of wisdom. The common saying puts it well: “of beautiful women, most have slim fates.” A woman like you is correctly matched with the likes of this man [Que Lihou]. If you were to spend your life with me, it wouldn’t be in keeping with the old saying. Now, if you behave yourself and go home with him and serve him as a good, contented wife, who knows, you may even have a child or two and enjoy some advantages in your old age. But if you quarrel all the time and refuse to settle down, you’ll end up like Miss Zhou, on the end of a rope, and even if ten of you died, let alone one, there’d still be nobody to redress your wrongs. (modified from Chu and Hanan 34)

你走過來，聽我說幾句好話。俗語道得好，紅顏婦人多薄命。你這樣女子，正該配這樣男人；若在我家過世，這句舊話就不驗了。你如今好好跟他回去，安心貼意做人家，或者還會剩兒育女，討些下半世便宜。若還吵吵鬧鬧，不肯安生，將來也與周氏一般，是個梁上之鬼。莫說死一個，就死十個，也沒人替你伸冤。(Li, “Naihe tian” 76)

Because the direct speech of characters in the story is easy to turn into dramatic dialogue, Li Yu made few changes when he copied Palace Examination Graduate Yuan’s admonishment of Miss Wu into Yuan Zhuobing’s mouth in *Naihe tian*, and Hanan’s translation of the former is easily modified to translate the latter.<sup>17</sup> The mechanics of transposing dialogue from *huaben* to *chuanqi* are, perhaps, less interesting than the fact that Yuan, the *sheng*, through his use of “*hongyan boming*,” is aligned with Miss Wu, the

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<sup>17</sup> This is the relevant part of “Chou langjun”: “Yuan turned and addressed Miss Wu. ‘Now you listen to what I’m going to say. As the proverb goes, ‘pretty face, sorry fate.’ A woman like you is bound to marry someone like him. If you’d stayed with me, the proverb would not have been born out. Now, if you behave yourself and go home with him and serve him as a good, contented wife, who knows, you may even have a child or two and enjoy some advantages in your old age. But if you quarrel all the time and refuse to settle down, you’ll end up like Miss Zhou, on the end of a rope, and even if ten of you died, let alone one, there’d still be nobody to redress your wrongs” (Chu and Hanan 34) 袁進士就回過頭去對吳氏道：“你聽我講，自古道：‘紅顏薄命。’你這樣的女人，自然該配這樣的男子。若在我家過世，這句古語就不驗了。你如今若好好跟他回去，安心貼意做人家，或者還會生兒育女，討些下半世的便宜；若還吵吵鬧鬧，不肯安生，將來也不過像周氏，是個梁上之鬼。莫說死一個，就死十個，也沒人替你伸冤 (Li, “Chou langjun” 27).

*dan* (who takes the phrase so to heart that she uses it to admonish her peers in the audience), and both with the *huaben* story's narrator, and by extension, with even the author himself, Li Yu. This would seem to indicate that Li Yu reached out to his literati peers through the *sheng* and *dan*.

When Miss Wu embraces the phrase “pretty face, slim fate,” she specifically addresses herself to other *jiaren* in the audience. For a character to address the audience (or parts of it, as in this case) in this fashion in traditional Chinese theater, as opposed to the kind of speaking to the audience that occurs in self-introductions, is uncommon, but not unheard of, but perhaps even more remarkable in that such calling out is usually restricted to *chou* and *jing* roles. Miss Wu's appeal to other beauties in the audience comes at a very important moment in the trajectory of her story in the play, and is easily the most standout part of this play for this *dan* role:

All of you in the audience, if there are those of you who possess both intelligence and beauty, and who are not married to good husbands, then please pay attention to my example. As for those of you whose intelligence is high, it will not surpass that of Miss Zou, as for those of you whose looks are very beautiful, they will not surpass those of Miss He, and as for those of you who have both intelligence and looks, they will not surpass myself, Miss Wu. We all have ended up married to this kind of man [i.e., Que]. No matter what tricks we tried, we were still not able to fly off to heaven or burrow into the earth. You can see that these four words, “beautiful face, slim fate,” are the barrier beyond which women cannot escape. Moreover, even if your husband is especially ugly, he will still not be as ugly as that man [Que]. So all of you should be like me and pass your lives contented and happy!

你們看戲的裡面，凡是有才有貌的佳人，嫁不著好丈夫的，都請來看樣。就作才思極高，不過像鄒小姐罷了；就作容貌極美，不過像何小姐罷了；就作才貌兼全，也不過像我吳氏罷了，都嫁了這樣男人，任你使乖弄巧，也不曾飛得上天，貼得入地。可見‘紅顏薄命’四個字，是婦人逃不出的關頭。況且你們的丈夫就生的極醜，也醜不到次人的地步。大家象我一般，都安心樂意過了一世罷！（Li, “Naihe tian” 77）

Miss Wu makes a similar appeal directly to the reader in “Chou langjun,” but in it she does not use the phrase “pretty face, slim fate.” By repeating this phrase that acts as the shared story’s motif, these characters in *Naihe tian* do more than simply tie the play together, they align themselves to one another and to the *huaben* version’s narrator. From this we can see that Li Yu’s bold innovation of making a *chou* the male lead in place of the *sheng* in *Naihe tian* is mitigated both by the transformation of the *chou* into a handsome man in scene 28, and via the expected identification of the audience with the *sheng* and *dan*. As Jing Shen argues, *chuanqi* was a means through which literati could commune with their peers. This is overshadowed somewhat in *Naihe tian* due to the comparative marginality of the *sheng* and the *dan*. However, Li Yu still manages to find a device to align his readers/audience to his narrator, and further to the *sheng* and *dan*, through the way they relate to and use the phrase *hongyan boming*.

As the exposition above shows, neither *Naihe tian*, nor the original story “Chou langjun,” is fashioned to persuade women to be obedient regardless of how deplorable their circumstances might be, as Eric Henry argues. Instead, the story and play both take aim at the clichéd and stale plotlines of *caizhiaren* stories and *chuanqi* dramas. Many of Li Yu’s story plotlines spin out of an inversion of a common-sense truism. The humor of these stories is produced as the reader is led through a scenario in which an inversion becomes the rule. In “Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing,” for example, the heroine thinks her onstage marriage is real while her mother’s real life attempt to sell her as a concubine is false. In “Chou langjun” and *Naihe tian*, Li Yu inverts the *caizi-jiaren* romance by insisting instead that beauties are fated to marry boorish husbands, and talented young men are fated to marry ugly, jealous wives. The fact that the three wives in “Chou

langjun” are condemned to a lifetime with the repulsive Que Lihou comes out of the inverted reading of “*hongyan boming*” that, as we saw above, is spelled out for the amusement of audiences of the play and the story. That the women in the story and play end up accommodating to their “fates” is not about a didactic message on Li Yu’s part, but an occasion for comedy. All three women have refined sensibilities, so their squeamish interactions with Que are more hilarious than they are tragic.

Both *Naihe tian* and “Chou langjun” offer a parody of boiler plate *caizi jiaren* stories. As the author-narrator reminds us in both versions, the play and story are a rebellion against the stale plots of romantic comedies. In the first scene the *mo* boasts, in the voice of the author, “How many playwrights could break the mold,/ and while snatching the *dan* and returning the *sheng*,/ still put on a romantic play” 多少詞人能革命, 奪旦還生, 演作風流劇 (Li, “Naihe tian” 7). He goes on to assert, “This play smashes all the conventions of *chuanqi*. Matching the *chou* and the *dan* is truly beyond expectation.” 此番破盡傳奇格, 丑, 旦聯姻真叵測 (Li, “Naihe tian” 7). The play’s final aria, which the leading characters all sing in unison, repeats this idea. Que Lihou and his wives sing,

*What is the real intention behind writing this play?  
It is only that there are too many romantic plays.  
If you want to become famous as a playwright but avoid bad karma,  
You first have to throw a perverse stone to block the torrent of qing.*

填詞本意待如何? 只為風流劇太多. 欲往名山逃口業, 先拋頑石砥情波. (Li, “Naihe tian” 102)

According to my understanding of the play, its primary purpose is not to teach women obedience, but instead to set the author’s work apart from the competition through its parody and innovation.

### CHAPTER III

#### An Enterprising Author: Li Yu's Narrator in "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing" and *Bimuyu*



Figure 2: Liu Miaogu Performs her Chastity, Tan Chuyu Follows. After Li, "Liweng chuanqi shizhong," p. xxxix.

The twin foci of this chapter are how Li Yu marketed his works, and how one of the prime features that he used to “brand” his *huaben* stories, a personalized narrator highly reflective of himself, fared in the adaptation of one his stories for the stage. I will

characterize and contextualize the narrator in Li Yu's *huaben* in relation to those of his near contemporaries. I will then establish the importance of Li Yu's personalized narrator to his general project to make a living as a professional author. I will then trace the voice of the narrator in one of Li Yu's *huaben*, "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing" and his *chuanqi* adaptation of it as *Bimuyu*. I will identify a particular character as the narrator's proxy in *Bimuyu*, and show how the embedded meanings of the play relate to her. I will stress the underlying writerly concerns and anxieties that infused the process of the adaptation of "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing" into *Bimuyu*. The attempted sale of a daughter into concubinage that takes place will be shown to be even more informed in the play by Li Yu's concerns over his competing desire to circulate his writings widely while still protecting them from pirates and plagiarists. I will also demonstrate how the play shows more clearly Li Yu's discomfort with the uncultured rich among Li Yu's patrons, and his preference for selling his publications in the market instead. I will conclude by looking at the two instances of writing in the play as commentaries on the way texts circulated in Li Yu's day and his fear of impersonation and plagiarism.

### Story versus Play

*Bimuyu*, prefaced 1661, is a *chuanqi* play in 32 scenes and Li Yu's second surviving effort at adapting one of his previously published *huaben* stories.<sup>1</sup> "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing" was originally published in *Wusheng xi erji* in 1657 (Shan, "Li Yu

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<sup>1</sup> See chapter two above on the first of the pairs, "Chou langjun pa jiao pian de yan" and *Naihe tian*.

nianpu” 30).<sup>2</sup> The original purpose of this chapter was to outline the mechanics of genre translation through a comparison of “Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing” and *Bimuyu*. The fruits of this comparative analysis have pushed my inquiry in a new direction, considering not only the concrete and mechanical questions related to what is different from one version to the other, but further to ask why Li Yu made the changes he did, and what the changes mean. Most of the changes we see in *Bimuyu* can be readily attributed to the generic requirements of *chuanqi* drama. The first thing to note is that *Bimuyu* is four times longer than “Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing,” with the former 75,000 characters long and the latter only 17,000 characters (Chen 263). Even taking into account the repetition of content between arias and dialogue that is typical of *chuanqi*, *Bimuyu* is considerably more slowly paced and expansive than the original *huaben* story.

Before we can efficiently talk of other changes made in the adaptation process, we will need at least a brief summary of the story.<sup>3</sup> What follows is the plot as presented in the *huaben* story (a scene by scene summary of the play can be found in Appendix B).

The story is set in a county known for its actors, particularly actresses playing the leading female role. Liu Jiangxian, one of these actresses, is concerned solely with making money and different from her peers in that she sells her access to her body as well as to her art. Much to her dismay, she gives birth to Liu Miaogu, who while both beautiful and talented is high-minded and obstinately refuses to imitate her mother by

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<sup>2</sup> *Second Collection* is no longer extant. “Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing” is available to us today because it was included as the lead story in *Liancheng bi* 連城壁 (Priceless Jade), which combines the twelve stories of the original *Wusheng xi* and six stories from *Second Collection*.

<sup>3</sup> I am summarizing “Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing,” the original *huaben* version of the story. The primary plot of *Bimuyu* unfolds in the same sequence, but is slowed at points and also punctuated by the addition of a secondary plotline. For scene summaries of *Bimuyu* please see the appendix.

selling herself offstage. After catching a glimpse of Miaogu going on stage, the young, orphaned, and displaced scholar Tan Chuyu determines to make a play for her while she's still a virgin. Without money, the only means he can think of to get close to her is to join the acting troupe she is in, which happens to be looking for a *jing* 淨 (painted-face) actor. Chuyu and Miaogu soon vow their love for one another and are able to play husband and wife onstage after Chuyu is promoted to male lead (生 *sheng*). Because she fears her daughter will never agree to entertain men off stage and make real money for her, Liu Jiangxian decides to accept an offer from a wealthy theater patron to buy Miaogu as his twelfth concubine. When Miaogu is told of this she protests to her mother that she is already married to Chuyu, because they have been wedded over and over and played man and wife on stage. This does not have the desired effect on her mother, so Miaogu decides to commit suicide in such a way as to display her fidelity to Tan Chuyu and shame the theater patron at the same time. At her final performance before being sold off Miaogu requests to be allowed to perform a scene from *Jingchai ji* 荆釵記 (The Thorn Hairpin) in which the female lead attempts to drown herself. She changes the scene by cursing the theater patron and actually jumping into the river beside the stage. Chuyu realizes that Miaogu is committing suicide in fidelity to him, and follows her lead, expecting to join her in death. But the deity Lord Yan, whom the couple has previously prayed to and at whose temple the scene is being performed, spares their lives. They are pulled out of the river by the scholar-recluse Fisherman Mo, who gives Tan money so that he can take the exams, which he passes with flying colors. On their way to his post, Chuyu and Miaogu pay a visit to Fisherman Mo and ask him and his wife to come with them and share in their wealth and prestige. Mo and his wife adamantly refuse, preferring

their simple life of rustic reclusion. Chuyu and Miaogu then go to Lord Yan's temple where Chuyu, without letting his identity be known, commissions Liu Jiangxian to perform the male lead from *Jingchai ji* as a test to see what kind of emotions she will show concerning her daughter before revealing themselves to her. Jiangxian passes this test and goes off to live with them but within a month she becomes ill from longing for her old life and has to return to being an actress. By the time Chuyu finishes his term of service he becomes enlightened and the couple go to live in happy reclusion with Fisherman Mo and his wife.

A major factor behind the comparative length of *Bimuyu* is the addition of a secondary plot line in which Shan Dawang 山大王 (“Bandit King of the Mountain”), introduced in scene 8, attempts to overthrow the government, but is prevented first by Murong Jie (this turns out to be the “real name” of the Fisherman Mo figure), and then more finally by Chuyu after an unlikely and convoluted string of twists and turns. This plot adds martial and civil elements to the play. *Chuanqi* as a genre demands variety, as well as a great number of characters played by the whole spectrum of role types, making the appendage of a second plot line almost mandatory for the conversion of the story into a “proper” *chuanqi*. Aside from simply adding fast-paced, noisy, and acrobatic scenes, this secondary plot expands and complicates the characters of Tan Chuyu and Fisherman Mo. In the *huaben* story Chuyu is basically a hopeless romantic, and Fisherman Mo just a scholar-recluse, but in *Bimuyu* they also are shown as a tireless and loyal civil official (Chuyu) and general (Mo/Murong Jie). While the expansion of the two leading male roles ostensibly gives the two more importance in the play, their civil service ends up contradicting their personal values (especially in the case of Murong Jie) to the effect that

their inflated importance is challenged by a subtle suggestion in the play that they lack integrity. The additions made to the story's plot in its conversion to *chuanqi* also amount to the overshadowing of the heroine Liu Miaogu as the central character and simultaneously a coupling of the romantic, personal, and private realm with the parallel realm of civil, military, and public order.

### **The Stakes of the Emerging Author: Locating Li Yu's Narrator within the Evolution of *Huaben***

Li Yu went further than his predecessors or contemporaries in becoming a professional author. In this section, I will outline how Li Yu's narrator—a consistent *authorial* persona as opposed to the earlier storyteller narrators of vernacular fiction—constituted a major innovation in the genre of *huaben* fiction, and further how the correlation between himself and his narrators, along with the actual writing, publishing, and publicizing of his work, qualifies him to be thought of as one of the first professional authors in China. By modeling his narrators on himself, the commodity that he was most consistently publicizing when he tried to sell his fiction was his own self-proclaimed self as literary genius. Collapsing the distance between himself and the morally questionable genre of vernacular short fiction, Li Yu branded his own unique authorial voice, which he could then repackage and resell to readers across multiple genres. What made Li Yu arguably China's first professional author was precisely his assertion of continuity between himself and his narrator. A major concern of this chapter, then, is to look into the conditions related to the emerging category of professional authorship in China

through a detailed account of how Li Yu translated his distinct narratorial voice from his *huaben* fiction to the predominately presentational genre of *chuanqi* drama.

Studies on the anthologies produced by Feng Menglon and Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644) dominate scholarship on the genre of *huaben* vernacular short fiction.<sup>4</sup> Feng Menglong's edited anthologies, *Yushi mingyan* 喻世明言 (Famous Words to Enlighten the World; originally titled *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說 Stories Old and New; c. 1620), *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 (Warning Words to Tell the World 1624), and *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恒言 (Lasting Words to Awaken the World, 1627), collectively known as the *Sanyan* 三言 (Three Words), each contain forty *huaben* stories. Ling Mengchu's collections, *Pai'an jingqi* 拍案惊奇 (Striking the Desk in Surprise at the Marvels; 1628), and *Erke pai'an jingqi* 二刻拍案惊奇 (Second Edition of Striking the Desk in Surprise at the Marvels; 1632), collectively referred to as *Liangpai* 兩拍 (Two Strikes), in a nod to Feng, try to give the appearance of containing 40 stories each (Rolston 274n22). In the introduction we already traced the complicated history of the publication of Li Yu's *huaben* stories, which originally appeared one after the other from 1656 to 1658.

Feng's 120-story *Sanyan* went a long way toward elevating the status of *huaben* stories and standardizing the parameters of the genre. The sometime heaviness of hand in his editing of the stories has been the object of scholarly inquiry,<sup>5</sup> but for our purposes here, what is significant is his insistence on distancing himself from the creation or even

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<sup>4</sup> See, Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story*, and *The Chinese Short Story*; Lévy, *Inventaire*; and S. Yang, *Appropriation*.

<sup>5</sup> See especially, Hanan, *The Chinese Short Story*, and *The Chinese Vernacular Story*.

the publication of the stories. For instance, he did not sign the preface to the first collection with a name traceable to himself, nor did he admit in that preface to having anything to do with the actual production of the collection. Critics have long suspected that Feng played a much greater role in the final form of the stories and Patrick Hanan has persuasively argued that at least 19 stories in the *Sanyan* collection were most likely authored by Feng.<sup>6</sup>

The distance Feng put between himself and the *huaben* fiction he authored and edited is probably attributable to the genre's low standing as a lowly and possibly corrupting one. We see Feng working against that understanding of the genre by comparing it to orthodox works in his prefaces to the collections and giving them titles that stress their supposed didactic character. Instead of overtly investing himself in the narrators of the stories, he lets them remain generic storytellers modeled on professional oral storytellers who always maintain a certain distance from both himself and the characters within the diegesis of the story.<sup>7</sup> Let us look at a typical example of the narration in *Sanyan* so that it can be compared later to Li's narrator. This passage comes from the first story of the first collection, one that Hanan and others are convinced was written by Feng:

Who might this handsome young man be? He was not a local resident but a native of Xin'an County in Huizhou. Chen Shang by name, he was also known familiarly as Daxige, which was later changed to Dalang. At twenty-four years of age, he was a strikingly handsome young man, not any less so than Song Yu and Pan An. (S. Yang and Y. Yang 44)

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<sup>6</sup> See Hanan, *Chinese Vernacular Story* 116-19, and Rolston, 272, n.12, who notes that Satō Teruhiko has also identified several stories in the first collection as being by Feng.

<sup>7</sup> For more on pseudo-orality in Chinese fiction, see Wivel 115-20, and Rolston 285, 288, and 306.

這個俊俏後生是誰？原來不是本地，是徽州新安縣人氏，性陳名商，小名叫做大喜哥，後來改口呼為大郎。年方二十四歲，且是生得一表人物，雖勝不得宋玉，潘安，也不在兩人之下。(Feng 7)

Once we look at Li Yu's narrator below, it will become apparent that Feng's lacks the comedy, irony, and self-reflexivity of Li Yu's narrator.

Ling Mengchu's narrator is more personalized than Feng's. Patrick Hanan says that Ling "gives the narrator a power over the story's interpretation such as he had not had before and grants him a distinct personality" (Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* 148). Below is an example of Ling's narrator's style. Notice that his narrator stages a dialogue between himself and his audience (remember that just as the narrator in these stories pretends to be a professional oral storyteller, we the reader are asked to pretend that we are his audience listening to him speak). This passage is taken from the first story of Ling's first collection:

"Why storyteller, you must be wrong! If silver there was so cheap and they did business like that, why didn't those merchants who regularly carried silk and brocade overseas sell for silver coins? Then they could have made a hundred times as much profit!" No, reader, you don't understand. The people of that country liked to barter goods for silk and brocade. And only by taking goods could our merchants make a profit; for if they sold their wares for money the people of Killah always used coins stamped with dragons and phoenixes or human figures, so that even if the price was good the silver did not weigh much. (modified from G. Yang and X. Yang 248)

說話的，你說錯了！那國裡銀子這樣不值錢，如此做買賣，那久慣漂洋的帶去是綾羅段匹，何不多賣了些銀錢回來？一發百倍了！看官有所不知，那國裡見了綾羅等物，都是以貨交兌，我這裡人也只是要他貨物，才有利錢，若是賣他銀錢時，他都把龍鳳，人物的來交易，作了好價錢，分兩也只得如此，反不便宜。(Ling 10)

While Feng's narrator does engage in dialogue with his audience, the conceit is rarely developed to this extent. Hanan says, "Among late Ming authors, there is a development of the dialogue with the audience to extraordinary proportions, for both comic and didactic purposes" (Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* 21). In the seven or so years between the publishing of Feng's *Gujin xiaoshuo* around 1620 and Ling's 1628 *Pai'an jingqi*, there was one very big change: the appearance of Feng's *Sanyan*, it is clear that this greatly affected Ling's relationship to his own stories, in that in his preface to this first collection, which is signed with a pseudonym directed connectable to himself, he both praises Feng and complains that the latter "snatched up all the good material" (Rolston 274). This implies that Ling composed all of his stories (instead of the 10-20% for Feng) and that is the consensus of scholarship on that issue (*ibid*). Here we see a far greater openness and directness about the process of publishing *huaben* stories than Feng was willing to engage in. Ling was selling himself as well as his stories (both men present their collections as commodities in the prefaces they wrote for the first of their collections).

Unlike Feng Menglong, Li Yu did not try to distance his name and reputation from the genre of *huaben* fiction but instead wrote himself into the narrator of his stories.

According to David Rolston:

Li Yu's narrator is presented not only as the author of the text, but also often as a projection of Li Yu himself. In some stories the time of the narration of the tale is indicated as falling within Li Yu's lifetime. Not only does the narrator frequently use first-person pronouns to refer to himself, in three stories he quotes Li Yu's poetry as his own. (Rolston 294)

Li Yu's use of his own poetry in his *huaben* stories is significant when you consider the fact that poetry was traditionally one of the main platforms for self-fashioning one's public identity. Li's inclusion of his personal occasional poetry (he typically fills in the context of their composition) in his vernacular fiction ties the self-fashioned persona that he developed in his poetry to the persona he projected in his fiction.

By advertising his upcoming publications in his current publications, by working his own poems into his stories as his own poems, and by establishing a consistent authorial persona that presents what could be called a commodified version of himself, Li Yu became a professional author—someone openly professionally connected with commodifying his own writing who branded himself not only through his *huaben* stories but his other writings as well.

### **Li Yu's Narrator in "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing"**

As already mentioned above, the majority of Li Yu's *huaben* story plotlines are produced through inversion. He usually inverts a commonly accepted notion or convention, but in "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing," he produces the main story by inverting his own prologue, justifying this by having the narrator claim, "when things reach one extreme, they turn back toward the other" 物極必反 (Li, "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing" 255). As a prologue, he introduces the story of Liu Jiangxian, an unchaste actress in a community of actresses who, contrary to expectation, only allow their patrons to lust after their bodies rather than to enjoy them. He then inverts the model of Liu Jiangxian by presenting her daughter, Liu Miaogu, who won't even indulge in the flirtation offstage

that the other actresses engage in, and we end up with a truly chaste and virtuous actress, something that for most people of the time would be considered an inversion of reality.

The daughter's name, Miaogu 藐姑 (lit.: "Petite Lass"), puns with *miaogu* 妙菇, "fantastic mushroom," which in turn is basically synonymous with *lingzhi* 靈芝 (glossy ganoderma). This will remind us of how something fine, such as a "magic mushroom," can be produced by filth and decay, and symbolizes how she remains virtuous and chaste despite her money-hungry mother. This metaphor appears in the narrator's introduction to her and her story:

However it may be, the four lowliest classes in society consist of prostitutes, entertainers, lictors and slaves. Thus actresses, as both prostitutes and entertainers, combine two of the four classes. Why, then, should an actress be made the subject of a story? Because when a person from the lowliest class of all performs the noblest deed of all, it is fully as remarkable as a magic mushroom growing out of a dunghill, and it deserves to be publicized. (Hanan, "An Actress Scorns Wealth" 163)

天下最賤的人，是娼優隸卒四種，做女旦的，為娼不足，又且為優，是以一身兼而賤了。為什麼還把他做起小說來？只因第一種下賤之人，做出第一件可敬之事，猶如糞土裡而長出靈芝來，奇到極處，所以要表揚他。 (Li, "Tan Chuyu" 252)

This passage actually occurs before the narrator has even mentioned Liu Miaogu's existence, much less given her name. Here we can see the kind of expectations Li Yu is making on his reader, whom he expects to be as clever in remarking such subtle references as he was in making them (this is related to the fact that Li Yu's *huaben* stories can be understood as examples of restricted production that conjure up an implied ideal reader who is the *zhiji* or intimate understander of the author.

Far beyond any earlier case, Li Yu's *huaben* narrator was highly personalized. In addition to that, his narrator plays a large role in his stories, rivaling central characters for

prominence through his uniquely branded humor and irony, and his open manipulation and control of the plot. A realization of how important Li Yu's narrator is in his *huaben* stories must inform any analysis of his adaptation of them to the genre of *chuanqi* drama from the practical point of view of the difficulty of replacing the effects of such a narrator in a play, which lacks a narrator. Beyond those practical aspects, we also need to see how Li Yu brands his plays differently than in his *huaben* stories, again because lack of a narrator will prevent him from simply using the same model in his plays.

So how is does Li Yu “translate” his narrator as he works out his dramatic adaptation? Some of the transformation is comparatively easy. The narrator's comment about “magic mushrooms” quoted above, for example, is just worked into the prologue of *Bimuyu*. As explained above, the first scene or prologue of a *chuanqi* play is the place where the playwright not only can speak most directly to the audience but also a place commonly used to “sell” the play. Because of this, it can fairly easily be used to replicate some of the uses Li Yu makes of his narrator's prologues in his *huaben* stories and Li Yu can make the *mo* in his prologue come off very similar to his *huaben* narrator (and himself). But how about the other scenes in the play, where the action is just presented rather than narrated? How can narration be adapted into a representational genre? At the risk as being taken as perverse as Li Yu himself, let's begin first by looking at what happened when *Bimuyu* was converted by a hack into two linked vernacular novels.

### ***Xi zhong xi/Bimuyu—Hack Novelizations of Bimuyu***

We have already noted that Li Yu was not the only one to make genre translations of his work, and that both *Bimuyu* and *Naihe tian* were later novelized. These

novelizations cannot be more precisely dated than to say that they appeared after the plays they novelize and before the end of the Qing dynasty. Not only do we not know if Li Yu was aware of them, we don't know if they were published during his lifetime. They certainly do, however, represent the kind of unauthorized circulation of his work than he was clearly worried about.

The novelization of *Bimuyu* is comprised of two parts, the first part contains seven chapters and is called *Xi zhong xi* 戲中戲 (A Play within a Play; this part ends with Liu Miaogu's performance of the scene from *Jingchai ji* and her jumping into the river) and the second contains nine chapters and is called *Bimuyu*. All we know about the writer is a penname: Aiyue zhuren 愛月主人 (The Master that Loves the Moon). The novelization copies from the text of *Bimuyu* so closely that one can only assume that it was produced from a copy of the play rather than live performance.

It almost incredible how little work the novelizer did to produce a narrative from the play or to put his own mark on his product. The novelized version of *Bimuyu* is literally a narratization of the written *chuanqi* text with the fewest changes possible. Only a fraction of the the text in the arias is preserved, but the dialogue from the play is just quoted verbatim with the mere addition of prefatory phrases such as “so-and-so said.” Because the novelist was so lazy, there are countless extended passages filled with long strings of dialogue and very minimal narration, with the result that the proportion of dialogue to narration is skewed in favor of the latter way far beyond what can be found in a typical *huaben* story. The ingenious plot is preserved, but that is all.

To give a sense of exactly how the novelizer did his job I will present parallel passages. First, from the sixth *hui* 回 (chapter) in the first part of the novelization:

Miaogu said, “Mother, I don’t understand in the least what you’re saying, please explain it to me clearly.” Liu Jiangxian said, “I’ll tell you frankly. With your temperament, it is clear that you won’t be a money-earner and that in the future you will instead bring down disasters and cause calamities. It’s better for you to marry a man from a good family, and eat a few bowls of ready-cooked rice. Nearby there is a retired official named Qian, he is a very rich man in this area who formerly served as an official. Recently, he resigned his post and returned home. He’s not that old, and very generous. As soon as he saw you, he wanted to take you to become his concubine.”

藐姑說：“母親說的話，孩兒一些也不懂，到求你明白講了罷。”絳仙說，“我老實對你說，你這樣心性，料想不是掙錢的，將來還招災惹禍。不如做個良家的婦人，吃幾碗現成飯罷。這邊有個錢鄉宦，他是這塊的一個大財主，從前也作過一任子官，如今告終養回家。年級也不甚大，做人也極慷慨。他一眼看上你，要娶你做個二房夫人” (Jin et al. 19).

This is the passage in scene 14 of Li Yu’s *Bimyu* that the novelizer converted:

(*Dan*): Mother, I don’t understand what you’re saying, please explain it to me.

(*Xiaodan*): I’ll tell you frankly. With your temperament, it is clear that you won’t be a money-earner and that in the future you will instead bring down disasters and cause calamities. It’s better for you to marry a man from a good family, and eat a few bowls of ready-cooked rice. Nearby there is a retired official named Qian, he is a very rich man in this area who formerly served as an official. Recently, he resigned his post and returned home. He’s not that old, and very generous. As soon as he saw you, he wanted to take you to become his concubine.

(旦): 母親說的話，孩兒一些也不懂，到求你明白講了罷

(小旦): 我老實對你說，你這樣心性，料想不是掙錢的，將來還招災惹禍。不如做個良家的婦人，吃幾碗現成飯罷。這邊有個錢鄉宦，他是這塊的一個大財主，從前也作過一任子官，如今告終養回家。年級也不甚大，做人也極慷慨。他一眼看上你，要娶你做個二房夫人。 (Li, “Bimuyu” 151)

This is typical of the relationship between the two works. Word for word whatever appears in the novel can be found in practically the same form in the novel. The only difference is how who says what is indicated. If we compare these two passages with the one that parallels them in Li Yu’s *huaben* story, however, we see that only the smallest

proportion of the language is the same. The novelization's flatness in comparison to "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing" shows the uniqueness of Li Yu's narrator and his importance to the success of Li Yu's *huaben* fiction. In "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing," when Miaogu asks for her mother's explanation, her mother replies:

When I brought you into the world I went to great trouble to give you a training, in the hope that you would cooperate with us and work hard to improve the family's position. But you've been willful from the very start, and have actually turned against money. You don't know your place in society, you pout when you meet people, and one day you're going to find yourself in real trouble. This business is simply not for you, and you'd better pack up your costumes and get married as soon as you can. I know a gentleman who's very rich and who has served in office. If you became his wife, you'd be a lady of sorts, and what's more, you'd never want for anything the rest of your life. I've already accepted his betrothal gifts and promised you to him as a concubine, and the wedding is set for tomorrow. Now don't start acting up, or you'll make your mother *very* cross. (Hanan, "An Actress Scorns Wealth" 178)

我當初生你一場，又費許多心事教導你，指望你盡心協力，替我掙一分人家。誰想你一味任性，竟與銀子做對頭。良不像良，賤不像賤，逢人就要使氣，將來畢竟有禍事出來。邊樁生意不是你做的，不如收拾了行頭，早些去嫁人的好。某老爺是個萬貫財主，又曾出任過，你嫁了他，也算得一位小小夫人，況且一生又受用不盡。我已收過他的聘禮，把你許他做偏房了。明日就要過門，你又不要任性起來，帶挈老娘啣氣。(Li, "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing" 263)

In many instances, Li Yu simply transposed dialogue from *huaben* when writing a *chuanqi* adaptation, but in this case the dialogue from the original *huaben* has more detail. As this case evidences, the hack novelization of *Bimuyu* was taken directly from the play, without reference to the original story.

### Liu Jiangxian Ventriloquizes Li Yu's Narrator in *Bimuyu*

As Patrick Hanan points out in his brief coverage of Li Yu's *Bimuyu* in his *The Invention of Li Yu*, "In *Soul Mates*, the key relationship is that of the actress Liu Jiangxian and her daughter" (Hanan, *Invention* 175). My reading below gives greater depth to Hanan's recognition of the primacy of this mother-daughter relationship in the play by demonstrating Liu Jiangxian to be symbolic of Li Yu as a professional author brokering the sale of his literary products through her brokering of her daughter, Liu Miaogu. As I will demonstrate below, Liu Jiangxian's importance is amplified by the fact that she is used to give voice in the play to emblematic lines presented by the narrator in the original story.

According to *chuanqi* convention, if the *dan* or female lead is unmarried and still living with her parents, as is the case with Liu Miaogu at the beginning of the play, and which covers the circumstances of perhaps the majority of *chuanqi* plays, she is introduced in the domestic context of her family and her parents often come on stage first and get to introduce her. This almost always happens in the third scene of the play. This differs from, how the male lead, typically displaced from the home he grew up by the time the play begins, is given the chance to more directly introduce himself (by convention in the second scene) in a non-domestic context. One of the main jobs of the narrator in a *huaben* story is to introduce the characters. Because of the circumstances outlined above, in *chuanqi* the male lead generally gets to introduce himself in the second scene, to self-narrate himself, so to speak, but the female lead is often introduced by others in her important opening scene (almost always the third one), and is more "narrated by others." Hence, in Li Yu's adaptations of his *huaben*, when the male lead is

truly the most important character in the play, as in *Naihe tian*, then it is the male lead that is called upon to do a lot of the work that the narrator did in the original *huaben*.<sup>8</sup>

When the main character is the female lead, as in the case of *Bimuyu*, it is more likely one of her parents will get the job. Of Miaogu's parents, Liu Jiangxian is by far the more consequential, and indeed she it is who takes the stage first, and is given the job of introducing Miaogu. Let us see what role Liu Jiangxian has in the play in simulating some of the narration that occurs in the *huaben* original.

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<sup>8</sup> In *Naihe tian*, a substantial amount of the narration that is transferred fairly directly from “Chou langjun” into the play is put in the mouth of the male lead, Que Lihou, in his self-introduction in scene two. For instance, this is one of the more striking passages in the narrator's introduction of Que in “Chou langjun”: “Every ugly feature in the world, bar none, was concentrated in this person, and the local wags dubbed him ‘Not Quite Que’. Why did they choose this nickname in particular? Because, although every part of his body was flawed, none was completely defective. What were these flaws of his?/ His eyes were not quite blind, just filled with white flecks;/ His face was not quite full of pockmarks, just covered with strawberry patches;/ His fingers were not quite bare, just short of a nail or two;/ His feet were not quite duck-like, he just waddled along on his heels;/ His nose was not quite red, it just sported a wine spot here and there;/ His hair was not quite brown, just vaguely the color of aloeswood;/ He was not quite a stammerer, he just stuttered when nervous;/ He was not quite a hunchback, but the fold at the back of his neck was just an inch too high;/ His mouth was not quite crooked, it just twitched as if tugged by an invisible string;/ His eyebrows were not quite absent, just patchy as if thinned by a woodcutter's axe. (modified from Chu and Hanan 7-8) 凡世上人的惡狀，都合來聚在他一身，半件也不教遺漏。好事的就替他取個別好，叫做“闕不全”。爲什麼取這三個字？只因他五官四肢，都帶些毛病，件件都闕，件件都不全闕，所以叫做“闕不全”。那幾件毛病？眼不叫做全瞎，微有白花；面不叫做全疤，但多紫印；手不叫做全禿，指甲寥寥；足不叫做全蹠，腳跟點點；鼻不全赤，依稀略見酒糟痕；髮不全黃，矇矓稍有沉香色；口不全吃，急中言常帶雙聲；背不全駝，頸后肉但高一寸；還有一張歪不全之口，忽動忽靜，暗中似有人提；更餘兩道出不全之眉，或斷或連，眼上如經樵采 (Li, “Chou langjun,” 8).

In *Naihe tian*, it is Que himself who gets to narrate the specifics of his flaws to the audience. This is how conveys the same basic information: “Recently there was a damned literati who gave me the nickname ‘Not Quite Que.’ He also wrote an encomium for a portrait of me, which even though it's pretty malicious, still isn't far off the mark. (He simultaneously points, gestures and explains) It says, ‘Eyes not quite blind, it's just that they are filled with white flecks; face not quite pock-marked, it's just that it is filled with dark blemishes; hands not quite nail-less, it's just that they are sparse, feet not quite club-footed; it's just that he walks on his heels; nose not quite red, it's just that it is dotted with wine stains; hair not quite brown, it's just the hazy color of aloeswood; mouth doesn't really stutter, it's only when he is nervous; back not quite hunched, it's just that his neck is one inch too tall. Moreover he has a mouth that is never quite right, one second still and the next in motion, as if someone was secretly pulling his strings; and his two eyebrows seem not to be all there, sometimes broken up and sometimes continuous, like they've been gone over by a woodcutter. . .’ (He laughs).” 近來有個作孽的文人，替我起個混名叫做“闕不全，”又替我做一篇象贊，雖然刻毒，卻也說得不差。(一面指，一面做，一面說介) 道我眼不叫做全瞎，微有白花；面不叫做全疤，但有黑影；手不叫做全禿，指甲寥寥；足不叫做全蹠，腳跟點點；鼻部全赤，依稀微有酒糟痕；發不全黃，矇矓似有沉香色；口不全吃，急中言常帶雙聲；背不全駝，頸后肉但高一寸；更有一張歪不全之口，忽動忽靜，暗中似有人提；還餘兩道出不全之眉，或斷或聯，眼上如經樵采. . . (笑介) (Li, “Naihe tian,” 8-9).

As we have seen (in chapter two above), in a representational genre such as *chuanqi*, the easiest ways to incorporate narration is to insert it into scene one or the prologue, the self-introductions (*zibao jiamen* 自報家門) of characters, or to let certain characters in the play repeat things that the narrator said in the *huaben* story. With such limited opportunities, it is understandable that Li Yu seems to choose to transpose only the catchiest phrases—those that personify the narrator’s character most concisely.

Some of the most memorable lines of “Liu Miagu quzhong sijie” are the narrator’s introduction and explanation of “the three do’s and three don’ts” (*san xu san buxu* 三許三不許). These, the narrator says, are a set of maxims that separate how the actresses of the rather special place where his story is set treat their patrons from the practice of commonplace actresses elsewhere (Li, “Tan Chuyu” 253). What are these maxims? “Do let them look, but don’t let them taste. Do let them have the name, but don’t let them have the reality. Do let them plan, but don’t let them succeed” 許看不許喫，許名不許實，許謀不許得 (Hanan, “An Actress Scorns Wealth” 164; Li, “Tan Chuyu” 253). The narrator goes on to explain that the purpose of the rules has nothing to do with chastity but instead is all about earning money:

A man’s true feeling for a woman does not arise from the bodily contact, but from the eye contact that precedes it. A gourmand at a feast will smell the aroma of the food before he sits down to dinner and start watering at the mouth, feeling that he has never in his life met with such delicacies; but after he gets the food into his mouth and has wolfed down a meal of it, if a second gourmet dinner is brought out, he will feel disgust rather than desire. Now, at the sight of a woman, a man is like the gourmand at the sight of food; you can allow him to smell the aroma but not to start eating, for once he does so, he will lose interest, and it will be impossible to set his mouth watering again. (Hanan, “An Actress Scorns Wealth” 165)

但凡男子相與婦人，那種真情實意，不在粘皮靠肉之後，卻在眉來眼去之時。像極饞的客人上了酒席，眾人不曾下了箸的時節，自己聞見了香味竟像那些餚饌都是不曾喫過的一般，不住要垂涎咽唾。及至到口之後，狼饜虎嚼，喫了一頓，再有珍饈上來，就不覺其可想，反覺其可厭了。男子見婦人，就如饞人遇酒食，只可使他聞香，不可容他下箸。一下了箸，就不覺與致所然，再要他垂涎咽唾，就不能夠了。(Li, “Tan Chuyu” 253-4)

This is the kind of conceit that is typical of Li Yu’s narrator’s humor and style. Liu Jiangxian is chosen to voice these lines and she is the obvious choice, despite the fact that in the story she is presented as remarkable precisely in her failure to follow them. As noted above, it is Liu Jiangxian who takes over the job of first introducing her daughter to the audience. Now, Li Yu could have given Jiangxian a long introductory speech to deliver directly to the audience while she still is alone on the stage that could have been just largely devoted to repeating what the narrator says in the beginning of the *huaben*, but he does not do that, surely because that would not be very dramatic. Instead he works some of that same material into her mouth and has her address it to her daughter. We begin with Liu Jiangxian’s first speech to her daughter:

Daughter, you’re now fourteen years old, not so little anymore. Your father is putting together a separate, small troupe. You will practice drama with them. As for singing, making yourself up, dancing, and bodily charm, there can be no doubt that you will pick them up just fine. But for lead actresses there are other ways of making money, ones that are not in the playtexts and that have to be studied from childhood before can you learn them satisfactorily.

我兒，你今年十四歲，也不小了。爹爹要另合小班，同你一齊學戲。那些歌容舞態，不愁你演習不來；只是做女旦的人，另有個掙錢的法子，不在戲文裡面，須要自小兒學回才好。(Li, “Bimuyu” 115)

Miaogu replies,

Mother, a woman ought to only learn some needlework and embroidery, which would be sufficient for her to support herself. Acting is not part of what women should do and I am not willing to learn it.

母親，做婦人的只該學些女工針指，也盡可度日。這演戲的事不是婦人的本等，孩兒不願學他。(Li, “Bimuyu” 116)

This, of course, is not acceptable to her mother. Miaogu continues by saying that even if her mother insists that she learn to act, she will not engage in the other ways of making money because she does not want to compromise her honor or good name. Liu Jiangxian’s response is sharp:

Your father and I want to make big money off of you, but you on the contrary get all pedantic and impractical. Women like us, what need is there for us to pay attention to reputation or chastity? What does integrity and shame have to do with us? You just need to set your mind to it, and when an occasion arises where you are together with a man, you look on it as if you were still acting on the stage. If he takes it seriously, but you realize you are just acting, and if you don’t actually fall in love with them, then you will have maintained your chastity. What need is there for you to be so inflexible!

做爺娘的要在你身上掙起一分大家私，你倒這等迂闊起來。我們這樣婦人，顧甚麼名節？惜甚麼廉恥？只要把主意拿定了，與男子相交的時節，只當也是做戲一般。他便認真，我只當假，把雲雨綢繆之事，看得淡些，這就是守節了，何須恁般拘執！(Li, “Bimuyu” 116)

She then tells Miaogu that if she will follow three secret tricks she will reap countless rewards. Miaogu asks what they are, which of course leads Jiangxian to teach Miaogu about the “three do’s and three don’ts.” In her attempt to explain how they work Liu Jiangxian delivers an abbreviated version of the *huaben* narrator’s “gourmand” speech translated above:

When a man goes for a woman, that type of true feeling and real intention does not come after his body has been joined to hers, it arises from the eye

contact that happens beforehand. He is just like a gourmand at a feast, you can only let him smell the aroma, you can't let him start to work with his chopsticks, because once he does, his interest will come to an end.

但凡男子相與婦人，那種真情實意，不在粘皮靠肉之後，卻在眉來眼去之時，就像饞人遇酒食，只可使他聞香，不可容他下箸，一下了箸，他的心事就完了。(Li, "Bimuyu" 117)

The "three do's and three don'ts" and the use of the simile of the gourmand at a feast seems just as appropriate coming from the Liu Jiangxian of the play (see below for some of the ways Li Yu has changed her from the original) as it did from the narrator of the story, but Li Yu has dramatized the originally "static" remarks of the narrator by inserting them into the dramatic context of Liu Jiangxian's attempt to persuade her daughter to do what she wants her to do. Doing so also recreates, through different means, some of the irony and humor of the original story.

Li Yu's choices with regard to how he handles in his play the material just discussed can also lead to a loss of complexity. The story begins by recounting that all the actresses in the area follow the "three do's and three don'ts," only Liu Jiangxian does not. This is an example of how the speed with which things can be introduced in the story can allow for more subtlety and complexity than Li Yu thought it prudent to try to bring off in a dramatic version of the same story. In a play everything must be demonstrated by the action and dialogue of the characters, therefore too much subtlety and complex layering, especially if it all had to be brought off at the beginning of the play, would be difficult to bring off just as a practical matter. But we can also perhaps see the choice to simplify Liu Jiangxian as being made within the context of Li Yu's decision to aim for a more exclusive audience for his *huaben* and a wider one for his *chuanqi*.

### ***Bimuyu*'s Embedded Meanings 1: Li Yu in his Play**

We saw in the first chapter above how much of a concern it was for Li Yu to make as much as possible from his “genius” through writing, publishing, advertising, and reinventing himself, on the one hand, and to protect what he could earn from his pen from the very real threat of plagiarism and piracy, on the other. At this point I want to present a reading of *Bimuyu* that reveals how it reflects his authorial concerns. I have centered this reading on the *chuanqi* version of the story material, despite the fact that the reading, for the most part, also holds true for the *huaben* version. As a second iteration of the same material, Li Yu’s concerns are greatly amplified in the *chuanqi* version, and some interesting details only appear in it. My reading will hinge on Liu Jiangxian’s new significance in *Bimuyu*—as the voice of Li Yu’s authorial persona. Because Li Yu was perhaps the first professional author in China, it is natural to conclude that he had no real model to follow, and that some of the ways his authorial concerns bubble up in his fiction and drama will be pretty indistinct and hard to verify as such. I will be concentrating on several pertinent scenes in the play, the first of which is scene four.

The setting of Tan Chuyu’s first sight of Liu Miaogu, which happens in the play’s fourth scene, “Differing Tastes,” is a spectacle, suggestive of consumer comparison shopping. Chuyu has arrived in Sanqu, famous for its actresses. Chuyu’s friends praise Liu Jiangxian’s looks and talent and they all plan to go to watch her perform. Arriving early, they decide to wait at the entrance to watch the actresses arrive and judge them. Chuyu says, “As for actresses, their appearance on stage and off are completely different. I’ll stand with you here, where we can see who has real talent” 那些做戲的婦人，臺上的風姿與臺下的顏色，判然不同。我和你立在此處，到可以識別真才 (Li Yu,

“Bimuyu” 119). Tan’s friends again praise Liu Jiangxian when she appears but Chuyu disagrees, favoring Liu Miaogu and thinking Jiangxian’s beauty garish and overstated. He begins to debate the merits of the two actresses with his friends, but then decides it better that they be left unconvinced, so that he’ll have no competition for Liu Miaogu. He soliloquizes,

Not only do they not know it [the naturalness of Miaogu’s beauty and the tremendous potential in that], I cannot let them find out. If it became known by others, then this treasure that stands out among all things under heaven will have to be shared with all under heaven, and I won’t be able to have her for myself. So I’ll just let them continue to say that she is no good, and keep the truth to myself. Now, if I really want to get to know her, it must be before the melon has been split [i.e., before she loses her virginity]; it’ll only be acceptable if I am the first with her.

不但他們不知道，也不可使他們知道。若使見知與人，則天下之寶必與天下共之，小生不能獨得矣！我且依他說個不好，自己肚裡明白就是。是就是了，既要結識他，須是在未曾破瓜的時節，相與起頭才好。(Li, “Bimuyu” 120)

The quality that most motivates Tan Chuyu is Miaogu’s virginity, and as we see later, her chastity. The men’s appraisal of the actresses is based on viewing them as they enter the theater, not as they perform. This makes the process of the men appraising the women fell more like a “cattle call” and increases the resonances with the complete commodification of Miaogu in scene 13, when her mother agrees to trade her to Qian Wanguan as his twelfth concubine for 1000 taels of silver. To be presented as a metaphor for the literary productions on which Li Yu made his living, Miaogu must be a passive object of consumption and not an agent in the determination of her worth.

Tan Chuyu and his friends’ viewing of the actresses is symbolic of the market system in which the consumer is presented with a variety of like goods to choose from,

and the value of individual commodities is establishing through the law of supply and demand. Representing the sophisticated consumer of literature, Chuyu is concerned that knowledge of Miaogu's preciousness will become too widespread or popularized, thereby decreasing the cultural capital based on her present highly exclusive availability.

Miaogu's value lies in her rarity and virginity. Likewise, as a professional writer, the only means Li Yu had for making a profit was through selling his work, and the only way to maximize the profit he could gain through doing that was to, as much as possible, control the production and reproduction of his work. He did all he could to this end by undertaking the publishing of his work, branding his literary output so that it would be harder for imitators to get away with imitating it, and by doing what he could to guard against piracy. Crucial to establishing himself as a professional writer, Li Yu developed a consistent and unique authorial persona and overtly promoted his work for its inventiveness and ingenuity. Just as Miaogu's value in *Bimuyu* depends on her being in short supply, that is to say through her being naturally of superior and unusual stock (to the discerning) and through the restrictions placed on her "consumption" through her virginity and chastity, the value of Li Yu's literary commodities depends on the rarity brought about by their (insistent) novelty. One advantage of the patronage system is that it implicitly limits the circulation of both literary texts and performances to the wealthy elites. As Qian Wanguan exemplifies, however, how in the increasingly mercantilist world of seventeenth-century Jiangnan, limiting circulation to the wealthy no longer safeguards literature from devaluation through its consumption by vulgar persons and their vulgar understandings.

In accordance with *chuanqi* dramatic conventions, *Bimuyu*'s first scene opens with the *mo* relating the play's important themes and main attractions to the audience before the action of the play begins. As seen above, the *mo* here is not playing a character in the play. The most common persona adopted by the *mo* in these scenes is probably troupe leader/stage manager, on the one hand, or author, on the other. By this time Li Yu's choice should be no surprise. In the same vein as typical of Li Yu's self promotion of his own work, the *mo* in scene one of *Bimuyu* opens the play by telling the audience that this play ended his search for rarity,

When idle over the years I have plied my brush;  
Considering antiquity and consulting the present,  
I've searched everywhere for the marvelous.  
If "play" cannot be found within a play,  
In vain it would be to waste one's energy.

無事年來操不律，考古商今，到處搜奇跡。戲在戲中尋不出，教人枉費探求力。(Li, "Bimuyu" 112)

The *mo*, clearly standing in for Li Yu himself, praises the play's novelty and rarity. Not only can we link this praise with Li Yu's promotion of his own work, it can also be linked to rarity and marvelousness of the virginity and chastity that distinguish Miaogu from other beautiful and talented actresses.

Having established Miaogu as symbolic of Li Yu's literary commodities, we can proceed to trace how Liu Jiangxian's brokering of her daughter reflects Li Yu's complaints against the established patronage system and his desire to instead sell his productions in the market so as to widen their consumption, despite his fear of piracy. Liu Jiangxian intends to capitalize on her daughter's looks and talent in order to provide for herself when she is no longer able to do so; she can be seen as indirectly verbalizing Li

Yu's preference for selling his literary work in the market. Before offering Liu Jiangxian 1000 taels of silver in exchange for her daughter, the wealthy theater patron Qian Wanguan 錢萬貫 (note that his surname means "money" and his "personal name" means "ten thousand strings of cash") tried to prepare the ground for that offer by telling Jiangxian that while she might intend to make money off Miaogu's activities on and off stage, her daughter's refusal to engage in both makes selling her to a wealthy man like himself Jiangxian's only hope for reclaiming her investment in Miaogu's upbringing and theatrical training (Li, "Tan Chuyu" 262). Like prostitution, the print market allows Li Yu to sell his literary work to whomever is willing to pay the required price. Instead of the highly exclusive circulation afforded by the patronage system, the market system makes Li Yu's works available to anyone who can pay for them. While publishing for the market has the problem of having to either write down to the level of the mass of readers or somehow manage to bring them up to one's level, in the figure of Qian Wanguan we see the main problem with the patronage system as it existed in Li Yu's time, it now included wealthy but vulgar merchants and no longer protects art from the corruption of coarse understandings or empty appreciation.

Liu Jiangxian, symbolic of the professional author in this respect, has invested years into Miaogu's theatrical training, to the point that Miaogu, like a good literary piece, is able through her performance to transport the audience and command their emotions. But Jiangxian believes that she can only realize Miaogu's full earning potential through prostituting her to customers offstage. The idea that Miaogu would realize her earning potential through prostitution is symbolic of the potential profit to be earned through the publication and dissemination of printed work. Only when she is convinced that her

daughter will not condescend to prostitute herself does Jiangxian consider the possibility of exchanging her for a one-time fee. To persuade her to do precisely that, Qian Wuguan reminds Jiangxian that in order to turn a good profit, actresses must use their onstage performances to attract customers, but that the larger portion of their earnings must come from their “offstage performances”:

Don't blame me for saying this, but as for actresses, if they rely only acting on stage, the money that they'll manage to earn will be noticeable enough, but it is only when they're like you, playing both real and fake, acting both onstage and off, that they will really be able to earn some money. A daughter like yours, with her nature, if you want her to pull that off, my only fear is that that will be quite a difficult thing.

你莫怪我說，做女旦的人，若單靠做戲，那掙來的家私也看得見。只除非像你一搬，真戲也作，假戲也做，臺上的戲也做，臺下的戲也做，方才趁得些銀子。像你令愛那樣心性，要想他做人家，只怕也是樁難事。(Li, “Bimuyu” 148-49)

When Jiangxian agrees that this is the case, Qian continues to argue that her most profitable course would be to sell her daughter off now, while there's still money to be made:

If she doesn't earn money, that's still a small matter, what you should be afraid of is the prospect that even the money you have earned will get spent on her, and you'll end up broke, and then have to sell her off. The money you'd get for selling her wouldn't be enough to replace her, and would only be enough to pay your debts. The kind of business that you wanted to do, you will be unable to do.

他趁不得銀子來，也還是小事，只怕連你趁來的銀子，還要被他送去了，把人家敗的精光，然後賣到他身上。那賣來的銀子，又沒買的人，只勾還債，這樁生意就要做不成了。(Li, “Bimuyu” 149)

The alternatives presented to Liu Jiangxian by Qian Wuguan are the same alternatives presented to Li Yu in his attempt to live by his writing. If he used his earnings to publish

and market his writing, he was still left with the possibility that his work would not sell, or more likely that he would have to compete with cheaper pirated editions, leaving him at a loss. If he relies on the support of patrons he limits both the potential for the widespread circulation of his work and the possibility that he could reap the sustainable monetary rewards of mass consumption.

Despite Li Yu's efforts to publish and market his literary creations, he was never able to make the kind of living he thought necessary by these means, leaving him dependant on patronage. In 1662, the year following the publication of *Bimuyu*, Li Yu moved from Hangzhou to Nanjing, saying in a letter that he did so because the piracy of his work had become such a problem that he felt he had no other recourse than to move (Shan "Li Yu nianpu" 42).<sup>9</sup> It was in Nanjing that he built the Mustard Seed Garden bookshop, where he sold publications of his own work and the work of others (Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 44). Notwithstanding the partial success of this enterprise, Li Yu never achieved financial independence and continually traveled in search of patronage and wrote plaintive letters to patrons incessantly complaining of his desperate financial straits. Writing to his friend Ji Bozi 紀伯紫 (Ji Yingzhong 紀映鍾), he laments the fact that a recent journey in search of patronage has left him as bad off as when he set out:

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<sup>9</sup> Patrick Hanan notes that while Li Yu claims his move to Nanjing was necessitated by the rampant piracy of his popular work, it seems relatively implausible that he could avoid piracy simply by moving to Nanjing. He argues,

Li Yu's reasons do not make obvious sense. Why would the pirates cease to plague him merely because he had moved from Hangzhou to Nanjing? Dai Bufan suggests that Li Yu may have gotten into trouble over something he had written...Several possibilities come to mind. There was the Zhang Jinyan case, which may have involved his *Wusheng xi erji*...This occurred in 1660. On the other hand, it has also been suggested that his move had something to do with the seaborne attacks of the revanchist general Zheng Chenggong (Coxinga), who almost reached Nanjing in autumn of 1659 before being defeated. (Hanan, *Invention* 216-7 n. 38)

This year I came with begging bowl in hand to Chu [Hunan]. We have been here for several months. It was because of hunger that we came, and also because of hunger that we will leave.

今歲托鉢於楚，凡數閱月，為飢驅而來者，復為飢驅而去 (Li, “Liweng yijia yan wenji” 167).

In 1677, only three years before his death, he was forced to sell his bookstore along with the valuable woodblocks from which he printed his publications in order to buy a home for himself and his large household. These biographical details confirm the attitudes about patronage and the market system that I have highlighted in my figurative reading of *Bimuyu* outlined above. He tried to offer his literary creations at market, but when they did not earn him the profit he needed, he returned again and again to patrons for support.

If, in the end, Li Yu was better able to support himself by patronage than by publishing and selling his work, we are left to ask why he invested so much time and effort in the latter. Being dependant on their sponsorship, it is no wonder that one cannot find any direct evidence of complaints against his patrons, but looking at his characterization of Qian Wanguan can perhaps give us valuable hints as to why he strove for the kind of autonomy from patrons that might have been possible by marketing his work more broadly.

In scene 15 of *Bimuyu*, Qian Wanguan arrives at the temple theater where he has sponsored all the festivities, including theatrical performances, celebrating Lord Yan’s birthday. Having already paid Jiangxian 1000 taels for Miaogu, he struts like a cock in a henhouse and relishes the idea that all eyes are on him, the man to whom the cherished actress Miaogu now belongs (Li, “Bimuyu” 155). Ingeniously plying her art, Miaogu fools Qian into letting her curse him openly during her performance, as a public display

of Qian's ignorance and empty appreciation of theater and of her unwillingness to marry him. Qian, foolishly puffed-up, is blind to the sting of her insults and is only all the more satisfied to be incorporated into her performance, thinking himself the envy of the audience taking in the spectacle. She points at him repeatedly and ridicules him indirectly by saying, in words addressed to a character in the play she is performing but really referring to him, "You wicked bastard, you're a man who has never read the Classics and has no understanding of what is right!" 壞心的賊子，你是個不讀詩書，不通道理的人 (Li, "Bimuyu" 156). Here, Li Yu seems to suggest that even if the patronage system once protected art from the vulgarity of commerce, this is no longer the case in a world where the wealthy are increasingly made up of "uncultured" merchants, whose sponsorship of art is just one facet of their conspicuous consumption and boorish efforts to weasel their way into the ranks of the cultural elite.

But as a symbol of the disadvantages of the patronage system, Qian Wanguan's character is not simply a caricature of the uncultured rich. Looking closely at the scene in which he is introduced, scene 11, the specifics of Li Yu's complaint against the patronage system come into sharper focus. Specifically, Qian Wanguan demonstrates his opportunism at others' expense and his concern for appearance over reality or substance. Beginning his self-introduction, Qian Wanguan, whose name could be translated as Mr. Ten-Thousand Strings of Cash, recites a doggerel poem,

My prestige as landlord is number one in the district,  
My stomach sticks out as if swollen.  
Although I don't read the Classics I am still a squire,  
Just because I have saved up a bundle of cash.

財主威名冠一方，肚皮頂起如膨脹，不讀詩書也做郎，只因蓄得財兒  
旺 (Li, "Bimuyu" 139).

In the third line, Qian points to the key distinction between himself and what would have been the traditional patron of artists such as Li Yu—Qian is not a literatus. His patronage of Liu Jiangxian's troupe is not based on literary appreciation through shared cultural knowledge (such as the aforementioned Classics) common to literati, but is instead one of the empty ways by which he outwardly signifies his wealth and prestige.

Qian Wanguan represents the nightmare patron of theater by the pompous and entitled manner through which he contracts to add Miaogu to his collection of concubines and additionally by embodying the quality of *xuming* 虛名 (empty/undeserved reputation). As early as Miaogu's first entrance in scene 3, she complained against *xuming* in her criticism of the acting profession. Fitting both my metaphorical reading and a literal reading of *Bimuyu*, Liu Miaogu and Qian Wanguan are pitted against each other as polar opposites, with Miaogu representing authenticity in thought and action and Wanguan representing a threat to these qualities with his concern for name over substance and appearance over reality. In her opening scene, after her mother teaches her the “three dos and three don'ts,” Liu Miaogu sings her fears about how doing what her mother wants her to do will harm her reputation:

*A falsely won bad reputation is already bad enough,  
How much more so if the reputation is true,  
Then the loss is no bargain.  
Just to hear such talk makes me already ashamed.  
One's good name in the mouths of people,  
Once lost will be hard to regain.*

風影虛名猶吝惜，況實在，喪便宜。入耳先教漸悔。把口頭名節，失去難追 (Li, “Bimuyu” 118).

In scene 3, Miaogu's introductory and defining scene, we see her objecting to her mother's proposal to make her an actress and prostitute by first objecting entirely to the study of acting on the grounds that it does not belong to what is really "women's work" (*nügong*, 女工), i.e., sewing and embroidery. Forced to accept her lot and study dramatic texts to earn money, she still refuses to sacrifice her chastity and shame and sell her body off stage. Scene three sets up a conflict between Miaogu's concern for chastity and authenticity, and her mother's determination to profit from her.

By contrast, in Qian Wanguan's defining scene, scene 11, his primary concern is shown to be building up his empty reputation. The title of the scene, "Hu Wei" 狐威, might literally be translated as "Vulpine Prestige," but it really means "Borrowed Prestige," because of the set phrase it alludes to, *hu jia hu wei* 狐假虎威 (the fox borrowing the tiger's prestige), and it was surely chosen to highlight how Qian's prestige is inauthentic because it is only borrowed/bought. Having bought himself an official title, Qian uses his money and the prestige he has bought in order to gain more money and influence at other's expense. His primary concern throughout the scene is that the two clerks that come to visit address him by the honorific "Esteemed Master Qian" (Qian *Laoye* 錢老爺) instead of continuing to simply refer to him as "Master Qian" (Qian *Ye*, 錢爺) (Li, "Bimuyu" 141). In polar opposition to Liu Miaogu, who takes her stage marriage to Chuyu to be real because of the sincerity with which she has performed his wife, Qian is only concerned with name, reputation, and how things appear on the surface, not authenticity. When we consider these values in the context of Li Yu as an emerging Author, we are reminded that impersonation and empty show were the antithesis to Li

Yu's project of marketing himself as a unique authorial voice and then banking on the substance behind his name and reputation to sell his future works.

### ***Bimuyu's Embedded Meanings 2: Writing in the Play***

In this section I want to look at the three instances in *Bimuyu* where Li Yu's characters become authors. They concern Miaogu, Chuyu, and Murong Jie, and will be taken up in that order. This will give us insights into authorship and the circulation of texts within Li Yu's literary oeuvre.

I want to look at Miaogu's rewriting of the scene in *Jingchai ji* to prove Qian Wanguan's ignorance of drama and her own chastity in scene 15, "Together in Death" (*xie wang* 偕亡), not because the scene is clearly so important in terms of the overall plot of the play,<sup>10</sup> but rather how Miaogu as author within the play relates to Li Yu, author of the play.

Scene 15 demonstrates Liu Miaogu's command of literature and Qian Wanguan's ignorance of it. We tend to think of Literature as more exclusionary than inclusionary, communicating primarily to those for whom it was written, which in the case of Literature with a capital L means classically educated men with a shared background of textual and cultural knowledge. Miaogu offers a refreshing reprieve from this idea. After learning only the previous day that she was to be betrothed to a much older man as his twelfth concubine, she immediately applied herself to coming up with a plan that would

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<sup>10</sup> The novelization of the play discussed above uses it to end the first of the two parts it is divided into.

not only keep her promise to remain loyal to Chuyu intact, but that would also allow her to show her righteous indignation at being put in the tragic circumstance in the first place. We can draw several different conclusions from her plan. First let's look at her narration of it. After making her entrance she says,

Yesterday I just wanted to kill myself, but didn't because I haven't had the chance to say goodbye to Tan, and want to see him one more time. Besides, I want to take all the pent up feelings in my chest and expose them, for once, in front of everyone. That is why I have held out until today. Working the entire night without sleeping, I have taken an old scene and given it a new climax. Now I'll go backstage and wait. Once the audience arrives I can begin my performance. There's only one thing: if now [before the performance], when I'm in front of the others, I reveal even the slightest bit of sadness, then my plans will be found out, and as for committing suicide I won't be able to. I have to act normally, and on the contrary put on a happy demeanor. Only that is a foolproof plan for success. Indeed: "The loyal minister faces death with composure;/ The upright woman faces peril with a smile."

奴家昨日要尋短計，只因不曾別得譚朗，還要見他一面；二來要把滿腔心事，對眾人暴白一番，所以挨到今日。被我一夜不睡，把一出戲文改了新關目。先到戲房等候，等眾人一到，就好搬演。只是以見，我在眾人面前，若露出一點愁容，要被人識破，要死也死不成了。需要舉動如常，到妝個歡喜的模樣，才是萬全之策。正是；忠臣視死無難色，烈女臨危有笑容。(Li, "Bimuyu" 154-55)

Miaogu sees the stage as an appropriate place for her to voice her complaint, and she uses a well-known play to do so. What is the role of the actors and the audience to imbue meaning to a play text? To what extent did Li Yu write drama to give a public voice to his own complaints? She demonstrates that acting is itself an act of revision of the original material. She is very much the author of her performance even though there is no explicit indication that she actually wrote out her new version.

After Miaogu finishes explaining her intentions for the performance, the other members of the troupe make their entrance, presenting a portrait of outsiders' expectations regarding the marriage transaction that's about to come to fruition. From their point of view, "The rich all lust after sex,/ The beauty loves nothing but money./ When the money reaches her palm,/ Gratitude and righteousness are all in vain." 財主都貪色，佳人只愛錢。千金才到手，恩義總突然 (Li, "Bimuyu" 155). The troupe members remind us of the straightforwardness of the transaction—Miaogu is being sold. This scene presents a picture of the creation and consumption of art much like the one Li Yu would have been dealing with in his own life. The boorish patron, hungry for sex and the gratification of a public display of his wealth and ability to feed his appetites, the writer and actors working towards their own ends, and the general public eager to bring the patron down to their level.

Qian Wanguan's primary concern as he enters in scene 15 is that he is seen. He struts grandiosely as he enters and sings of how 10,000 eyes will be on him to see the 1000 taels that he's paid for Miaogu. His purchase of a singular beauty is, in his mind, the most important performance planned for the day. Qian immediately asserts his possession of Miaogu by telling the others in the troupe that she's his wife and that they should be careful not to stand too close to her. As the patron of the performance, Miaogu asks Qian's permission to play a selected scene of her choosing. Here again she stresses that the text she will be performing is of her composition:

It's only the first scene that is important. *The Thorn Hairpin* has a scene called, 'Clasping a Rock and Jumping into the River,' it's a scene that I've renewed and reworked, it no longer resembles the old version. I'd like to start the performance with that scene. As to the rest of the plays, you can pick whatever scenes you'd like.

只有頭一出要緊，那‘荊釵記’上有一出‘抱石投江’，是我簇新改造的，與舊本不同，要開手就演；其餘的戲，隨意做幾出罷了。(Li, “Bimuyu” 155)

We can see a kind of concession to reality on the part of Li Yu, the playwright. He’s acknowledging that once a play reaches the actors’ hands it can (and often did) become something entirely different from what the playwright had intended. In creating a positive character such as Miaogu that can and does change a play for her own ends, Li Yu is giving actors credit for something they did indeed commonly do, but generally to the chagrin and protests of the playwright,

Li Yu not only presents Miaogu here as playwright, he lets her be director as well. Before the performance starts, she instructs Chuyu to “Take care to act in accordance with what I do” 用心看我做戲 (Li, “Bimuyu” 156). She also instructs other troupe members to get the gongs and drums going and wait for her to make her entrance. Miaogu protects her purity by personalizing *Jingchai ji*. Her editing of *Jingchai ji* to protect her commitment to Tan Chuyu and air her grievances against Qian Wanguan resonates, in my mind, with Li Yu’s attempt to use a personalized narrator as an antidote to intellectual piracy.

The next two instances of the representation of authorship in the play reveal them to take part in an indirect commentary on circulation, audience, and anonymous authorship. The first of these concerns Chuyu. In scene nine, “The Cursory Note” (*Cao zha* 草札), he complains that after lowering himself so far as to join the newly formed acting troupe created by Liu Miaogu’s father to showcase her talents, he has found out that simply joining the troupe will not give him the access to Miaogu that he had

expected. To his surprise, despite their lowly status, fraternization between the sexes amongst the actors in the troupe is forbidden. Strictly enforced rules particularly protect Liu Miaogu's virginity for sale to the highest bidder. This is how he tells the audience about this:

Who would have thought that the rules in the green-room are different from elsewhere, and that in the middle of a mixed sex troupe, things are the most segregated of all. In the case of actresses, anyone in the world can hit on them, the only exception is their fellow actors, who aren't allowed to hit on them. Who on earth thought up these rules!? They say that there is a deity called Erlang or whatever, who is behind it all. How absurd!

誰想戲房裡面的規矩，更比人家不同，極混雜之中，又有極分別的去處。但凡做女旦的，普天下之人，都可以調戲得，獨有同班弟兄，倒調戲不得。這個陋規不知甚麼人創起？又說有個二郎神，單管這些閑事，一發荒唐可笑。(Li, "Bimuyu" 131)<sup>11</sup>

He realizes that communicating his feelings to her will require some ingenuity on his part. In "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing," he is able to tell Miaogu his feelings by conversing with her in classical Chinese, which their fellow players can't understand. In the play adaptation, however, Tan Chuyu writes a lyrical note to Miaogu in classical Chinese and she responds with a song that will only be understood by Tan. While the theatricality of Chuyu throwing his note to Miaogu while she's practicing could account for the fact that Li Yu chose to add it to the *chuanqi* version, it is more meaningful to interpret what he

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<sup>11</sup> In the *huaben* story, Chuyu's reaction and the narrator's explanation for the rule are given as follows: "To his dismay, he found that the rules of conduct in the green-room were twice as strict again as in the women's quarters. Every man in the world could make a play for the female lead—except her fellow actors! The rule was not Jiangxian's or her husband's devising; there was a founding father of the acting profession, the god Erlang, and he it was who had established it" (Hanan, "An Actress Scorns Wealth" 173). 誰想戲房裡面的規矩，比閨門之中更嚴一倍。但凡做女旦的，是人都可以調戲得，只有同班的朋友調戲不得。這個規矩不是劉絳仙夫婦做出來的，有個戲的鼻祖，叫做二郎神，是他立定的法度 (Li, "Tan Chuyu 259).

does in the context of the issue of limited or exclusive circulation of texts and their audience.

The last instance of writing in *Bimuyu* that I want to look at concerns the circulation of a text written by Murong Jie. But we'll begin with some discussion of Murong Jie himself. In "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing," there is a model scholar-recluse figure called only Fisherman Mo. We learn that he was once an official but not much more than that. He and his wife are happy with their simple but honest lives and refuse to return to the fickle world of officialdom when invited by Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu to live with them in luxury and high-standing. Li Yu's portrait of this scholar-recluse figure in *Bimuyu* is both more complex and more cynical. His original name is revealed to be Murong Jie. When we first meet him in scene five, he is still serving in his official post and he is tasked with the suppression of a bandit invasion led by Shan Dawang. In scene eight Murong defeats the bandits and they flee into the hills where they will regroup, only to be defeated later by Tan Chuyu. When Murong Jie leaves to retreat to the seclusion of the mountains in scene twelve, he and his wife ceremoniously cast their official headgear into the water and take on new identities and new names. In their seclusion in the mountains they are nonetheless accompanied by their servants, a husband and wife who act as comic surrogates for them in saving Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu from their fishing net, something they had personally done in the story.

Living under assumed names and identities in the mountains, Fisherman Mo and his wife rescue Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu and see to it that their union is legitimated by marriage and that Tan Chuyu has the resources he needs to leave for the capital to take his exams. After Tan has passed the exams, he is given same post in Tingzhou that

Murong himself had filled. In order to assure Tan's success and safety at his post, Fisherman Mo takes it upon himself to compose a book of advice for Tan. In scene 25, "Pretending to be a Spirit," Murong Jie explains to his wife how he will cleverly advise Tan on his duties, without revealing that he was once the holder of the same post. He explains,

Before, when he jumped into the water without drowning, that was all thanks to the help of Lord Yan's power. My plan is to "put superstition to work." I'll take advantage of the time left before he arrives to take my methods of governing people and quelling bandits and make them it into a book, add a cover to it on which I will inscribe the words "By the Lord Who Stills the Waters." I'll wait for him to arrive, and sneak it into his luggage. When he's on the road he will discover it suddenly, and take it as a demonstration of Lord Yan's power and that the latter wants to help him win merit and establish his career, and naturally he'll respectfully believe [what is written in the book] and not suspect it.

他當初入水不死，全虧宴公的神力。我的意思就要把神道設教起來。趁他未到之先，待我把治民剿賊之法，造作一本冊子，加上一道封皮，上面寫著“平浪侯封”四個字。等他走到，悄悄塞在行李之中；他到中途，忽然檢著，只說宴公顯神道，要扶持他建功立業，自然敬信無疑。(Li, "Bimuyu" 187)

Just as Murong has decided to live under a pseudonym, he decides to take someone else's name to write his treatise on government.

Not surprisingly, the bandits leave the safety of their mountain hiding place soon after Tan assumes his post. Shan Dawang's scheme to defeat Tan Chuyu is to hire a look-a-like to impersonate Murong Jie. When Tan is in desperate straights and needs assistance, Murong Jie is called back to official service to help, but the real Murong can't be found and the impersonator is taken for him. The impersonator, of course, instead of helping suppress the bandits, helps them. Tan Chuyu at this point learns that Fisherman Mo's original name is actually Murong Jie, and arrests him for what the impersonator has

done. Not until the last minute is the confusion cleared up and Murong Jie/Fisherman Mo's life saved. While Murong Jie's impersonation of Lord Yan when he wrote his treatise is never explicitly connected in the play to the trouble he gets into because the bandits have gotten someone to impersonate him, perhaps they are connected after all?

Just as Murong Jie borrowed Lord Yan's name to help his text circulate the way he wanted it to, publishers attributed texts not by Li Yu to him so as to increase sales. Fisherman Mo's spirit letter brings up the issues of integrity and impersonation and link back to Li Yu's concern over the possibility that his own work would be plagiarized. As I have argued above, Li Yu's personalized narrator stood in the way of plagiarism by marking his writing with his unique stamp, but impersonation of his authorial voice would still have been a threat at the forefront of his mind. Fisherman Mo's spirit letter evidences the fact that for Li Yu, professionalized authorship was fraught with concerns over plagiarism.

### **Conclusion**

As I have repeated at numerous points throughout this chapter, earning a living was never far from Li Yu's mind, and he considered his literary endeavors an entrepreneurial venture, and not simply a way to display his talents and win fame. In broad strokes this chapter aims to trace Li Yu's emergence as a professional author as that process and his concerns related to it left traces in his writing. I asserted above that Li Yu was dissatisfied with the patronage system, and sought instead to take his literary creations to market, betting on the potential rewards of widespread circulation. Li Yu's lifelong investment in publishing and promoting his work gives credence to my figurative

reading of *Bimuyu*, but concrete information as to how much money he made publishing and how much he made on patronage tours does not exist. Detailed information on the sale and circulation of his published texts is also wanting, and in its absence we are left to speculate. I would like to avoid becoming mired in open-ended and indefinite speculation, but to look instead at the rich corpus of texts left to us by Li Yu, and read them not only as representations of their respective genres, but also as vestiges of the unique milieu within which they were written.

As a shrewd business woman and theater troupe manager, Liu Jiangxian's and her brokering of her daughter Liu Miaogu in both *Bimuyu* and "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing" are ripe for comparison with Li Yu's entrepreneurial activities. Add to this the fact that in translating the *huaben* story "Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing" into the *chuanqi* drama *Bimuyu*, Li Yu chose Liu Jiangxian to voice the emblematic lines of narration he wished to transpose from story to play, and that his major innovation in the genre of *huaben* vernacular fiction was in insisting on a unprecedentedly close correlation between himself and his narrator, and a connection between the exchange of the actress in the play and the exchange of commodities in his actual life becomes hard to deny.

I would, however, caution us from reading Li Yu's fiction or drama as a direct expression of his attitudes. In most cases, taking him seriously would be a gross misunderstanding, and attempts to pin down his attitudes in the past by scholars have turned out to be a relatively meaningless endeavor. My goal is instead to mine his work for what it can tell us about the emergence of the professional author. There is a wealth of scholarship related to printing technology, book culture, and the birth of the author in Europe and the West, but very little work has been done to address how the interrelation

of these phenomena play out in the Chinese cultural context. Given the comparatively longer history of printing and book culture in China, it would seem a fruitful avenue of scholarship that could inform the study of both Chinese and Western literatures of the early modern period. I hope to offer my own readings of Li Yu's work as a very small step in this direction.

In their *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China*, Shelley and C. S. Chang read *Bimuyu* as social commentary. They cite the play as evidence of Li Yu's adoration and sympathy towards beautiful talented women and then, after a short summary of the play, conclude that,

Obviously, Li Yu deplored the wrongdoing of such greedy and selfish parents, but he did not really question the institution of the traditional marriage system. To him, marriage was not a personal affair but a familial one, and a man's first responsibility was still to his family. It should be pointed out that Tan Chuyu is an orphan in *The Pair-eyed Fish [Bimuyu]*, which would make it easier for the audience to accept Tan's suicide. Having no parents to care for, Tan has no filial duty to fulfill, and hence he cannot be accused of neglecting his duty to society. As for Liu Miaogu's suicide, the audience would have no problem accepting it because she was merely a woman whose only way to assert herself in the traditional society was to take her life into her own hands. Li Yu sympathized with her misfortune but fatalistically accepted it. (Chang and Chang 211)

I think the Changs are mistaken in reading *Bimuyu* as a direct expression of Li Yu's opinions on marriage customs, filial piety, or gender relations. If an audience was so literal-minded as to be unable to accept Tan's suicide if he were not an orphan, how would they stomach the idea that after their "suicide" the couple changed into fish, were caught, and then transformed into humans again by the grace of a Lord Yan who enlists the help of shrimp, crabs, turtles, and snails to protect the couple while they travel downriver to be deposited safely in the fishing net of Fisherman Mo's servant? The

Chang's reading is invested in the idea that Li Yu's fiction is a storehouse of Li Yu's opinions on the topics therein and that by correlating his fiction with societal trends, we can better understand society of his day. In contrast, my own reading of *Bimuyu* as a reflection of the underlying anxieties that plagued Li Yu in his attempt to make his writing a successful entrepreneurial venture is not concerned with making simple connections to the "real" world, but is instead concerned with how the adaptation of the original story into a play and its embedded meanings hint at the milieu within which Li Yu established himself as an author. The mechanics of genre translation serve as a window on the process of writing, and the content of the play indirectly suggests Li Yu's authorial concerns through the process of transforming his work for a new medium.

CHAPTER IV

Performing Gender Inversion: Feminized Authenticity ValORIZED as a Counter to Forgery in “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qiu feng*



Figure 3: Redress of Fraudulent Business Practices. After Li, “Liweng chuanqi shizhong” xxix.

This chapter will show how *Huang qiu feng*, Li Yu's *chuanqi* adaptation of his own *huaben* story, "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" demonstrates Li Yu's differential use of genre to target different sections of a stratified audience. In both works, the hero Lü Zaisheng is so good looking that prostitutes begin patronizing him to increase their market value—a visit with him signifies their quality. In both works Zaisheng seeks to keep his prostitute companion(s), but also find a proper primary wife. Of Li Yu's *chuanqi* adaptations of his *huaben* stories, *Huang qiu feng* most clearly demonstrates Li Yu's attempt to sanitize the material of his *huaben* story for consumption by a wider audience, including women and children. We will look at some of the changes Li Yu made to "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" to make the material appropriate for wider consumption.

Throughout this dissertation I have been arguing that Li Yu carefully fashioned his *huaben* fiction and *chuanqi* drama to target different sectors of the market, and that the comparison of his original *huaben* stories with his *chuanqi* adaptations is the best way to show that. Each of these two genres, of course, came with an established set of expectations that color Li Yu's use of them. I have already noted that in Li Yu's treatise on dramatic practice he specifically states that, because the audience for plays includes women, children, and the uneducated, an effort must be made to make dramatic texts comprehensible and appropriate for these viewers. But as will be made even clearer through the analysis below, there's more to the generic differences between *huaben* and *chuanqi* than the breadth of their audiences. Vernacular fiction was a more private practice than drama, both in how it was consumed (individual prefaces mention the idea that it can be read to illiterates but this does not seem to actually have been common) and how it was published (authors were far more inclined to keep their writing of fiction

private, through the use of pseudonyms and keeping mum about their being an author of fiction in public), so it is entirely within the realm of expectation that vernacular fiction would be a vehicle for the subversion of orthodox values. Drama, on the other hand, and dramatic performance in particular, had long been the subject of government prohibitions and regulation, and as such was more squarely contained within mainstream hegemonic cultural norms, especially when it came to public performance.

In a competitive literary market, Li Yu employed an array of strategies to increase his market share as much as possible. He attempted to market his *huaben* to a “restricted field of production.” That is to say, he tried to market them as widely as possible, but to an audience willing to think of themselves as his peers. His *huaben* fiction takes greater pains to create and capitalize on communality between readers and the Author/genius he creates in the text. That is to say that, in purchasing Li Yu’s fiction, readers were buying access to his genius, with an understanding that the value of this commodity would be protected from the vulgarization of mass public consumption. With his *chuanqi* drama, Li Yu still insists on commodifying his originality, but with only the shadow of his personalized narrator, the connection between the Author/genius version of himself he creates in the text and his *zhiji* is far less intimate, and he aspires instead to the mass consumption afforded by professional performance. *Huang qiu feng* stands as our best example of Li Yu’s aspirations for his *chuanqi*, because, as he recounts in his the combined biography of his two favorite actresses discussed in chapter three, in only a few months it traveled to stages three-thousand miles away (see below).

Li Yu’s differential deployment of genre to maximize his market share can be related to some of the aspects Pierre Bourdieu outlines in his “Relations Between the

Field of Restricted Production and the Field of Large-Scale Production.” For instance, Bourdieu says:

The field of large-scale production, whose submission to external demand is characterized by the subordinate position of cultural producers in relation to the controllers of production and diffusion of media, principally obeys the imperatives of competition for conquest of the market. The structure of its socially neutralized product is the result of the economic and social conditions of its production. *Middle-brow art*, in its ideal-typical form, is aimed at a public frequently referred to as ‘average’. Even when it is more specifically aimed at a determinate category of non-producers, it may none the less eventually reach a socially heterogeneous public. (Bourdieu 125)

First, it must be admitted that the “large-scale production” Bourdieu is referring to is on a much larger scale than anything Li Yu’s *chuanqi* reached. I think the excerpt still remains incredibly relevant, however, because “large-scale” and “restricted” are relative concepts. The restricted field to which Li Yu offered his *huaben* was not only restricted to producers, but to anyone with the means and inclination to consider himself (purposefully gendered) Li Yu’s *zhiji*. The field of large-scale production to which Li Yu offered his *chuanqi* dramas made him one of the most popular playwrights of his time, but was doubtless still relatively small-scale when compared with the degree of cultural saturation achieved since the modern period with newer media technologies such as radio or television.

As for how the excerpt from Bourdieu resonates with Li Yu’s authorial strategies, the main thing to be stressed is how the passage rings true with regard to Li Yu’s marketing of his *chuanqi* plays from a “subordinate position” relative to his marketing of his *huaben* stories. Li Yu subordinates his authorial persona in his *chuanqi* in order to create a “socially neutralized” product. Whereas, with his *huaben* short fiction, in

targeting a very specific field of his peers, not only does he not bear the burden of neutralizing the material, but its value, in fact, depends on it being able to offer genius that only this restricted field of *zhiji* are qualified to appreciate.

This chapter will begin with a look at how Li Yu described a very early instance of the circulation of *Huang qiu feng* just months after completing the play. As mentioned above, one of the foci of the chapter will be an examination of the ways that Li Yu deployed two different genres, *huaben* and *chuanqi*, to target, on the one hand, an exclusive group of readers eager to consider themselves peers of genius, and on the other hand, a wider, stratified audience, a “socially heterogeneous public.” The nuts and bolts of Li Yu’s efforts to target these audiences reveal themselves through a comparison of his genre translations from one genre to the other. *Chuanqi*, offered to a socially heterogeneous public, requires a “socially neutralized” product. A comparison of the original *huaben* story to its *chuanqi* adaptation reveals what Li Yu deemed more universally acceptable, and what he singled out as likely to be inappropriately consumed by audiences containing members lacking the education and culture of the more restricted audience he wrote his *huaben* stories for. More specifically, the comparison shows that sexual innuendo and potty humor are perfectly appropriate for public consumption, but challenges to hegemonic gender norms are not.

This last consideration leads to the second foci of this chapter: the performative gender inversions off which the plot of both the story and play spin. In both “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qiu feng*, the hero takes on a feminine role, while the women take on masculine roles. Lü Zaisheng’s femininity is related to a valorization of spontaneous feeling and authenticity. Brought into the context of the literary market and

the circulation of texts, the authenticity of Lü Zaisheng provides a counterbalance to forgery and the inauthentic. The masculinized women of the story breach the containment of texts enclosed within a restricted field of circulation, and pose a general threat to authenticity. My comparison of *Huang qiu feng* with the original *huaben* story demonstrates not only Li Yu's deployment of genre to reach different audiences, but will further reveal a gendered expression of his anxiety over the value of originality in the face of unregulated circulation and forgery.

### **Qiao Fusheng and *Huang qiu feng***

We were introduced to Qiao Fusheng and the collective biography Li Yu wrote on her and her fellow actress Wang Zilai. in chapter three. The biography begins by telling us that these two girls, in fact, did not have proper names during their lifetimes and were simply referred to by their place of origin and the diminutive *mei* 妹 (little sister). Qiao, being from Jin 晉 (Shanxi), was called, “Jinmei” 晉妹, and Wang, from Lanzhou 蘭州 was called “Lanmei” 蘭州 (Li, “Liweng yijia yan wenji” 95). The biography continues by rhetorically posing the question of how they came to be named Fusheng and Zilai. Li Yu writes, “Having no [real] names at the time, then how is it that they came to be called ‘Fusheng’ and ‘Zilai’?” 即日無名, 則何以有“復生”, “再來”之號? (Li, “Liweng yijia yan wenji” 95). “Fusheng” 复生 means “return to life,” and “Zilai” 再来 means “come back.” Their posthumous names reflect Li Yu's inability to accept the early deaths of these two beloved concubines who had formed the core of his small acting troupe.

Li Yu may have genuinely intended the biography as a consolation to mitigate his sorrow over the fact that the women otherwise would have had no lasting legacy. However, the biography of the actress-concubines is one of the only sources documenting details of Li Yu's dramatic troupe, and more broadly, one of a few that documents the lives of those in the acting profession at the time. As such, the narrative related in their biography has stood to represent not only the short-lived Fusheng and Zailai, but also Li Yu's dramatic practice, privately-owned drama troupes, and the lives of those sold into acting. As we will see below, Li Yu praised the girls for their performance of his own work. Their lives, as he recorded them, are presented as living representations of his work through their representations of his dramas for the entertainment of his literary friends and patrons.

The "Collective Biography" also contains the most accurate information for dating the completion and early performance of *Huang qiu feng*, the *chuanqi* adaptation central to this chapter. Not long after Li Yu was given Qiao Fusheng in 1666, she accompanied him to a professionally staged rendition of *Huang qiu feng* that Li Yu says took place only several months after he had completed the play. Li Yu's representation of himself watching his concubine watching an early performance of his own play is multi-layered. In it he illustrates Qiao Fusheng's superlative memorization skills and her aptitude as an actress because of her seemingly inherent ability to comprehend and appreciate his play. He describes how Qiao, an uneducated 13-year-old, watched *Huang qiu feng* from behind a screen (this was a common private performance practice, designed to prevent female spectators from becoming part of the spectacle of the dramatic performance for the male audience). Li Yu reports that he himself had a hard time

following the performance, but that when he tested Qiao the following day, he found out that despite the fact that she was a northerner and only spoke the local dialect, she was able to recall the play in minute detail, and could speak of not just its plot, but also the meaning of the arias as well.

Li Yu's writing of this scene is an example of the complexity and depth of his literary self-fashioning. It is a prism of projections of Li Yu's literary ego or his authorial persona. He personally included the biography in his collected works, *Yijia yan* 一家言, whose title, which can be translated as *An Author's Words*, already focuses on issues of authorship and originality.<sup>1</sup> The "Collective Biography" is both a record of and a projection of Li Yu's authorial persona. In it he accords himself the near divine authority of the Author in re-representing a recollection of a representation of a *chuanqi* play of his own creation by his concubine learning to perform the same play.

By projecting his literary creations, the progeny of his literary persona, as widely as he could in this way, Li Yu asserted his authority as Author. He did this within the context of the gap in authority within the field of cultural production of his day, which was marked by unprecedentedly unrestricted circulation and reproduction, and which prompted Li Yu to turn to restricted production in the case of his *huaben* stories.

According to Bourdieu,

As the field of restricted production gains in autonomy, producers tend, as we have seen, to think of themselves as intellectuals or artists by divine right, as 'creators', that is as *auctors* 'claiming authority by virtue of their charisma' and attempting to impose an *auctoritas* that recognizes no other principle of legitimation than itself. (Bourdieu 124)

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<sup>1</sup> The first collection of his works entitled *Yijia yan* appeared in 1670. It was followed, by a second one containing different material in 1673, and by one that combined both in 1678 (Wang Yiqi 2-3).

Li Yu insisted on the authority of his genius and the value that genius lent his writing. In writing a biography of Qiao Fusheng and Wang Zilai, Li Yu draws on his right as creator to construct an everlasting literary identity for his two concubine-actresses.

Aside from literally writing Qiao Fusheng and Wang Zilai into existence, the biography also gives us our earliest record of a performance of *Huang qiu feng*:

On this particular day, with two or three *zhiji* [intimate friends], carrying along a wine jug, we hired professional actors to perform my newly composed play entitled *Huang qiu feng*. It was only several months since I had finished drafting it; I don't know how it managed to be transmitted so widely as to travel more than three thousand *li* [approximately one thousand miles]. Two concubines watched from behind a screen. I watched with deaf ears and blind eyes: not only could it be said that I could not make out the arias, I couldn't even discern the spoken dialogue. For the words of a man of Wu-Yue [Southeast China] to be able to be understood by the ears of a woman of Qin-Jin [Northwest China], isn't that the same as when the state of Yuehang sent tribute to the Middle Kingdoms? How could that be? How could she have come up with an interpreter to stand by her side, and interpret every word? So the next day I asked her, "Did you enjoy last night's performance?" She replied, "I did enjoy it." I said, "You have to understand it to enjoy it, did you understand it?" She replied, "I understood." I didn't believe it. She claimed that she truly was able to understand it. As a test, I asked her to repeat the plot point by point for me. From beginning to end she recounted every detail without missing a single point. Moreover, she recounted the story with interest, not even looking tired when she reached the end; I began to think this was truly exceptional. Then I further inquired whether being able to understand the text of the arias, had she been able to distinguish the fine points [of the singing]? She replied, "There is the sound, and then there the [acted out] appearance [that goes with it], neither can be neglected. Appearance passes before the eyes and then disappears, but the echoes of the music remain in the ears. Why this is, I can't explain." I thought this even more exceptional, but while I believed what she said first [about her being able to understand and enjoy the play], her later words still gave me pause. As for the minute workings of music, how could just anyone be able to distinguish them? I thought she must have just been trying to make herself sound good and that's all.

是日有二三知己攜樽相過,命伶工奏予所撰新詞,名“鳳求鳳”.此詞脫稿未數月,不知何以浪傳,遂至三千里外也.二姬垂帘竊視,予以聾瞽目之,非謂曲詞莫解,亦且賓白難辨.以吳越男子之言,投秦晉婦人之耳,何異越裳之入中國?焉得譯者在旁,逐字為之翻譯乎!次日詰之曰:“昨夜之觀樂乎?”對曰:“樂.”予謂:“能解,斯可樂,解乎?”對曰:“解.”予莫之信.謂果能解,試以劇中情事一一為我道之.渠即自顛至末,詳述一過,纖毫不遺,且若有味乎言之,詞終而無倦色,予始異焉.再詢詞義則能明矣,曲中之味,亦能咀嚼否耶?對曰:“有是音,有是容,二者不可偏廢.容過目即逝矣,曲之餘響,至今猶在耳中,是何以故,莫能自解.”予更異之,然信其初言,而終疑其後說,謂聲音道微,豈淺人能辨?必飾詞耳!(Li, “Liweng yijia yan wenji” 95-96)

This passage is the best information (indeed some of the only information available, excluding the commentary that accompanied the printed edition of the play) we have about the reception and circulation of *Huang qiu feng*.

### Sanitized for the Stage

With increased printing, circulation and popularity of both fiction and drama, the Qing government of the seventeenth century made attempts, as inadequate as they may have been to the task, to curtail obscenity in literary texts. As we have seen, *Huang qiu feng* was completed and in performance by the sixth year of the Kangxi reign (1666). In the second year of that reign period, the government sent down a proclamation prohibiting the printing of obscene material by private publishers. The proclamation is part of a complex of strategies deployed by the Qing government during the Kangxi reign to centralize control. Li Yu was himself a private publisher, and while it is hard to say if this proclamation, issued in between the publication of “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang,” and that of *Huang qiu feng*, had any influence over the extent to which Li Yu sought to sanitize the dramatic version of the story, but it is useful as a marker of the increasing

anxiety over uncontrolled circulation of potentially corrupting literature. The proclamation reads:

We, in the Second Year of the Kangxi Reign [1663], after just consideration, have ratified that from hereafter, if there shall be privately printed gossip or obscene texts that go against proper social morals, if the branches and departments of the metropolitan government, or the governors and governors-general in the provinces, are able to find out the truth of these books and those persons implicated in their creation, they should be indicted by name and handed over to the appropriate ministry for judgment.

康熙二年議准，嗣後如有私刻瑣語淫詞，有乖風化者，內而科道，外而督撫，訪實何書系何人編造，指名題參，交與該部議罪。(qtd. in Shan, “Li Yu nianpu” 44)

Of course, efforts to prohibit obscene books only made them more popular, and it would be mere speculation to try and characterize in any real detail Li Yu’s response to increasing but futile attempts to control the content of literary culture, but it is important to note the release of the proclamation, as it underlines the tightening grip of the Qing government on literary culture. Much like the case of the attempts to control internet piracy today, looking at the efforts of the Qing government to control the circulation of obscene literature is actually far more likely to demonstrate how widespread and beyond control the circulation of the targeted materials actually was than they are to reveal effective surveillance or control.

That Li Yu sanitized his *chuanqi* adaptations in order to render them more acceptable to wider audiences is indeed a central argument of this dissertation. In the process of adapting “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang,” Li Yu excises aspects of Lü Zaisheng’s character deemed questionable. Warming up to tell his story, the narrator of “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” draws us in with a discussion of how an extraordinarily good-looking man

such as Lü Zaisheng came to be. The narrator first reasons that a product depends on its ingredients. He explains,

Lü Chunyang [Zaisheng's father] from a young age was originally an absolutely handsome catamite, who married an extremely beautiful "thin horse" [girl raised to be sold as a concubine]. The common saying puts it nicely:

Poor quality copper makes poor quality cash; firing good  
clay makes good ceramics.  
If you want a quality mule you have to start with a good  
horse and a good donkey.

Ordinarily, all that is needed is a beautiful wife to produce good sons and daughters; imagine, then how in his [Zaisheng's] case, with both the upper and lower parts of the press being so fine, as for the pattern printed by them, how could it not be the most well-proportioned?"

呂春陽少年時節原是個絕標致的龍陽，娶的那位妻子又是個極美麗的瘦馬，俗語四句道得好：低銅鑄低錢，好土燒好瓦；要生上相驢，先揀好驢馬。往常人家只消一個標致妻子，就生得好兒好女出來，何況他這一底一蓋，都是絕精的印子，印出來的花樣，豈有不齊整的？(Li, "Guafu" 369)

There are several notable points in this excerpt, some of which will become more relevant later on in our discussion. As I will detail later on, *Huang qiu feng's* entertainment is based on gender inversion. Lü Zaisheng performs the feminine, while the women in the play perform masculine roles. The details of Lü Zaisheng's parentage are presumably related to why this is the case with him. His father, a handsome catamite, joined with a woman trained for the concubine market to make ("imprint") the most (effeminately) attractive man imaginable. The metaphor likening the production of children to that of texts is certainly interesting in the context of concerns about the circulation of texts in a competitive literary market. But here my focus is on the fact that this is an example of material excised from the story's *chuanqi* adaptation. In *Huangqiu*

*feng*, we are never given any details of Zaisheng's parentage, other than the fact that they orphaned him at a young age. In his opening self-introduction in scene two he explains,

Unfortunately my parents died in the prime of their lives, I have yet to achieve scholarly success, and my marriage arrangements have been difficult to settle. But that is not what concerns me now.

不幸早背椿萱，終鮮花萼；功名未偶，姻事難諧。這都不在話下 (Li, "Huang qiu feng 426).

Zaisheng mentions his parents, but only in such a way as to justify the fact that they don't figure into the story. In the *huaben* version the narrator underlines the importance of his rather risqué parentage to the characterization of Zaisheng, but in the *chuanqi* adaptation he's not allowed such a colorful but problematic lineage.

In both *Huang qiu feng* and "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" Zaisheng performs the feminine, but the subversion is taken further in "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" than it is in its *chuanqi* adaptation. In both stories Zaisheng's prostitute companions undertake the task of finding him a suitable wife because they're afraid if this is left up to a match maker, she'll find someone that they will find unsuitable. In "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" this is how the prostitutes describe Zaisheng to the widow mentioned in the story's title, the Widow Qiao, whom they want to marry her daughter to Zaisheng:

The three "sisters" said, "Presently there is a handsome scholar whose looks are unmatched. If you took off his head scarf [something worn only by males], and put him next to your daughter, I'm afraid you wouldn't be able to tell which was male and which was female. Would you take him as son-in-law?"

這三個姊妹道：“如今現有一個才子，容貌是當今第一，若還去了方巾，與小姐立在一處，只怕辨不出那個是男，那個是女，不知肯許他麼？” (Li, "Guafu" 379)

For them, the fact that Zaisheng is virtually identical in his feminine good lucks to Widow Qiao's daughter should be enough to win over Widow Qiao. Both "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" and *Huang qiu feng* derive a lot of their entertainment value from the inversion of the orthodox performance of gender roles. In both instances, this cannot help but work to deconstruct normative gender roles, by highlighting their performative and constructed nature, but, as the example above shows, the *huaben* story takes the inversion further and has more subversive implications. But we will turn our full attention to the details of the gender inversions in both the *huaben* and *chuanqi* below. Our immediate focus remains on Li Yu's "neutralizing" of the original *huaben* story material.

One fundamental point of difference between the short story and play versions is the fact that in the process of adaptation from story to play, Li Yu reduces the number of prostitutes scheming to get Zaisheng to marry the kind of women they want to share him with from the three we have just met to only one in *Huang qiu feng*. Certainly, taking one prostitute as wife is less *yin* 淫 (excessive, licentious) than three. Interestingly enough, Li Yu did not seem to feel the need to reduce the number of main wives Zaisheng ends up with (two: Widow Qiao's daughter and Cao Wanshu), despite the fact that this was technically both illegal and a breach of propriety. This is probably because of ample dramatic precedents in *chuanqi* drama, starting as early as *The Lute*.

In "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" the three courtesans work in unison and their characters are never fully differentiated (as perhaps can be seen in the fact that they are presented as speaking in unison in the quote above), but the opening narration of them as individual characters creates a parallel between Lü Zaisheng and Li Yu as Author/Creator. In the *huaben* story each of the three courtesans gets her name and identity from a *ci*

poem Lü Zaisheng has written to describe her. Lü Zaisheng as author, writing the identity of his concubines, will be shown to have even more relevance later on in the chapter when we look at issues of authenticity, forgery, circulation, and containment, but for now let's briefly look at how Zaisheng as author creates the identities of the three women The narrator says,

One was called Shen Liyun; one was called Zhu Yanxue; and one was called Xu Xianchou. These three prostitutes weren't originally called by these names, it was only when they first had relations with Lü Zaisheng, he composed some poems to give to them and these poems contained fresh and original names that the prostitutes liked so much that they were taken and used as their names.

一個叫做沈留雲，一個叫做朱艷雪，一個叫做許仙儔。這三個妓女原不叫做這三個名字，只因呂哉生相與之初，曾做几首詩詞贈他，詩詞之中有這幾個新鮮字眼，那妓女重他不過，就取來做了名字。(Li, "Guafu" 377)

The personal names the prostitutes got in this fashion can be translated, in the same order that they are listed above, as "Holder Back of Clouds," "Voluptuous Snow," and "Fairy Companion." In adapting "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" into *chuanqi* drama, Li Yu sought to "neutralize" material that might present a challenge to orthodoxy, so he reduces the number of Zaisheng's courtesan companions from three to one.

As I have already mentioned in previous chapters, a primary generic distinction between *huaben* and *chuanqi* is that *chuanqi* are expected to have long, relatively complex plotlines, something that typically involves a primary plotline centered on an obstruction in the relationship between the male and female leads, and a secondary plotline in which the *sheng* gets to prove himself in the masculine world of civil service examinations and service to the state. As such, the conversion of Li Yu's *huaben* ficiton

into *chuanqi* drama involves many more additions than it does subtractions. In chapter 2, I stressed the addition of the military storyline in the adaptation process that produced *Naihe tian* and showed that Li Yu also felt the need to add in his dramatic version what might be characterized as *su*, or vulgar scenes, most of them involving sexual or bodily humor. Li Yu also added a good deal of bawdy humor in the process of producing *Huang qiu feng*. These two projects seem oppositional—adding bawdy humor while at the same time sanitizing for the stage, but, in fact, as will be demonstrated below, the humor added to the play, while bawdy, does nothing to challenge hegemonic gender roles, but what Li Yu excised from the story, though not overtly lewd, subverts normative gender roles in a manner that reveals their always already performative nature.

In a sequence that Li Yu adds to *Huang qiu feng*, three prostitutes (not to be confused with the three in the story that get reduced to one in the play) get together for a discussion on how to improve business. The scene is made more significant by the fact that it is only the third scene of the play, one usually reserved for introducing the heroine. In the case of *Huang qiu feng*, however, gender roles are reversed. Lü Zaisheng is sequestered in his home like an unmarried young woman, but most of the women of the play are professionalized and of independent means. Scene three, “Partners in Planning” 伙謀, underlines the professionalization of women in *Huang qiu feng* for comedic affect. The scene is opened by the *fujing* costumed as a low-class prostitute. She’s soon joined by two friends in the business, a fat prostitute (*chou*) and an old prostitute (*jing*). The three puzzle over why business has been down lately, and strategize a plan to improve their reputations with men. They decide that Lü Zaisheng is so good-looking, and so

desirable, that if they can prove that they have a relationship with him, they can become the top prostitutes in all of Nanjing.

The scene in which they put their plan into action, scene 6, “Reverse Prostitution” (Daopiao 倒嫖) is opened by Lü Zaisheng’s gardener (*chou*). He explains that on account of his master’s incredibly good looks, women come from all around to court him. His master gets enough letters from girls of good families alone that he does not even have time to read them all. The gardener tells the audience that he’s decided to take advantage of Zaisheng’s absence to entertain women in his stead. He feels secure in doing this, he says, because on the one hand women who know Zaisheng personally will be aware either that he has gone out or has sequestered himself and is not meeting guests, and not bother coming to his home to see him, and on the other the only women who are likely to still come by would not know what Zaisheng really looks like, he can simply dress in Zaisheng’s clothes and entertain them in his stead. This is how things are when two of the prostitutes from scene 3, Qian Erniang and Zhao Yijie, arrive at Zaisheng’s residence.

Of course, Qian Erniang and Zhao Yijie are more concerned with garnering proof of an encounter as a mark of quality to guarantee their services than they are with the encounter itself, so when they discover that “Zaisheng” is not Zaisheng, they are still not entirely put off. Covering for himself, Zaisheng’s gardener explains that he’s a stand-in, waiting on women on Zaisheng’s behalf, in order to select the best for him, since Zaisheng is so overwhelmed with beautiful courtiers. The two women have no problem sleeping with the stand-in, so long as this can count as an encounter with Zaisheng. The comedy continues as they ask the gardener to write his name on a fan for them. Being illiterate, but also being fairly certain that the women are too, the servant makes a great

show of writing on the fan. Then, just to make sure, the prostitutes have him stamp the fan with Zaisheng's seal, not once, but several times. With the prostitutes pleased with what they have gotten out of the bargain, there's nothing left to do but for all three of them to retire to the bedroom (offstage). But before that another piece of vulgarity is worked in. The gardener says, "I still have one more important thing to bring up, we'll get in bed as soon as it's settled, and this will save a quarrel when the time comes.

Ladies...!" 有一句要緊的話, 明白了上牀, 省的臨時爭論. 你二位呵! (Li, "Huang qiu feng" 440). Then he breaks into song, "*Who gets to go first and who goes last we must fairly decide.*" 誰先誰后從公講 (Li, "Huang qiu feng" 440). To this Qian Erniang responds by singing, "*Those surnamed Qian/Money [besides her surname, qian also means money] have always been given priority.*" 姓錢的從來居上 (Li, "Huang qiu feng" 440). To which Zhao Yiniang, the old prostitute, retorts, "*By order of seniority it should be Zhao Yiniang.*" 序齒還該趙一娘 (Li, "Huang qiu feng" 440). The scene is entitled "Reverse Prostitution" because in the scene we see prostitutes going to offer themselves to the man rather than the man going to the brothel to hire their services.

The scenes above are a demonstration of how *Huang qiu feng's* humor can be bawdy without going so far as to pose a challenge to orthodoxy. Unlike Zaisheng or Zaisheng's courtesan companion, the gardener and these low-class prostitutes have none of the respectability or reputation that would make the scene questionable. As such, the scene is more slapstick than salacious. Li Yu's *chuanqi* were very much oriented toward performance. This is certainly evidenced in his avoidance of material that would get him

in trouble<sup>2</sup> and by the insertion of vulgar comedy to make his *chuanqi* adaptations more appealing to a broad audience that includes, perhaps, people who are pretty vulgar themselves.

### Reversed Gender Roles

The title *Huang qiu feng* 凰求鳳 (The Female Phoenix Chases the Male Phoenix) already alludes to the gender inversion at the center of both the *chuanqi* play and the original story. By performing reversed gender roles, both works deconstruct and demystify gender as a naturalized system of categorization. The hero of both “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qiu feng* plays the feminine role. His feminization is characterized by his sequestration within the home, his passive role with respect to women, and his abundance of *qing* 情 (feeling/passion). The masculinization of the women is characterized by their professionalization, financial independence, and active sexual pursuit of Lü Zaisheng.

Let’s begin by taking a closer look at Lü Zaisheng’s feminine qualities. As I already quoted above, the one quality that Lü’s courtesan companions tout him for, when trying to find a proper wife for him to betroth, is the fact that without a head scarf he would be indistinguishable from a woman. He is also feminized in how he is the passive one who is approached by active women, and how he is the sexual object rather than the

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<sup>2</sup> There is no indication that this was ever an issue with *Huang qiu feng*, but the one thing that Li Yu publicly swore off doing in his plays, and which he was clearly very scared of being accused of doing, was writing *roman á clef* plays critical of living persons. Hanan, *Invention* 15, is convinced that it was the suspicion that one of his plays was doing precisely that once got him run out of town. On the general issue of *roman á clef* readings in both fiction and drama in later imperial China, see Rolston 78-84 (on Li Yu in particular, see 78-79).

women who chase him. This is clear in Zaisheng's gardener's description of the state of affairs in his self-introduction that opens scene six:

Laughable, laughable, truly laughable!  
The affairs of the world nowadays are all turned upside down.  
A man opens his doors to greet women who come to see him,  
A young scholar has become fodder to prostitutes.

I am none other than Lü Zaisheng's gardener. Master Lü has always closed his gates to visitors, that is in order to get out of the clutches of women. Who'd have thought that decent women are possible to stay out of the clutches of, but those sisters of the pleasure quarters are karmic enemies who can't be gotten rid of. The more he avoids them, the more they come. It has ended up so that before his gate is as crowded as a busy city market, This has produced this absolutely new and strange phenomenon that I'll tell you about. It is called "reverse prostitution." Because he is so unusually good-looking, if any of the sisters of the brothels get to sleep with him for one night, the business outside their gate really picks up. They all say that with his looks and talent, if she's not the best-looking woman, how could he pay any attention to her? So, all of the prostitutes are plotting to get this kind of reputation, each of them coming up with letters of recommendation, and had their palanquins carry them to his door to come and sleep with him. They even go so far as to give him money, and treat him to meals.

好笑好笑真好笑，近来世事偏宜倒。男子開門接婦人，頭巾變做煙花料。自家非別，呂相公的園丁是也。他一向閉關謝客，原是要躲避婦人。誰想良家的女子便躲得脫，那些娼家姊妹是遣不去的冤魂。你越躲，他越來，倒弄得其門如市，又做下個新奇不過的例子，叫做倒嫖。只因他的相貌生得標致異常，院子裡的姊妹與他宿過一晚，門前的生意就熱鬧起來。都說呂哉生那樣面貌，那樣才情，若不是第一等婦人，他如何看得上眼？所以那些妓女要圖這個名聲，各人討了薦書，把轎子抬上門來送與他睡；還要倒貼錢財，反賠東道。(Li, "Huang qiu feng"437)

In *Huang qui feng*, once Lü Zaisheng is married to Cao Wanshu and Xu Xianchou (the latter being the one prostitute companion kept over from the *huaben* story), his sequestration is not simply self-imposed. Not only do these two women keep him under stiflingly watchful surveillance, they also have the gates locked to prevent his escape and

ensure *his* chastity (typically, only female chastity was enforced). We can get a better idea of how this feels to him from Zaisheng's complaints in scene 18:

I can't do anything about those two women and their constantly monitoring and guarding me, making it impossible for me to get away. Even this garden gate has locks upon locks, and seals upon seals. It's like they are guarding a criminal, and they only fear that I'll break out of jail.

當不得這兩個婦人, 終日行監坐守, 使我脫身不得. 連這所花園的門戶, 都被他重重上鎖, 處處加封, 竟像防守罪人一般, 只怕我要逃監越獄.  
(Li, "Huang qiu feng" 477)

He is clearly under the control of these two women. On the other hand, the female characters of "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" and *Huangqiu feng* play masculine roles in that they are independent women of means, who are, in the majority of cases, also highly professionalized. Two comic scenes of professional women have already been outlined above: *Huang qiu feng*'s third and sixth scenes revolve around the flagging business of low-class prostitutes and their attempts to gain a share of the market. Zaisheng's courtesan companion is much more highly professionalized than in the *huaben* story. She has an established reputation based not so much on her sexual desirability as her literary talent. Right before Xianchou meets her future sister-in-marriage, Qiao Wanshu, in scene 8, "Encountering Virtue," Wanshu's mother reminds Wanshu what a fan her daughter is of Xianchou's poetry, saying: "Daughter, you've been praising and reciting her poems day in and day out, but today you will get to personally meet her." 我兒, 你終日贊誦他的詩篇, 如今親見其人了(Li, "Huang qiu feng" 444). Xianchou is further professionalized in this scene by Wanshu and her mother's use of a term of respect for courtesans to refer to Xianchou. Upon first encountering Xianchou, Mrs. Cao says, "Would you be Proofreader Xu? We've long envied your immortal talents, and have

suffered unbearable longing [to meet you].” 這就是許校書麼？久慕仙才，不勝渴想 (Li, “Huang qiu feng” 444).<sup>3</sup> Conventionally, in *caizi-jiaren* romances, it would be the hero who would have such a literary reputation. In this case, Zaisheng’s literary reputation goes unmentioned, but Xianchou is a talented woman of letters.

In “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” Zaisheng’s three prostitute companions are all women of independent means, in charge of their own destinies. The story’s narrator stresses their ability to act: “These three women all have more than a thousand cash ready savings, and they are their own masters, without a madam, so they have the means to do and make things happen” 他三個身邊都有千金積蓄，又是自己做主，沒有鴇母的，所以敢作敢為 (Li, “Guafu” 379). The masculinization of female characters in “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qiu feng* goes beyond representations of courtesans and prostitutes. Even the women from good families are financially self-sufficient and make their own life choices, whereas Zaisheng defers to Xianchou in the matter of choosing a main wife. In *Huang qiu feng*, in the course of her first introduction, Qiao Menglan’s father transfers oversight of her future and of family affairs over to Menglan. That is to say she gains her independence right at the very point of her introduction to us. Her father informs her,

From this day forward, I am entrusting all aspects of household management to your care. This will allow me to live a life of leisure in retirement. Even as for your betrothal, I will let you select your husband. After the match is settled, you can call me out to finalize things.

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<sup>3</sup> Note that *jiaoshu* 校書, literally “proofreader,” is a term of respect used to refer to courtesans. Here it signifies not only her imminence in her profession, but her literary talent as well.

我從今日起，把家務事情都交付與你，讓我做個局外閑人，連你自家的婚姻，也憑你自家選擇。只到議成之後，請我出來替你完成好事便了。  
(Li, “Huang qiu feng” 440)

Whether through literary reputation, professionalization, or financial independence, the women of “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qiu feng* perform roles of masculine independence.

At the pinnacle of the professionalization and masculinization of women in “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qiu feng* is the devious and money-grubbing Yin Siniang. Yin Siniang, through her own greed and disregard for others, becomes the primary obstacle separating Zaisheng and his companions from their happily-ever-after ending. Siniang is a masseuse/healer by trade. Not only is she a professional woman, she’s also incredibly mobile. Of all the women of the play-story pair, Siniang is the most masculine, precisely because of her freedom of movement. When she deduces that the match between Qiao Menglan and Lü Zaisheng remains a possibility, even after he’s been married to Cao Wanshu and made a sworn commitment to either one or three prostitutes (depending on the version), she offers her services to unite the two of them, but through deception and by making things difficult prolongs that outcome, in order to extract as much money as possible from all parties involved (and remember, each woman has access to her own funds). Yin Siniang is deceptive, competitive, and money-driven to the extreme. These negative attributes, here associated with masculinity, become the anti-values of the play-story pair, bringing to the surface Li Yu’s concerns over competition in the literary market, which produced professionalization and forgery. In figure 3 we see Miss Qiao’s original matchmaker, He Erma, about to beat Yin Siniang at the end of *Huang qiu feng* for fraudulently stealing her business. He Erma is portrayed positively as

an honest business woman, while the conniving Yin Siniang receives her just deserts. As we will see in the following chapter, Li Yu defends entrepreneurialism, but vilifies making a profit by dishonest means. This is related to his authorial concerns to defend his own commercialism, but simultaneously condemn those who profit off others' work.

The professionalization of women in *Huang qiu feng* and “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” signifies the wider professionalization of cultural productions previously protected from the vulgarization of commerce. With the rapid expansion of commercialization, and most relevant to our discussion, the professionalization and commercialization of literary culture, producers of literary products, such as Li Yu, sought out ways to grab a share of the market. Here the reversed gender roles signify the corruption of authenticity of literary commodities by the efforts of forgers and pirates.

### **Lü Zaisheng as *Qingzhong*: Reclaiming Authenticity to Counter Forgery**

What are the ramifications of Lü Zaisheng's performance of a feminized gender role? It might be tempting to explain the gender-reversals at the center of both the story and the play as a plot device meant to engender originality and comedy, two staples of Li Yu's literary oeuvre, but contextualized within the competitive literary market of the early Qing, and given the relationship of the co-opted feminine subject position to authenticity, the specific dynamics of Zaisheng's gender-role reversal have implications beyond the boundaries of the texts themselves. Maram Epstein's work on *qing* 情 as a current in Ming-Qing fiction and drama has informed my understanding of the gender reversals in this play-story pair. She asserts that the feminine subject position was co-

opted as an alternative to the restrictive proscribed path to male success and social mobility, the examination system and government service. She argues,

By the late imperial period, the rewards for participating in the examination system were widely perceived as incommensurate with the sacrifices demanded. Even if a man were talented and lucky enough to win a degree, the breakdown of the official bureaucracy stymied his chances for meaningful service to the state. Born of these frustrations was a nostalgic yearning for a simpler, less regulated, and less commodified basis for self-identity to take the place of the official route. Because of the nominally apolitical status accorded women in the premodern period, they were easily transformed into icons of cultural purity. Indeed, during the late Ming, the feminine began to be idealized as an authentic subject position untainted by the frustrations, sacrifices, and moral compromises demanded by participating in the bureaucratic system. In fiction, particularly in the scholar-beauty genre, sentimental characterizations of beautiful and talented women became the norm. The increasing social mobility of the late Ming caused many literati to become concerned with the problem of distinguishing authenticity from mimicry and pretense; many anxieties about literati status and identity were resolved in fiction by having women enact roles traditionally reserved for their male counterparts. One gets the sense reading through Ming-Qing vernacular fiction that women, by their apolitical status, could redeem the moral authority of orthodox values and the imperial bureaucracy, both of which had become debased through their conflation with men's career ambitions. (Epstein 88)

The commodification of culture and the limited success offered by the examination system fed a search in literary culture for authentic identities freed from both the vulgarity of commerce and the hypocrisy of the traditional path to male success. Within Li Yu's fiction and drama, authenticity is primarily expressed through an incessant insistence on originality. Within "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" and its companion *chuanqi*, authenticity and inauthenticity are gendered, and a retreat to the feminine provides protection against the corruption and forgery associated with professionalization and competition. We have already seen how Zaisheng performs the feminine, and the women

of the play and story perform professionalized masculine roles. Let's take a closer look at how the feminine is related to the abundance of *qing* in both the story and play.

Because Lü Zaisheng, after being newly married to Cao Wanshu and Xu Xianchou, would still have the emotion to think of Qiao Menglan, she calls him a “*qingzhong*” 情種, a seed of *qing*. She says, “Ah!, In that case, he's a *qingzhong*, how could I turn my back on him!” 竟是個情種了, 如何負得他! (Li, “Huang qiu feng” 484). Qiao Wanshu's labeling Zaisheng as a *qingzhong* places him in the company of some of the greatest characters of early modern Chinese literature, namely Du Liniang and Jia Baoyu. In *Honglou meng*'s second chapter, Jia Yucun corrects Leng Zixing in his assumption that Baoyu's more effeminate tendencies will result in his becoming a “lady-killer.” This sends Yucun into a long discussion of Baoyu's future possibilities based on his unique essence. His description of the possible fates of someone such as Baoyu will lend some clarity to our discussion of *qingzhong*. Yucun expounds,

Such human recipients, whether they be male or female, since they are already amply endowed with the benign humor before the evil humor is injected, are incapable of becoming either greatly good or greatly bad; but place them in the company of ten thousand others and you will find that they are superior to all the rest in sharpness and intelligence and inferior to all the rest in perversity, wrongheadedness and eccentricity. Born into a rich or noble household they are likely to become great lovers or the occasion of great love in others; in a poor but well-educated household they will become literary rebels or eccentric aesthetes; even if they are born in the lowest stratum of society they are likely to become great actors or famous hetaerae. Under no circumstances will you find them in servile or menial positions, content to be at the beck and call of mediocrities. (Hawkes 78-79)

使男女偶秉此氣而生者,在上則不能成仁人君子,下亦不能為大凶大惡。置之於萬萬人中,其聰俊靈秀之氣,則在萬萬人之上,其乖僻邪謬不近人情之態,又在萬萬人之下。若生於公侯富貴之家,則為情痴情種,若生於

詩書清貧之族,則為逸士高人,縱再偶生於薄祚寒門,斷不能為走卒健仆,甘遭庸人驅制駕馭,必為奇優名倡. (Cao 19)

In *Honglou meng*, *qingzhong* is embodied by Qin Zhong 秦鍾, whose name puns on *qingzhong*, signaling this embodiment. Maram Epstein explains,

The meaning of *qing* in *Honglou meng* cannot be considered separately from Baoyu's deep connection to Qin Keqing and her brother Qin Zhong. Several traditional commentators noted the obvious pun in their names to *qing*, and one glossed Qin Zhong's name as the "seed of *qing*" (*qingzhong* 情種). (Epstein 163)

To use Jia Yucun's words, as a *qingzhong*, Zaisheng is likely to become a great lover, or the occasion of great love in others, to become a literary rebel or eccentric aesthete, and all of these things indeed seem as if they apply to him or could, if his circumstances changed.

What is the larger import of the concentration of *qing* in our male protagonist in "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" and *Huang qiu feng*? What were the authorial intentions behind this choice? Speaking of the authors of "the two most beloved examples of authentic behavior in fiction and drama," Du Liniang and Jia Baoyu, Epstein asserts,

Most other authors did not create so radical an opposition between authenticity and orthodoxy; in fact, in most writers' hands, unconventional behavior, emblematic of authenticity, became a necessary stage in reclaiming the conventional orthodox values of filiality and loyalty as authentic rather than rote. The appropriation of a highly sentimentalized femininity was one of these unconventional expressions of authenticity. The imaginings of a reinvigorated literati culture based on the subjective and dynamic qualities of *qing* animate much of late Ming and Qing fiction and drama; yet, even in fiction the tensions between the desire for the benefits of community-centered orthodoxy and individualistic authenticity never fully resolved. (Epstein 8)

This raises several questions relative to our discussion of "Guafu sheji zhui xinlang" and *Huang qiu feng*. Does Li Yu present authenticity as "a necessary stage in reclaiming

orthodox values,” or, does Li Yu stand apart, like Tang Xianzu and Cao Xueqin, valorizing authenticity in opposition to orthodoxy? According to some of my broader claims, we might expect that Li Yu’s *huaben* fiction would present authenticity as a counter to orthodoxy, while his *chuanqi* drama would present authenticity as a “necessary stage in reclaiming conventional values.” It will be the object of the next section to explore the merits of this possibility, which would substantiate the claim that in adapting the story for the stage, Li Yu realigns his story material to fit conventional orthodox values. One avenue left unexplored in this discussion of *qing* and authenticity is to what extent these currents in Ming and Qing fiction and drama relate back to the realities of the literary market in early-modern China. The printing boom of the Ming saw a huge uptick in the publication of fiction and drama, and as we have seen with Li Yu’s own experience, forgery and piracy were real and constant threats. Could the valorization of authenticity relate not only to producers’ position vis-à-vis orthodox values, but more pointedly, also be a stage for asserting ownership of over intellectual property? It is certainly no accident of history that the valorization of *qing* in literary culture paralleled an unprecedented printing boom. I would suggest that this current in literary culture relates to the economics of that culture. That is to say, I believe that the values espoused in relation to authenticity/feeling/*qing*, whether orthodox or heterodox, are a by-product of latent anxieties in the minds of producers over threats of piracy and forgery. If Li Yu is valorizing *qing* in “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qiu feng* as an implicit expression of his authorial anxieties, then it stands to reason that the expression would be the same across his genre adaptations. If, on the other hand, valorization of *qing* is either

a stage for reclaiming orthodox values, or an alternative to orthodox values, then we would expect a large variance between Li Yu's *huaben* fiction and *chuanqi* drama.

Let us continue with another quote from Epstein:

Strong currents of influence connect the textual worlds of philosophical theory and literary practice during the late Ming. The philosophical attempts to reclaim *qing* as a vital and essentially moral quality provided an ethical defense for the publication of fictional texts that from other perspectives could be seen as morally suspect. Whereas fictional narratives with an orthodox intent, such as *Jing Ping Mei* and *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, treat sexual yearnings as inherently threatening, the fiction and drama influenced by the cult of *qing* depict sexual desire as a positive instinct that can lead toward moral regeneration.

In order to redefine *qing* as redemptive, however, writers of fiction practiced a slight of hand whereby they reinscribed the liberating power of *qing* within a stable Confucian frame. In these dramas and novels, the protagonists' most deeply felt desires, which initially challenge hegemonic moral codes, are eventually made to express the highest Confucian values of filiality, loyalty, and chastity; true *qing* resolves tensions between authentic self-expression and orthopraxy. In many instances, an uneasy ideological balance results from narrative attempts to celebrate individual expression, particularly in the area of sensual enjoyment, while claiming for it the moral purity historically reserved for orthodox self-restraint. (Epstein 87)

To what extent is Li Yu's valorization of *qing* within this play-story pair an "ethical defense for the publication of fictional texts that from other perspectives could be seen as morally suspect"? As we have seen in the introduction, Li Yu was distained by some staunch Confucian contemporaries for his association with acting and performance. Also unusual for the time, Li Yu unabashedly published vernacular fiction under the thinnest of pseudonymous cover, going even further than that, in fact, to suggest that it was only his genius that could possibly have authored his work. This is to say that, indeed, he might have wanted some ethical defense for the publication of his fictional texts. What his adaptations of his *huaben* stories as *chuanqi* plays reveals, however, is that alongside

any effort to legitimize vernacular fiction, the *Huang qiu feng huaben-chuanqi* pair reveal authorial anxieties over the uncontrolled circulation of texts, and the difficulty of assigning and re-assigning value to originality in the face of forgery and piracy. The following section will examine the circulation of texts within exclusive circles and forgery in “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qiu feng*. After outlining how the exclusive circulation of texts, and authentic originality, are jeopardized by forgery, we will go on to draw conclusions that attempt to make sense of a gendering of both authenticity and inauthenticity.

### **Breached Containment: The Circulation of Private Texts in “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qiu feng***

In scene 14 of *Huang qiu feng*, Xu Xianchou has found out that after believing a lie that Xianchou was trying to find him an ugly wife, Zaisheng has gone out on his own and arranged to marry Qiao Menglan. Because Menglan is originally unwilling for their marriage to be conditional upon her agreeing to accept Xianchou as his concubine, Xianchou knows that his agreement to marry Menglan means that he’ll be abandoning her. In order to prevent his marriage to Qiao Menglan, Xianchou arranges for a sedan chair to come and pick him up. Because he’s arranged to go to Qiao’s home as a live-in son-in-law, she will be also be sending a sedan chair over to bring him to her house. (Note again the reversal of gender roles. Conventionally a bride would be brought to the groom’s house in a sedan chair on their wedding day.) When the sedan chair arrives, thinking it’s been sent from Qiao’s house, Zaisheng eagerly gets in. With Zaisheng gone, Xianchou has more latitude to undermine the wedding plans. Shortly thereafter, the sedan

chair from Qiao's house arrives. Xianchou forges a note to Menglan, extricating Zaisheng from his obligations to her, and authenticates the note by writing it on Qiao Menglan's personal poetry stationary. Then, to bring shame upon Qiao Menglan, Xianchou forges a poster in her name—the content of which is an embarrassing appeal for the return of her lost love. Xianchou explains her strategy:

There are still two things I can do. First, I'll forge Lü's name and write a letter of separation. I'll wait for the sedan chair to arrive, and can send it over so as to break off his relations with her for good. I'm only afraid that she won't believe the letter, so I'm going to take piece of poetry paper that came from her and tear off the top part and stick the bottom part on my letter. When she sees traces of her own pen, she naturally won't suspect the authenticity of the letter. Secondly, I'm going to forge that jealous shrew's name, and write up several dozens of posters, saying because of a slip up she lost her fiancé. I'll have them hung everywhere to bring shame throughout the country. With these two things done, there'll be no worry that that jealous shrew will literally die of rage!

我還有兩計在此：第一計，假冒呂郎的名字，寫下一封休書，等他轎子一到，寄轉去離絕他；又怕他不肯見信，竟把那幅詩箋裁下前半幅，把後半幅粘在書上。他見了自家的筆跡，自然信殺無疑了。第二計，假冒那妒婦的名字，寫下幾十張招子，說他自不小心，失卻新郎一個，往各處粘貼起來，把他無恥的名頭，揚於通國。用了此二計，不怕這個妒婦不活活的氣死！（Li, “Huang qiu feng” 465）

Xu Xianchou's publication of the poster with the forged plea from Qiao Menglan opens the door for Yin Siniang's intervention. This is the text of the poster, as read out loud by locals who hope a reward will be involved:

The author of this poster is Qiao Menglan. Recently, because of a slip up, I lost my fiancé, whose name is Lü Zaisheng. On top of his head he was wearing a turban with streamers, on his torso he was wearing a butterfly-colored silk padded tunic, on his feet he was wearing red shoes and he was carrying no valuables on his person. Suddenly, on the evening of our marriage, in disgust at my ugliness, and displeased with my jealousy, on the spur of the moment he took flight, and vanished. If any gentleman anywhere can detain and send him back to me, I will give a reward of

three hundred taels. To those who can offer information on his whereabouts, I will give fifty taels. He is extremely important to me, and in truth it is hard to wait for him. I widely pray that you, friends and relations, will have compassion for me. I will most certainly keep my promises [of rewards]. Please tear off this poster as validation.

立招子婦喬夢蘭, 今因自不小心, 失去新郎一個, 名喚呂哉生. 頭頂有帶飄巾, 身穿蝶色紗襖, 腳踏紅鞋, 身邊並無財物. 忽於贅親之夜, 憎嫌丑貌, 兼怪妒心, 忽地逃亡, 不知下落. 倘有四方君子收留送出者, 願出謝禮銀三百兩; 知風報信者, 願出謝禮銀五十兩. 此系急切要用之人, 實難久待. 廣祈親友, 速賜哀憐. 所許並不食言, 請揭招子為證. (Li, “Huang qiu feng” 480-1)

The mention of three-hundred taels is enough for Yin Siniang to want to become involved. And, as luck would have it, she’s just had a visit from Lü Zaisheng’s servant. Lü is a client of hers, and his servant stopped by to say that Zaisheng could use a massage after recently suffering through wedded bliss with his two watchful wives. On account of the visit paid to her by Zaisheng’s servant, Siniang knows exactly where Zaisheng has recently moved to, and can provide that information to Miss Qiao to claim the reward promised on the poster.

On the one hand, we have the theft of Zaisheng’s name and of his hand in Xianchou’s forgery of a letter of separation from him to Qiao Menglan. Xianchou made use of the way poetry’s circulation was/should be intimate and closed to authenticate the forged letter. In the case of the poster, on the other hand, we have a document meant for wide and unrestricted consumption by anyone who is literate and sees it posted, that comes into the hands of an illiterate woman who uses it for her own personal gain.

As I have already argued, my research suggests that Li Yu had two primary strategies for success in a competitive literary market. Firstly, he attempted to circulate his *huaben* fiction within an exclusive and restricted field, commodifying his genius, and

offering it up to readers who gained cultural capital through communion with such genius and through the supposed exclusivity of its circulation. Within this transaction between author and reader is an implicit promise by the author to protect his work and his genius from the vulgarity of commerce and popular consumption. Within this segment of the literary economy, forgery and piracy devalued a work not only by taking some of the market share for it, but even more so by breaching the containment of the work within an exclusive circle of restricted circulation that produced its value. We see the anxiety over such breaches in “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qui feng* when Yin Siniang, illiterate, capitalizes on the contents of the poster by surreptitiously listening in on its reading. Exclusive circulation is also breached when Xianchou forges the private correspondence between Zaisheng and Menglan. Using her poetry as a mark of authenticity, Xianchou circulates the false letter of separation, passing it off as a document circulating exclusively between author and reader. It becomes difficult not to see Li Yu’s authorial concerns and anxieties in these textual representations of forgery and breaches of exclusive circulation.

In “Guafu sheji zhui xinlang” and *Huang qiu feng*, gender roles are reversed. The containment of the feminized hero is not only an occasion for comedy, but is also a site of exploration of the imperative to contain and control the circulation of texts to protect their market value. Chastity, or exclusivity between partners, is a ready-made trope for the expression of authorial concerns related to popularization and piracy.

CHAPTER V

Displaced Identities: Reclaiming Authenticity through Circulation in “Sheng wo lou” and *Qiao tuanyuan*

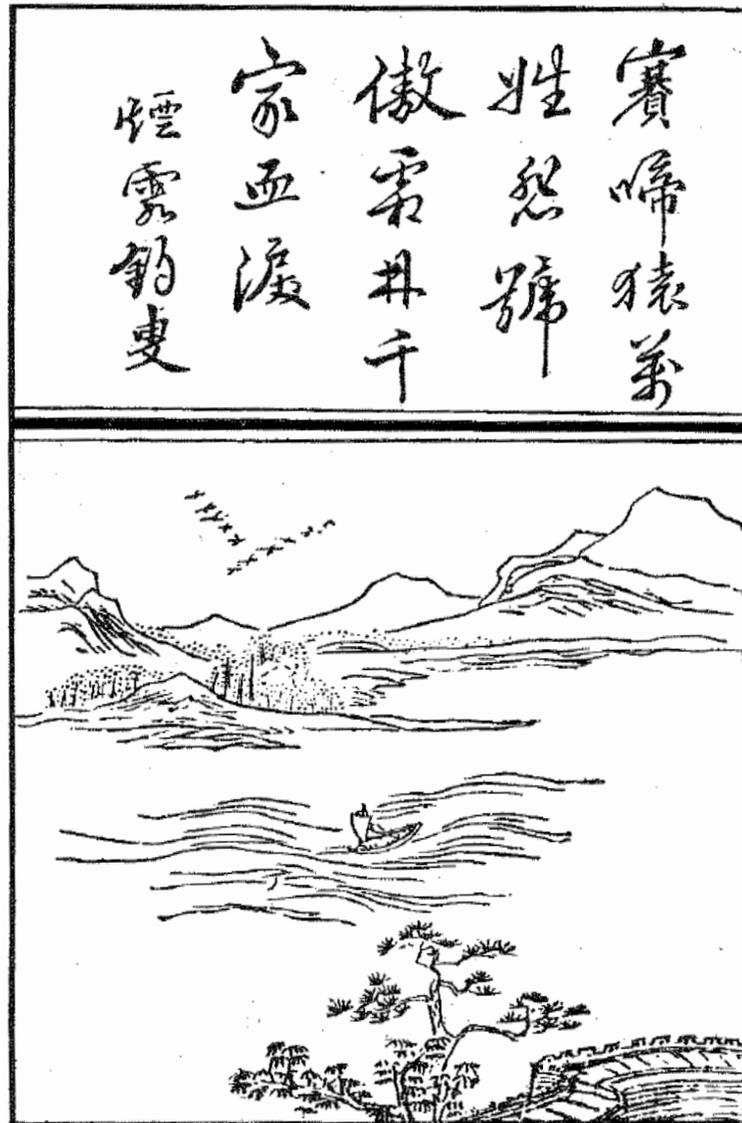


Figure 4: The River as a Stage of Identity Transformation. After Li, “Liweng chuanqi shizhong” liv.

The late Ming and Early Qing witnessed the unprecedented commercialization and commodification of culture. Li Yu stands as a perfect example of commercialization and professionalization within the production of literary culture in seventeenth-century China. Both increased commerce and the instability of the Ming-Qing transition make travel and displacement persistent tropes in literature of the late Ming and early Qing. Commerce, beyond contaminating art with greed and gradual popularization, depends on a transience that is equally threatening. The book trade depended on well-established trade routes for its rapid expansion during this period. Li Yu likewise made his living on the road, bringing with him his actresses, paper designs, recent publications, and entertaining hosts with the performance of his persona.

The *huaben* story and adaptation of it that are the focus of this chapter are both concerned with travel, identity, authenticity, and circulation, and how they relate to each other. In chapter three above, in our examination of “Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing” and its dramatic adaptation, *Bimuyu*, we saw how imitation posed a threat to authentic feeling. The villain, a wealthy landowner, who emptily appreciates beauty and theater for their cultural capital, nearly succeeds in purchasing the singularly talented actress, Liu Miaogu. The rich man’s attempt to enhance his reputation by purchasing the accoutrements of the literati class are thwarted by Miaogu, whose depth and sincerity of feeling for Tan Chuyu causes her to enact the most authentic expression of her emotions onstage, before attempting suicide by leaping off the stage into the river. In both “Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing” and *Bimuyu*, imitation endangers authenticity. I likened the villain Qian Wanguan’s attempt to purchase Miaogu, whom he could not appreciate in the least, to a plaint by Li Yu against forgery, on the one hand, and wealthy, but uncultured patrons on

the other. The pattern in the pair of works to be examined in this chapter is quite different. In them, imitation and circulation are a means to authenticity, suggesting that the market will determine the ultimate value of a literary work.

“Sheng wo lou” 生我樓 (Tower of My Birth) comes from Li Yu’s *Twelve Towers* (*Shier lou* 十二樓), whose preface is dated to 1658. It was Li Yu’s last collection of *huaben* stories. *Qiao tuanyuan* 巧團圓 (Miraculous Reunion), published in 1668, is the last of Li Yu’s extant plays to be published. Its publication preceded the opening of Li Yu’s Jiezi yuan 芥子園 (Mustard Seed Garden) bookshop by only one year. All the extant editions of Li Yu’s books published within his lifetime were published by the Yisheng tang 翼聖堂 publishing house, and not by his own Jiezi yuan. Stationery papers (*jianjian* 箋簡) with Li Yu’s designs bearing the Jiezi yuan name were printed within his lifetime (Shan, “Li Yu nianpu” 68).

Speaking of what the commentary published along with the text of *Qiao tuanyuan* tells us, Patrick Hanan points out, “a note to Scene 6 says that the day Li Yu finished the draft he gave these songs to Miss Qiao to sing from behind a screen” (Hanan, *Invention* 19). The full note, which is actually a marginal note that appears at the beginning of the scene and is really about the four arias in the scene, reads,

Such unique lyrics. These four arias are full of subtle sadness but also haunting sparkle. Performed on stage they will of course be marvelous, but they are even more suited to chamber performance without costume or acting. The day that Liweng completed the manuscript [for this scene], he taught it to Xue’er. I heard her sing this suite [of four arias] from behind a curtain. It was like listening to “Juntian” [heavenly music]—it left me feeling enchanted and transported for several days.

奇字！四曲淒婉溜亮，奏之场上固妙，用之清讴更宜。笠翁脫稿之日即授雪兒，予隔簾聽度此曲，如聞鈞天，心醉神移者屢日。（Li, “Qiao tuan yuan” 335）<sup>1</sup>

Qiao Fusheng’s death in 1672 spelled the dissolution of Li Yu’s small acting troupe, Li Yu being so aggrieved that he could not stand to hear music or singing for six months after her death (Chang and Chang 87). The following year his second beloved actress-concubine, Wang Zilai, also died. The deaths of the two concubines that formed the core of his acting troupe might partially explain why *Qiao tuanyuan* was Li Yu’s final *chuanqi*, but we can also see through his *huaben-chuanqi* adaptation that Li Yu had reached a level of technical precision in his implementation of *chuanqi*, and perhaps had reached the limits of his creative expression within the genre. Like *Naihe tian*, *Qiao tuanyuan*’s use of *chuanqi* as a genre is explicitly self-referential. By convention, *chuanqi* plots all move toward their culmination in a *tuanyuan* ending—a grand reunion resolving numerous plot conflicts and celebrating conjugal, familial, and social harmony. In *Qiao tuanyuan*, occasioning the grand reunion is the primary thrust of the plot, which reunites the hero, through a series of coincidences, with his parents and true identity.

*Shi’er lou* stands apart structurally from Li Yu’s other story collections in that as opposed to most *huaben* stories before it, each of its stories are divided into from one to six chapters or *hui* (回). It is also Li Yu’s most “personal” short story collection. This is how Patrick Hanan summarizes and evaluates it:

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<sup>1</sup> The commentators of *Qiao tuanyuan* are listed as Shuixiang Jijiu 睡響祭酒, a pseudonym for the poet Du Jun 杜濬 (1611-1687), an intimate friend and collaborator of Li Yu’s, and Mochou Diaoke 莫愁釣客, one of Li Yu’s own pseudonyms. Because the note refers to Liweng (Li Yu) in the third person, it would seem most logical that Du Jun authored the comment, but it is also possible that Li Yu is here referring to himself in the third person.

The third collection, *Famous Words to Awaken the World*, with the alternative and better-known title *Twelve Structures*, carries a preface by Du Jun dated autumn 1658. Its twelve stories, each divided into as many as six chapters, make up a more unified and personal collection than *Silent Operas*. They contain some of Li Yu's own previously published poems; they expound some of his favorite views as we find them in *Casual Expressions* [*Xianqing ouji*]; and they conclude with a story that amounts to a personal statement of his ideas about the relationship of the artist-intellectual to his society. If the stories contain less bawdy comedy, they also demonstrate a more conscious artistic control. (Hanan, *Invention* 23)

In his *Causality and Containment in Seventeenth Century Chinese Fiction*, Keith McMahon outlines how gendered regimes of containment become internalized as structures in seventeenth-century fiction. In her *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction*, Maram Epstein connects a valorization of female purity in early-modern Chinese fiction with the rise in consumer culture and subsequent anxiety produced around the value of authenticity. I would like to add to both of these discussions by suggesting that the regimes of bodily containment and the valorization of passion/feeling/*qing* as a mark of authenticity that are strong currents in literature of the Ming-Qing transition are both products of the printing boom and increased circulation and popularization of literary culture.

### **The Male and Female Leads**

Yao Ji, the male lead of *Qiao tuanyuan*, is defined by travel. As a trope in literature, travel works as a device that allows for a slippage in the identity of the character, usually the hero. Conventionally in *chuanqi* drama, and typical of *caizi-jiaren* romances, the hero embarks on a journey, possibly several, to take the examinations,

serve or return from government service, or flee bandit invasion. The slippage in the hero's identity occurs when he travels or is displaced from the family and locality that were so important to his original identity. In the case of "Sheng wo lou" and *Qiao tuanyuan*, the hero, Yao Ji, first loses his true identity, we are told, when he goes out to play as a young boy and is kidnapped. As the plot unfolds, Yao Ji regains his identity and the place of his birth. That is to say, "Sheng wo lou" and *Qiao tuanyuan* "jumpstart" the traditional sequence in which the hero, leaving home, loses his reputation and identity and then through the course of the plot's development essays to regain his home and conjugal unity by having the story start when the hero has already lost his old identity but is only vaguely aware of some of what he is missing through the recurrent dreams he has of the room he was born and lived in as a child. As can be expected, Li Yu tells the story with great irony and humor and lots of inversions. Tina Lu manages to show a lot of this in her brief summary of the *huaben* story,

The joke is fairly obvious: both normal family relations and usual literary conventions are inverted here. A family is put together backward: a son adopts a father and finds a wife for him; a mother chooses a daughter-in-law before she has a son. In another inversion, a family reunion is described precisely as if it were a romance. (T. Lu, "Fictional" 320)

We will spend plenty of time with Yao Ji below. Let us now turn to the female lead, his fiancée, Miss Cao.

As noted elsewhere in this thesis, in *chuanqi* drama there are frequently two parallel plotlines—a primary plotline revolving around the fated romance between the hero and heroine, and a secondary plotline in which the hero demonstrates his duty and loyalty to the state through government service. These plotlines typically create two spheres, or more precisely, squares, of containment, reifying normative gender roles and

the subservience of individual desires to the needs of the state and the common good. Typically, the main concern of the primary plotline is the heroine's defense of her chastity, while in the secondary plotline it is the hero's need to defend the borders of the state from bandit invasion or defend the integrity of his identity in the absence of reputation, family, and ancestral home.

The heroine of "Sheng wo lou" and *Qiao tuanyuan*, Yao Ji's fiancée, has to defend her chastity when she is captured by rebels/bandits. In the story version she is a passive figure who figures very minimally in the plot. She has to be rescued by others when her chastity is threatened. That would not do in the dramatic version and Li Yu has to create a character for her and give her more to do. Instead of writing something entirely new, Li Yu cannibalized an episode from one of his own *huaben* stories, *Wusheng xi*'s "Nü Chen Ping ji sheng qi chu." The episode fits very easily into the story, because both the "Female Chen Ping" (Chen Ping being a famous strategist) of the original and Miss Cao of *Qiao tuanyuan* are captured by bandit troops and their honor threatened by a bandit leader.

In "Sheng wo lou," the Caos/Yaos are cloth merchants from whom Yao Ji has learned his trade. In *Qiao tuanyuan*, Yao Ji's own father was a cloth merchant, and the Caos trade in pharmaceuticals. In scene 13, Miss Cao plots to keep her chastity to Yao Ji in the face of her imminent capture, making use of a trick borrowed (by Li Yu, not her) from "Female Chen Ping":

I have often seen my father preparing pharmaceuticals. When it comes to croton beans, he never dared to personally touch them, but would always get someone else to handle them. It's because the nature of croton beans is extremely intense and harsh. There's no need to say that if eaten they'll kill a person with diarrhea, if the skin gets so much as touched by one,

they'll immediately cause swelling bad enough to scare you to death. But as easily as the swelling is produced, as easily does it dissipate, and they don't do any real injury. The best thing would be to take several beans and hide them on my person. I'll wait until the bandits are about to arrive, and then smear some of the oil from beans on my face, changing myself into swollen-up woman, so that when they see me they will be afraid, and naturally won't dare try to get close to me. This ruse will protect me for several days, and then we'll see. I'll take the jade ruler, which was given to me by Yao Ji as a pledge in response to mine, and carry it on me. If I'm not able to keep my chastity intact, I'll clasp the jade ruler and use it to commit suicide. At least then he will not have given me it in vain.

我常見爹爹製藥，到了巴豆一味，就不敢親自動手，定要央人代制。只因巴豆的性子極狠極烈，莫說吃下肚去要瀉死人，只要皮膚粘著了，也就登時臃腫起來，令人嚇死；卻又易腫易消，不傷性命。我不免多取幾粒，藏在身邊，待賊兵將到之時，就把它塗在臉上，變做個臃腫婦人，使他見了害怕，自然不敢近身。且保全幾日，再做道理。那玉尺一根，是姚郎回贈之物，也要帶在身邊，萬一保全不得，就把他殉身而死，也不枉贈我一場。(Li, "Qiao tuanyuan" 255)

In *Qiao tuanyuan*, both the heroine's chastity and the hero's identity are contested territories, threatened by bandit invasion. The heroine protects her chastity through her ingenuity. She uses her knowledge of pharmaceuticals, a trade which her father has taken up to avoid government service during a dangerous time, to give herself the appearance of having a contagious illness.

But Miss Cao and the female Chen Ping of "Nü Chen Ping" are very different kinds of women, and grafting this element from the original story to the play required a lot of tweaking to make it appropriate for the varied and stratified public audience that Li Yu imagined would consume his *chuanqi*. In the original story, the heroine ingeniously allows herself to be captured, pretends to be a willing companion to the bandit chieftain, but has plans in place to protect her chastity, without putting her life at risk. In order to avoid intercourse with the bandit chief, she applies croton-oil beans to her genitals, not her face, to give them the appearance of being infected. Although he uses pretty coy

language, Li Yu, in this *huaben* story, does not hesitate to go for broke. This is how the story describes the bandit chieftain's encounter with the trap that the female Chen Ping has set for him:

His eyes sparkled with delight and he rubbed his hands together in anticipation. He could hardly wait for nightfall to indulge his desires.

But that afternoon Secunda suddenly collapsed on her bed and began moaning prettily while complaining of severe pain. The chieftain asked her where it hurt.

"I don't know why," she said, "but I have swelling down there the size of a bowl, and I feel hot and cold all over. It's *unbearable!*"

"Where does it hurt exactly?"

She raised a slender, jadelike finger and pointed beneath her skirt.

"But that's my gate of life!" exclaimed the chieftain in alarm.

"How could you get an infection down there?" He pulled up her skirt, tore open her silk drawers, and looked at her gate of life. This is what he saw:

Jade-white flesh that has risen high,  
Held in a purple glow.  
Deep cleft swollen to a shallow slit,  
With no gate left to enter.  
Two parts forming a single whole,  
With a crack that is hard to open.  
Like a bun left steaming three whole nights,  
Or a dried mussel soaked for ten days.

The chieftain was fearfully upset. He rubbed it for a while, then rushed off to a doctor for some ointment. But strangely enough, the more ointment he applied, the more it swelled up. Little did he realize that this was another of Secunda's ruses. (Hanan, "Female Chen Ping" 88-89)

賊頭聽見，眉歡眼笑，摩拳擦掌，巴不得到晚，好追歡取樂。只見二娘到午後，忽然睡倒在床，嬌啼婉轉，口裡不住叫痛。賊頭問她哪裡不自在，二娘道：“不知什麼緣故，下身生起一個毒來，腫得碗一般大，渾身發寒發熱，好不耐煩。”賊頭道：“生在那裡？二娘舉起纖纖玉指，指著裙帶之下。賊頭大驚道：“這是我的命門，怎麼生得毒起？”就將她羅裙揭起，繡褲扯開，把命門一看，只見：玉膚高聳，紫暈微含。深痕漲作淺痕，無門可入；兩片合成一片，有縫難開。好像蒸過三宿的饅頭，又似浸過十朝的淡菜。賊頭見了，好不心疼。替她揉了一會，連忙去捉醫生，討藥來敷，誰想越敷越腫。哪裡曉得這又是二娘的一計？(Li, "Nü Chen Ping" 100-101)

It is immediately evident why this would be difficult to stage without adaptation. In this *huaben* story, Li Yu is purposely and subversively playing around with the supposedly clear borderline between what is permissible for a woman to do to preserve her chastity and what is not. Apart from practical considerations concerning representing swollen genitals on stage, Li Yu both clearly has no intention of pushing this particular boundary in his play, and has taken care to construct Miss Cao in such a way that it is inconceivable to even imagine her rubbing croton bean oil on her genitals. In scene 15, “Maintaining Chastity,” Li Yu has the bandit indulge himself only as far as, despite her apparent illness, licking the heroine’s hand. In what is one of the play’s most comic episodes, the bandit’s tongue swells, slurring his speech, and he is immediately stricken with violent fits of diarrhea that send him rushing on and off stage, much to Miss Cao’s satisfaction. The bandit is a fit tool for such comedy, Miss Cao is not. In any case, by employing performance in the service of bodily containment, Miss Cao is able to use imitation to protect the integrity of her personal identity, represented by her chastity.

Both Yu Weimin and Wilt Idema and his co-editors, among others, have pointed out that Li Yu stands apart from playwrights of the time by not turning his attention to representations of the trauma of the Ming-Qing transition (Idema, Li, and Widmer 25 and 381; Yu 49-50). Of all of Li Yu’s fiction and drama, the play-story pair “Sheng wo lou” and *Qiao tuanyuan* stand out for their depictions of dynastic transition. Here Wilt Idema explains how Li Yu’s work, in not aiming for the catharsis produced by a representation of historical trauma, may be a large part of the reason that it was understudied until well into the twentieth century.

The valorization of serious purpose and popular nature also resulted in the long neglect and even condemnation of arguably the finest playwright of

the 1650s and 1660s, Li Yu, whose well-made but risqué comedies were seen to lack all gravitas and to pander to the reactionary tastes of the new powerholders. It did not help Li Liweng [Li Yu]'s reputation that he toured throughout China with his own all-female troupe, performing at the yamens of the highest provincial officials. (Idema, "Drama" 381)

"Sheng wo lou" and *Qiao tuanyuan* stand as exceptions to the larger characterization of Li Yu's work as "lacking gravitas." As I have mentioned at various points, *chuanqi* plays typically contain action-packed battle scenes to punctuate the more slowly-paced domestic drama. So while it is quite common for Li Yu's plays to depict bandit invasion, *Qiao tuanyuan* stands alone in depicting events out of recent history. This is all the more remarkable in that the *huaben* story that it is adapted from did not do that. Although the brief prologue of that story does deal with the rebellion led by Li Zicheng 李自成 (1606-1645) that led to the fall of Beijing and ushered in the conquest of China by the Qing, the main story, the one adapted as *Qiao tuanyuan*, is set in the chaotic years of the fall of the Southern Song. Li Yu himself had to flee his home and head to the mountains to avoid the chaos and devastation of the disorder set off by Li Zicheng's rebellion (Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 13; Li, "Liweng yijia yan wenji" 94). Quick to voice his authorial concerns, in one of only a few poems he writes documenting the impact of the Ming-Qing transition on his own life, Li Yu complains that his writing was lost in the chaos (*shishu feng sangluan* 詩書逢喪亂; Shan, "Li Yu nianpu" 12).

Li Yu fled the rebellion during which Li Zicheng captured the capital in 1644, losing the produce of his labors, his writing. In his most productive years in the 1650s and '60s, Li Yu integrated his itinerancy into his authorial persona. As I mentioned in the introduction, Li Yu was quick to complain of his impoverished circumstances that left him no other recourse than to travel the country on "begging bowl" tours, entertaining

men of means to support his large household and earn the capital to publish and market his literary products.<sup>2</sup> Li Yu's frequently dilates on the necessity of travel in his life in letters, infusing mercantilism and itinerancy into his authorial persona. Here's one example of how travel, the writing trade, and necessity are tied together as refrains in Li Yu's personal communications,

I have not even a half *mu* of land on which to support a family of several dozen. In the writing trade you depend on one person and one person only. Wherever that person goes, his family looks to him for support. Now that I have come north, my family looks to me in the north to feed them. Besides, I am a small-minded person who is ashamed to ask for favors. I have been roaming the whole country for almost twenty years and have never presumed to outstay my welcome by impoverishing any of my hosts. (Hanan, *Invention* 4)

漁無半畝之田，而有數十口之家。硯田筆來，止靠一人，一人祖東則東向以待，一人祖西則西向以待。今來至北則皆北面待哺矣。矧又賤性硜硜，恥為干謁，浪游天下幾二十年，未嘗敢儘一人只歡。(Li, *Liweng yijia yan wenji*" 204)

Unsurprisingly, travel and displacement are familiar sights of identity transformation for characters within Li Yu's fiction and drama.

### **In Defense of Commerce**

The *chuanqi* adaptation of "Sheng wo lou" presents a defense of the merchant class in times of unrest. Within the Confucian social hierarchy, merchants were the lowest of the four occupations, above only prostitutes, entertainers, and slaves, because

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<sup>2</sup> For detailed surveys of Li Yu's travels, see Shan Jinheng, "Li Yu nianpu"; Patrick Hanan's first chapter in *The Invention of Li Yu*, "Making a Living"; and C. S. Chang and Shelley Hsueh-lun Chang's chapter, "Sociopolitical Change and Individual Response: Li Yü's Life and Work in the age of Transition," in *Crisis and Transformation in Seventeenth-Century China*.

instead of contributing something useful to society, they serve as middle-men, sponging off both producers and consumers. By the seventeenth-century, Jiangnan had a thriving and well-established material culture, and the lines between wealthy merchants and literati began to blur. Merchants were increasingly able to educate their children to succeed in the exams, and degrees could be bought, along with the status and prestige that comes with them. Unsurprisingly, this near wholesale commodification of culture produced anxiety in elite society, eager to cordon off “true” elite culture from that which could be bought. Li Yu positions himself deftly within this schema, marketing his work, but at the same time making a show of reserving some of it for those discerning enough to fully appreciate it, his *zhiji*. Authenticity of feeling, and “true” artistic appreciation are recurrent themes in both Li Yu’s fiction and drama.

In chapter three we saw that in “Tan Chuyu xili chuanqing” and *Bimuyu*, the villain is a wealthy man who made his fortune through usury and other means of exploiting the less fortunate. He is vilified not only for his bullying, but for the fact that he has purchased a title, and has every intention of purchasing Miaogu as his twelfth concubine even though he cannot appreciate even a hundredth of her literary and musical talents. A fair portion of my analysis of Li Yu’s *huaben* to *chuanqi* adaptations have shown the degree to which his professional, commercial, and authorial concerns are ubiquitously woven throughout his work. As a classically educated lower civil service examination degree-holder in cosmopolitan Jiangnan, Li Yu was most certainly a member of the cultural elite. His publishing activities, his emphasis on performance, and the theatricality of his persona inspired the disdain of some amongst his contemporaries, who accused him of pandering. Li Yu walked a fine line, trying to authenticate his

product through the singularity of his genius, marketing some genres to an audience who, he assured them, had the exclusive ability to appreciate his creative genius, whilst simultaneously attempting to offer his work in other genres to anyone and everyone who had the money to buy them.

Li Yu openly identified with merchants, his own father being a pharmaceuticals merchant. Add to this the heavily commercialized culture of his hometown Lanxi, and his lack of success getting an official career (Q. Liu 158), and *Qiao tuanyuan*'s representation of, and identification with the merchant class, seems entirely natural. In 1668, the year of *Qiao tuanyuan*'s publication, Li Yu went on the road with his small acting troupe for the first time. It would be no stretch of the imagination to think that *Qiao tuanyuan* was a part of their repertoire, along with Li Yu's other plays, since as we saw above, he had one of his concubine-actresses sing the arias in one of the scenes to the play as soon as he had finished the manuscript for it. On the 1668 tour, he and his troupe started out from Jinling (Nanjing), traveled upstream on the Yangzi, passing through Wuhu in Anhui and arriving in Yanghu in Jiangxi. They then went south, following the Ganjiang river to Linjiang, and then further south to Qianzhou in Gan county. They passed through Dageng and Nanxiong in Guangdong, finally arriving in Guangzhou. Comparing the tours of Li Yu's family troupe with contemporary trade routes shows that Li Yu closely followed established trade routes on his tours (Q. Liu 157-58). This is highly significant because it suggests that with him commercial concerns could sometimes trump established connections with patrons, and underscores the degree to which Li Yu's literary activities fit under a larger umbrella of cultural commerce.

*Qiao tuanyuan* presents a nuanced view of the merchant class and consumer culture. On the one hand, the main conflicts of the plot are taken up with the pursuit of authenticity, but on the other hand, an explicit dispensation is granted to becoming a merchant in the midst of dynastic collapse. In the play, the hero Yao Ji was orphaned as a young boy. When we first meet Yao Ji in scene 2, “Dream Inquiry,” he explains that his psyche is being haunted by a recurrent dream in which he visits the same dwelling over and over. He says that, in order to uncover the dream’s meaning, he will try to visit the dwelling once again in dream, but this time to get some answers to his questions. He then revisits in dream the dwelling, going upstairs and finding a room with a bed, behind which is a chest filled with the toys he remembers from childhood. Playing with these toys jogs his memory. He’s reminded of the fact that his father was a cotton merchant, and gave him a jade ruler telling him, “If by chance becoming a scholar-official does not come to fruition, you should return to the family business” 萬一讀書不成, 還做本行生意 (Li, “Qiao tuanyuan 324). Considering the value and symbolism of the jade ruler, Yao Ji is surprised not to find it among his childhood belongings in his dream. The old man guiding him in his dream inquiry assures him that the jade ruler does have significance, but that will be in determining his marriage, not his parentage.

Yao Dongshan, a former high official who is living under the alias of Cao Yuyu and has taken up the trade of selling pharmaceuticals, is introduced in the next scene. He has fled his home in Sichuan and come to Hankou to live under an alias in order to avoid being made to return to government service. He has decided to take Yao Ji under his wing as a potential son-in-law. In the following, fourth scene, “Testing Boundaries” (Shixian 試限), Yao Dongshan/Cao Yuyu explains to his protégé that becoming a

merchant in a period of chaos is safe and practical, because itinerancy still allows a merchant to practice his trade. He asks Yao Ji why he spends all of his time at home, without ever leaving. Yao Ji replies, “If I’m not reading, I’m writing essays, I’ve nothing else to do here.” 不是讀書, 就是作文, 此處並無一事 (Li, “Qiao tuanyuan” 329). The older man responds, “This isn’t what needs to be done. In today’s world of chaos and fragmentation, just preserving life and family is difficult, and you’re still reading what books, and still writing what essays? You are just too unpractical and unrealistic!” 好沒正經, 這等亂離之世, 身家性命也難保, 還去讀甚麼書? 作甚麼文? 你也迂闊極了! (Li, “Qiao tuanyuan” 329). After Dongshan convinces him that peace is not in the imminent future, Yao Ji agrees that studying will be of no use. Dongshan further counsels, “In today’s world, there are only three kinds of people worth being. The first is fortuneteller, the second is artisan, and the third is merchant” 當此之時, 只有三等人好作: 第一等是術士, 第二等是匠工, 第三等是商賈 (Li, “Qiao tuan yuan” 329). When Yao Ji asks why this is the case, Dongshan explains,

Living in this time of disorder, when you encounter bandit armies, just to be able to protect your own life is all you can hope for. Whatever land or possessions you have can’t be taken with you. Other types of people, when they have lost all their property, even if they can save their lives they will then starve to death. The “property” of the fortuneteller and the artisan is their skills, which reside in their stomachs [i.e., minds]. Wherever they go they can come up with food [by selling or trading their skills for it], so these two are the first and second highest levels [of the three]. As for merchants, they’re used to trading, they travel on the “rivers and lakes,” and are familiar with details of terrain and local customs. They know where to go to avoid bandit troops, which road to take if they have to become refugees. When things become really dangerous, they are ready to take their wives and children and flee, and even if they only have one or two taels of capital, they can still turn it into a profit to make ends meet. So, while this may be the lowest of the three, anyone can learn to be one, and be one without losing face.

處此亂世, 遇了賊兵, 保得性命就勾了, 一應田產家私都不能攜帶. 別樣人沒了家私, 就保得性命也要餓死, 那術士, 匠工, 把技藝當了家私, 藏在腹中, 隨處可以覓食, 所以算做上中二等. 為商作賈的人, 平日做慣貿易, 走過江湖, 把山川形勢, 人情土俗, 都看在眼裡, 知道某處可以避兵某路可以逃難, 到那危急之際, 就好挈帶妻子前行, 若留得幾兩本錢, 還可以營生度活. 這雖是最下一等, 卻人人可做, 又不失體面. (Li, “Qiaotuan yuan” 330)

After contemplating the relative merits of each occupation, Yao Ji agrees with his future father-in-law Dongshan’s conclusion that becoming a merchant—not being connected to one location for one’s subsistence—is the best recourse during a period of unrest.

Dongshan gives him some startup capital, which he is to use to engage in trade, and then invest the profits he makes from that into buying more goods to trade. Yaodong assures him that if he invests wisely, he ought to be able to make a living whilst still being mobile enough to avoid the bandit invasions.

Yao Ji soon leaves for Songjiang to trade cotton cloth, just like he remembers his father doing. We don’t actually see him transacting any regular business, but we do see him invest in the purchase of a father in Songjiang, and a mother and wife later (in each case, it turns out that, although he did not know it at the time, he has actually purchased his own father, mother, and wife), clearly suggesting that commodification gets pushed to inhumane extremes during periods of political instability. In a chapter on fictional reunions in the literature of the early Qing, Tina Lu focuses the bulk of her discussion of “Sheng wo lou” on Yao Ji’s purchase of his mother and wife at the “human market” set up by the bandits to turn a profit from their pillaging. The bandits in charge of selling all of the women they have captured reason that, if they sell the women as-is, the young and pretty girls will fetch decent sums, but they’ll be left with the old, fat, and ugly women,

who'll be absolutely useless to them. To ensure that they'll be able to sell every woman they've captured, they come up with a plan to put the women into sacks, and sell them by weight as would be done with meat, fish or other produce. This way, people won't be able to avoid the old, fat and ugly women, and they'll make a steady profit off all their captives. As Tina Lu puts it, by selling the women by weight, the women are dehumanized and turned into a "pure form of commodity" (T. Lu, "Fictional" 320). This is how Tina Lu describes this scene (please remember that her focus is on "Sheng wo lou"):

Yao Ji finds himself in surreal circumstances, somehow redolent with significance; surrounded by the bags of women, all faceless, to be measured and purchased only according to their weight, transformed from people into a pure form of commodity. Only after he enters this marketplace does he read a notice: "In this marketplace of people, passersby are not permitted to come in and peek. Anyone who does not buy and leaves empty-handed will be investigated for fraud and will be executed for the crime of smuggling. There will be no lenience. By special directive." In other words, now that he has entered, he is stuck. He cannot leave without buying. Not only must the choice be random—but it must also be made. Yet from this assortment of unidentifiable bags, he is to find in the next few pages first a woman who becomes his mother and then one who becomes his wife. How does that happen? (T. Lu, "Fictional" 320)

We will take up the topic of precisely how Yao Ji was able to discern his true wife and mother from amongst the undifferentiated bags of women offered for sale below, but for the moment let's continue our discussion of *Qiao tuanyuan*'s defense of mercantilism.

In *Qiao tuanyuan*'s scene 28, "No Way Out" (*Yu qiong* 迂窮), Yao Ji momentarily leaves the older woman he bought and that he has taken as his mother (unaware she actually is his mother) and his wife to go find the father he bought and adopted (unaware he actually is his father). He thinks that a scholar he meets will surely know where a former official can be found, but the scholar has no time for him and can

think of nothing but going to take the civil service exam. This provokes Yao Ji to say to himself,

Alas! I am also a holder of the first level examination degree, it is only because I was forced to change my profession to that of merchant that I had to put aside any consideration of winning honor and rank [through taking the civil service examinations].

噯! 我姚克承也是個青年秀士, 只因改業為商, 竟把功名置之度外. (Li, “Qiao tuanyuan” 396)

Li Yu gives his hero, Yao Ji, and himself, a special dispensation to make a living through commercial ventures during the chaos of the dynastic transition. Within late-Ming early-Qing fiction and drama, it is the transiency and mobility of the merchant class, their connection with excessive circulation not always transacted in an honest manner, and particularly their increasing ability to pass themselves off as members of the cultural elite through the purchase of the emblems of elite culture, that renders them suspect to traditional literati. Itinerancy and circulation were cornerstones of Li Yu’s trade. Making a living depended on his ability to circulate his fiction and drama through publication and performance to consumers and patrons, but likewise depended on his control of the circulation of his work. Circulation and commerce were both a godsend and a threat to him. As we have seen in chapters one and three, unauthorized publication of his work threatened Li Yu’s livelihood to the point that could claim that he was forced to move from one city to another to avoid the piracy of his publications. The two-sidedness of circulation that characterizes Li Yu’s professional literary endeavors manifests itself in Li Yu’s differential deployment of genre, as is exposed through an analysis of his *huaben* to *chuanqi* genre adaptations.

### Asserting Authorial Authority

As I have underscored at various points throughout this dissertation, Li Yu's *huaben* stories represent a more personal rendering of the story material than their *chuanqi* counterparts. In particular, the near absence of Li Yu's narrator is a conventional aspect of *chuanqi* which hampers the possibilities for the intimate and exclusive connection between reader and author that we have seen that he created in his *huaben* stories. Further, Li Yu's *chuanqi* adaptations were an opportunity for him to offer the story material to a much broader audience, an opportunity, however, that necessitated a "socially neutralized product." Li Yu's *huaben* to *chuanqi* genre adaptations are a means through which he could target two distinct audiences, one exclusive, private, and intimate, and the other inclusive, public, and less directly personal. The audience of his *huaben* fiction counted on the cultural capital engendered by the supposed exclusivity of the relationship between author and understanding reader, and a central role of Li Yu's narrator is to create such an imagined exclusive relationship with his reader through his exploitation of narrative devices. The *huaben-chuanqi* pair of "Sheng wo lou" and *Qiao tuanyuan* demonstrate, on the one hand, Li Yu's targeting of an exclusive audience for his *huaben*, and on the other, his offering of a "socially neutralized product" for his *chuanqi*. Speaking of exclusive imagined communities of readers targeted by emerging authors in a competitive literary market, Bourdieu contends that it is in this context that "Authors" emerge, claiming the divine right of their charisma and genius (Bourdieu 124). In "Sheng wo lou" we see Li Yu playfully engaging in this exact assertion of his own authorial genius. And to the readers willing to accept his genius, he gives the supposedly exclusive right of fully apprehending his *huaben* fiction. Near the end of "Sheng wo lou,"

Li Yu reminds readers that his ingenuity trumps the Creator's. The narrator, who is clearly the same narrator as in the other stories in *Shi'er lou* and who is closely tied to Li Yu personally through such things as the inclusion of Li's personal poems and the narrator's reference to them as "my poems," self-mythologizes, asserting his authority as author:

Who would ever have expected the Creator's ingenuity to be a hundred times greater than man's. It's as if he had deliberately combined these events so that they could be turned into a play or a story—united the two couples and then separating them, separating them and then uniting them, at prodigious cost in mental effort! This plot rates as novel and ingenious to an extraordinary degree! (Hanan, *Tower* 245)

誰想造物之巧, 百倍於人! 竟像有心串合起來, 等人好做戲文小說的一般, 把兩對夫妻合了又分, 分了又合, 不知費他多少心思. 這樁事情也可謂奇到極處, 巧到至處了! (Li, "Sheng wo lou" 267)

As we have seen throughout this study, Li Yu was able to use his *huaben* stories as a much more extensive and direct platform for the projection of his authorial voice than he was able to manage in his *chuanqi* plays, due primarily to the generic constraints of the latter, which forced him toward less direct forms of ventriloquizing.

### **Displacement and Narrative Time, Circulation and Authenticity**

We can measure the narrative pacing of both "Sheng wo lou" and *Qiao tuanyuan* by following the narrative's transitions from place to place. This play-story pair is particularly suited to this kind of analysis because the plot is anchored to a series of movements through space. In his "Narrative Time," Paul Ricoeur explains how place or "within-time-ness" lends structure to narrative:

At the level closest to that of the ordinary representation of time, the first temporal structure is that of time as that “in” which events take place. It is precisely this temporal structure that is leveled off by the ordinary representation of time. An analysis of narrative will help to show in what way this “within-time-ness” already differs from linear time, even though it tends toward linearity due to its datable, public, and measurable nature and as a result of its dependence on points of reference in the world. (Ricoeur 170)

In the both “Sheng wo lou” and *Qiao tuanyuan* the characters’ movements from place to place, and the presence or absence of historical specificity lend structure to the plot development. The original story, “Sheng wo lou” opens with a meditation on a found poem, obviously written by a talented poetess who was abducted during the disorder of the Ming-Qing transition and forced to lose her chastity, but the story proper is set during the fall of the Song dynasty to the Mongols. In other words, the opening story has more temporal relevance to Li Yu’s first readers, whereas the story proper takes places in the distant past. After his meditation on this poem written during Li Yu’s own lifetime, the narrator distances himself from recent history, moving on to recount the unchangeable past. Let’s look at how, in the *huaben* version of the story, the author plants himself within, and then distances himself from recent and traumatic history. This is how “Sheng wo lou” begins, with a breach in containment from the recent past:

Lyric:  
Holocaust of the ages—  
During my life it came.  
Nation and family gone, myself dishonored,  
All things brought to a nothingness—  
It’s the Lord of Heaven that I blame!  
Mine was a momentary slip;  
It’s pointless to regret the shame!  
So many martyrs there are! So hard to find him!  
But Yellow Springs is a narrow track  
Where I’ll have to meet him, cheeks aflame.

(To the tune “Gazing Toward the South”)

This lyric was discovered during the Dashing Bandit’s advance south. Someone found a small quantity of Zhangzhou tobacco at the side of the road and noticed this lyric on a piece of paper that the bandits had wrapped the tobacco in. The man who picked it up didn’t know what it meant and thought it merely a scrap paper. But afterwards it came into the hands of a literary man who realized it was a poem by some gifted woman whom the bandits had captured. Full of remorse over her lost honor, she had wanted to kill herself but been ashamed to face someone in the netherworld. In her cruel dilemma she had written this poem with its haunting grief and rage. In light of the words *nation and family gone* in line three, she cannot have been any commoner’s wife or official’s concubine; the man she is to meet on the narrow track in Yellow Springs must have been a ruler with family and nation in his care. (Hanan, *Tower* 221-2)

詞云：千年劫，偏自我生逢，國破家亡身又辱，不教一事不成空，極狠是天公！差一念，悔殺也無功。青冢魂多難覓取，黃泉路窄易相逢。難禁面皮紅。右調“望江南。”此詞乃闖賊南來之際，有人在大路之旁，拾得漳煙少許，此詞錄於片紙，即闖賊包煙之物也。拾得之人，不解文義，僅謂殘編斷幅而已。再傳而至文人之手，始知為才婦被擄，自悔失身，欲求一死，又慮有覷面目，難見地下之人，進退兩難，存亡交阻，故有此悲憤流連之作，玩第二句有“國破家亡”一語，不僅是庶民之妻，公卿士大夫之妾；所謂“黃泉路窄易相逢”者，定是個有家有國的人主。”(Li, “Sheng wo lou” 250-51)

The poem would have brought to mind traumatic memories for readers, many of whom would have had, like Li Yu, to flee their homes to escape the roving rebel armies led by Li Zicheng and others, as well as the invading Qing troops. What is noteworthy, is the fact that the poem, and the narrative explanation below it, recount a triple breach of containment. The outermost breach is Li Zicheng’s breach of national unity. This precipitates the second breach—the woman leaving the sequestration of her quarters in flight, only to be captured and violated. The third breach is to the integrity of her literary identity. Normatively, a woman such as the one depicted, would write poetry within the confines of her quarters, and circulate this poetry only with extreme care, to protect her

literary subjectivity from the repeated violations of open circulation. Now, because of the chaos of Li Zicheng's attempted usurpation, she is left to pour her heart onto paper that is repurposed into tobacco wrapping, leaving her literary subjectivity vulnerable to the apprehension and misapprehension occasioned by uncontrolled circulation. Returning to the theme of controlled circulation, the opening story of "Sheng wo lou" highlights the disastrous breach in containment occasioned by the uncontrolled circulation of identity, especially the subjective identity contained in poetic expression. The prologue also lends immediacy and historical relevance to the main story, which would otherwise remain safely sequestered in the distant past.

Let's take a brief look at the "teaser," or the point of transition in narration in the *huaben* story from the prologue to the main story, and in this case from the traumatic events in the recent past, to the temporally distant and spatially vague world of the story-proper:

This discussion has little to do with the story I am about to tell, so why do I choose it as my lead-in? Because the neighboring stories [to this one in the collection *Shi'er lou*] are about abduction, and I want the reader to suppress his feelings a little and not simply apply his most critical standards. Changes of dynasty have always brought with them periods of separation followed by periods of reunion. Now, separation is a tragic experience, but it may occasionally lead to good fortune, either by our meeting someone we have never met or by finding someone we have been looking for. The Creator's ingenuity in arranging our destinies manifests itself in such ways.

Let me tell how in the last years of the Song dynasty there lived in Zhushan county of Yunyang prefecture in Huguang province a rich farmer named Yin Hou. (Hanan, *Tower* 223)

此段議論，與後面所說之事不甚相關，為甚麼敘作引子？只因前後二樓，都是說被擄之事，要使觀者稍抑其心，勿施責備之論耳。從來鼎革之世，有一番亂離，就有一番會合。亂離是樁苦事，反有因此得福，不是逢所未逢，就是遇所欲遇者。造物之巧於作緣，往往如此。卻說宋朝末年，湖廣鄖陽府竹山縣，有個鄉間財主，姓尹名厚。(Li, "Sheng wo lou" 251)

The narrator moves readers from events of the recent past, to a story set in the distant past. Unlike the case prior to him, stories in Li Yu's collections include explicit references to other stories in the collection they appear in. Conventionally, the "teaser" in a *huaben* story ties the prologue (which can be either feature a prologue story or be just discursive [as in the case of "Sheng wo lou"]) of the story to the main story through contrast or similarity. In Li Yu's "teaser" in "Sheng wo lou," we see instead the narrator directly comparing the prologue concerning the poem to other stories in the collection and only indirectly to the main story that follows the prologue. The preceding story is concerned with the main characters' choices made during the decline and fall of the Northern Song, while the following story begins precisely with the quotation and discussion of a poem Li Yu himself wrote at the time he was forced to flee his home. In the end, he follows the safe course for the main story of "Sheng wo lou," by placing it in the past, but gets to have his cake and eat it too by drawing the reader's attention between similarities between the concerns of the main story and recent history. But, why is *Qiao tuanyuan* then set not in the fall of the Song but during the fall of the Ming?

Unlike the indirect mention of him in the prologue to "Sheng wo lou," Li Zicheng is directly depicted in *Qiao tuanyuan*. He is played as a *jing*, and he and his bandit minions are presented as violating both nation and women. Why did Li Yu choose the temporal immediacy of the recent past for the setting of his *chuanqi*, and the softening of the distant past for the setting of the same story in his *huaben*? Part of the explanation is that, beginning in the late Ming, it became far more common than it ever had been before to write plays that were directly about contemporary events or events of the recent past.

Many of these plays criticized specific officials and other people who abused their power, but typically appeared after those persons had fallen from power. The fall of the Ming was an even greater trauma than those caused by usurpers of power before the dynasty fell, and the obsession with the failure of the Ming on the part of literati is noticeable in a variety of genres. Writing and publishing under the new Qing regime, writers had to be careful to point the blame for the fall of the dynasty to internal causes and not toward the Qing themselves. This is the strategy in *Taohua shan*, for instance. So setting the story of “Sheng wo lou” during the fall of the Ming in his dramatic version was certainly an option, especially if no mention is made of the Qing, as is the case with *Qiao tuanyuan*. As for how we can explain why the prologue and the main story in “Sheng wo lou” do not both concern the fall of the Ming, we can perhaps attribute this to the fact that in the prologue a main concern seems to establish a bond between author/narrator and reader on the grounds of shared experience, while the emphasis in the main story itself is to create a shared appreciation of the cleverness of the plot, for which shared historical experience is not required.

In *chuanqi*, jumps in time occur between scenes, not in them. Besides that, temporal dislocations or discontinuities are more easily handled in *huaben* stories because the narrator is available to keep the reader from getting lost and make connections clear (or at least try to persuade the reader of such connections). In addition, although *chuanqi* often contained main and subsidiary plotlines, they typically were still part of the same story and shared characters. Although *chuanqi* could make use of frame tales and the idea that characters are reincarnations and thus include what at first glance might appear to be unconnected narrative and characters, all this was quite different from the conventional

ability of *huaben* stories to include, for purposes of contrast, multiple different narratives spread among their prologue and main stories. That is to say, the leap in time in “Sheng wo lou” from the concern with the fall of the Ming in the opening story, to the setting of the fall of the Song in the story proper, would fit uneasily into *chuanqi*. Movement through space as a mark of temporality works as a narrative device in both the direct representation of *chuanqi* and the narrative depictions of *huaben*. In Li Yu’s fiction and drama, spatial displacement or dislocation become sites of transformation in the characters’ identities. Dislocations also occasion ruptures in the integrity of the characters’ reputations.

As we have seen, novelty and inversion of the expected are central to Li Yu’s stories and plays. In “Sheng wo lou” and *Qiao tuanyuan*, he achieves this by, instead of following everyone else and making displacement a challenge to the chastity of the heroine and the integrity of the hero’s identity, he makes that very same displacement the means by which both Yao Ji and Miss Cao lose their adopted false identities and are reconnected to their authentic identities and families. Just as increased circulation both benefits and threatens Li Yu’s profits (benefit gained through increased circulation engenders an increased threat of piracy) and there was the possibility Li Yu could turn it to his profit, within the representational system of “Sheng wo lou” and *Qiao tuanyuan*, dislocation through circulation represents both a threat to the integrity of the characters’ identity, and is crucial to their reunion with their true identities and family. What follows will demonstrate how, in a reversal of convention, Yao Ji is able to retrieve his true identity through the dislocations of a dynastic transition. We will further see how parallel to the integrity of the hero’s personal identity, both story and play also concern

themselves with the recovery and integrity of literary identity, bringing us back to Li Yu's authorial anxieties concerning the dual nature of the profusion and circulation of his work in a competitive literary market—the more popular his work was, and the more widely and rapidly it circulated, the greater the occasions for piracy and forgery, which, as we have seen, were never far from Li Yu's mind.

In “Sheng wo lou” and *Qiao tuanyuan*, textual authority lies in the true identity of authorship. That is to say, while the circulation of texts threatens the integrity of authorship and the literary identity and reputation of the author, textual circulation simultaneously stands as a means through which authors can circulate and reify their literary reputations and identities. In “Sheng wo lou,” Yao Ji's father, Yin Xiaolou, authenticates his desires to find a son through the physical circulation of a text that asserts his “true” identity through the adoption of a “fake” identity. Yin Xiaolou, a retired official, has no heirs, but is reluctant to look near his home, among relatives or other people who know him, fearing that he would end up with an unfilial heir only interested in his money and status. Here is how Xiaolou explains his reasons for setting out to unfamiliar places to find an heir:

Everyone in this area knows how much we're worth and would like to be named my heir. Once they hear about this idea of mine, there are bound to be some who'll lay a trap for me by faking their affection. I'd be far better off traveling about the country testing people's feelings in chance encounters. If I met someone born under a lucky star who gave his heart to me of his own free will, I'd bring him home and name him my heir. Wouldn't that be a good idea? (Hanan, *Tower* 227)

同鄉之人, 知道我家私富厚, 那一個不想立嗣? 見我發了這段議論, 少不得有垂釣下餌的人, 把假情假意來騙我. 不如離了故鄉, 走去周游列國, 要在萍水相逢之際, 試人的情意出來. 萬一遇著個有福之人, 肯把真心向我, 我就領他回來, 立為後嗣, 何等不好? (Li, “Sheng wo lou” 254)

Xiaolou's fears about how potential heirs would treat him if they knew his identity are given concrete form in *Qiao tuanyuan*'s fifth scene, "Fighting for Inheritance," the scene in which he makes his decision to go abroad to find an heir. In the scene, Yin's relatives parade their sons to the Yins in succession, each competitively vying to have their son be his heir. It is their disingenuous displays of familial love that convince Yin Xiaolou that, if he is to find a true son, he will have to leave his hometown and travel to somewhere his wealth and status are unknown. He then explains his plan to his wife in words similar to those we have quoted above from "Sheng wo lou."<sup>3</sup>

This presents an inversion of the conventional logic surrounding the authentication of identity in seventeenth-century fiction and drama. Typically, one's family and hometown constitute the primary loci of one's identity, and distance from home and family unmoor a character from his true identity, opening him to danger and deception. Here, characters are forced to circulate in order to authenticate and retrieve their true identities.

So, in order to authenticate the feelings of his potential heirs, Yin has to circulate himself beyond the boundaries of his known identity, or reputation. But when he first tries out his plan, he only meets with indifference. Xiaolou decides to authenticate his desire to find an heir through textual representation. The narrator of "Sheng wo lou" explains,

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<sup>3</sup> This is what he says in the play: "I think that as for those who live nearby, there won't be any who don't know our family's circumstances, so if I try to test their true feelings, I'll be unable to. I've no other recourse but to leave my hometown, and travel somewhere else to handle this transaction, only then will I be able to successfully test out the right person. Before long I'll set out for this extended trip; you must wait patiently at home for my return." 我想近處之人, 那個不知道我家的事, 要試真情也試他不出, 除非丟了故鄉, 到別處去交接, 才試得出這個人來. 我不久就要遠行, 夫人在家可耐心等待 (Li, "Qiao tuanyuan" 332).

The bystanders assumed he was joking and paid no attention. When he found that nobody believed him, he bought a sheet of parchment, mounted it on several layers of cardboard, and wrote a few columns of characters on it in a bold hand—a placard advertising himself for sale. It ran:

OLD MAN WITH NO SON WILLING TO SELL  
HIMSELF AS FATHER. ASKING PRICE ONLY TEN  
TAEELS. SAME-DAY CLOSING. LIFELONG  
COMMITMENT.

Whenever he came to a new place, he would parade up and down the streets with the placard held in front of him. (Hanan, *Tower* 228)

都說是油嘴話，沒有一個理他。他見口裡說來沒人肯信，就買一張綿紙，裱做三四層，寫上幾行大字，做個賣身為父的招牌。其字云：“年老無兒，自賣與人作父，只取身價十兩。願者即日成交，並無後悔。”每到一處，就捏在手中，在街上走來走去。(Li, “Sheng wo lou” 254)

Here we see Xiaolou deciding to make his endeavor more easily consumed as authentic through the textual circulation of a version of himself, just as Li Yu authenticated his literary authority through the persistent literary circulation of his authorial persona. But as we have seen, the same circulation that enables Li Yu’s literary commodities to reach their potential value also jeopardizes the authenticity of his literary identity by simultaneously opening his products up to forgery and piracy. We can also point out that Li Yu’s texts were also open to (and in fact frequently suffered) what he would certainly have seen as misreading. Xiaolou’s circulation of himself through textual representation also meets up with this kind of problem. His poster, like Li Yu’s writings, meets up with its share of readers who do not take its invitation for communion. But he is eventually successful in finding its perfect reader.

That perfect reader is Yao Ji. But then there is the problem that they have different surnames. Yao Ji says:

Since losing my parents I've had no one to guide me; I hope you'll give me daily instructions and help me grow into a good man. That would give it all meaning—my establishing this bond with you so late in life. But now that we're related, I shall have to change my name; it would never do for a father and son to go by different names. I beg you to let me take your honorable surname. And please choose a personal name for me. (Hanan, *Tower* 232-33)

孩兒自幼喪親，不曾有人教誨，全望爹爹耳提面命，教導孩兒做個好人，也不在半路相逢，結了這場大義。如今既做父子，就要改姓更名，沒有父子二人各為一姓之理。求把爹爹的尊姓賜與孩兒，再取一個名字，以後才好稱呼。(Li, “Sheng wo lou” 258)

However, instead of accepting this offer, Yin Xiaolou continues to use the leverage afforded to him by his false identity and anonymity to test the authenticity of this heir:

Yin knew that this was a son capable of supporting a family, and he was completely satisfied. But he still feared that the situation might change and his son tire of him, so he wished to try one more test. He could hardly pass on the false name he'd taken, so he improvised: “If I had paid for you, you'd have been obliged to take my name. But you paid for me. How can I trouble the buyer to change his name. No, since your name is Yao, let me use that and call myself Chalet [Xiaolou] Yao. (Hanan, *Tower* 232-33)

小樓聽到此處，知道是個成家之子，心上十分得意。還怕他有始無終，過到後來漸有厭倦之意，還要留心試驗他。因以前所說的不是真話，沒有自己捏造姓名又替他捏造之理，只得權詞以應，說：“我出銀子買你，就該姓我之姓；如今是你出銀子買我，如何不從主便，倒叫你改名易姓起來？你既姓姚，我就姓你之姓，叫做‘姚小樓’就是了。(Li, “Sheng wo lou” 258)

This sequence demonstrates that identity is tied to consumption. Yao Ji asserts that because he paid for his father, his father ought to take his name, instead of he his father's.

This assertion that money trumps tradition, allows Yin Xiaolou to continue to test the authenticity of his son's feelings, but simultaneously keeps Yao Ji from progress towards knowing his true identity as Yin Xiaolou's biological son. In order for Yao Ji to regain

his true identity as Yin Xiaolou's biological son, he must first prove his genuine feelings, which are, ironically, tested through his father's impersonation of a false identity. Here, as with Miss Cao's chastity, authentic identity is protected through impersonation and play-acting, just as authorial authority is created and protected, and simultaneously undermined, through textual circulation.

In addition to offering to take his new father's surname, Yao Ji proves his filiality to his new father by turning all of his money over to the older man. Before too long, however, Yao Ji and Xiaolou are forced to flee an imminent bandit invasion, and they decide to temporarily separate, with Yao Ji returning to Hankou to settle his marriage to Miss Cao, and Xiaolou to return home and wait for Yao Ji there. Unfortunately (or fortunately, from the point of view of suspense and plot retardation), they part before Xiaolou tells Yao Ji the two most crucial pieces of information, Xiaolou's true surname and hometown. Xiaolou is very disturbed when he realizes the mistake. The illustration above depicts the boatribe that caused Yao Ji to be separated from his adopted (and biological) father. By circulating under a false name and identity, he had been able to find a son, but now it is precisely the same means that got him that son that is the cause for what threatens to be their permanent separation. Once again he decides to textualize himself in the form of a poster (one that this time he intends to reproduce and disseminate widely), but with the goal of broadcasting his true identity, not a false one.

Interestingly, the text of the notice on the poster as included in "Sheng wo lou" lacks specifics precisely where the poster most needed to be specific: Xiaolou's name and hometown. When the narrator first introduced us to Yin Xiaolou we were told that his proper name was Yin Hou, and his hometown, Zhushan, but in the text of the notice itself,

where that information should appear all you get are “such-and-such person” (*mouren* 某人) and “such-and-such place” (*mouchu* 某處). Here Li Yu is probably writing from the reader’s point of view (we know who Xiaolou really is and where his hometown is and thus there is no need to be specific), and not Yao Ji’s. As you can see from Hanan’s translation below, he chose to include the information Yao Ji needs:

Anonymous letter of authenticity:

WHAT I TOLD YOU BEFORE WAS WRONG. IF YOU ARE  
LOOKING FOR ME, COME TO ZHUSHAN AND ASK FOR YIN HOU.  
(Hanan, *Tower* 244)

都貼一張招子, 說: “我舊日言並非實話, 你若尋來, 只到某處地方來問  
某人就是。” (Li, “Shen wo lou” 266)

The heading (“Anonymous letter...”) is also added by Hanan. A more literal translation of the notice itself might read, “What I told you before was not the truth. When you come searching for me, just come to such-and-such place and ask for such-and-such person.” Why did Li Yu choose to omit the specific details that were the very reason behind the poster, particularly when disclosing those details to readers spoils none of the upcoming plot events, and further, are details that have already been provided to readers? Why not have the notice read, as it does in Hanan’s version, “come to Zhushan and ask for Yin Hou?” “Sheng wo lou” and *Qiao tuanyuan* present the complex and conflicting relationship between the circulation of texts and their authenticity. On the one hand, the more widely a text circulates, the more open it is to forgery and piracy. On the other hand, the more widely a text circulates, the easier it is for an author to trademark his authorial persona, authenticating authorial authority on the appeal of his particular brand of genius. As always with texts open to uncontrolled circulation, Yin Hou worries that his audience

(Yao Ji) will have no reason to suspect his original assertions as fake, and will disregard his attempt to rectify the lie with the truth. He worries, “After I arrived home, although I wrote a notice and had it posted everywhere, I worry that he’ll take my false words for the truth” 我到家之後, 雖然寫了招詞, 叫人往各處粘貼, 只愁他把假話黨了真言 (Li, “Qiao tuanyuan” 382). Yin Hou has to circulate the truth as widely as possible to mitigate the damage done by his adoption of a false identity. Again, in order to test Yao Ji’s authentic feelings, Yin Xiaolou took on a false identity. An authentic father-son bond was born out of this false identity, but in the wake of an unexpected separation, the true identities of both father and son must be exposed in order for things to return to harmony and order.

In Li Yu’s fiction and drama, aside from structuring narrative time, the river, or the site of travel, is a familiar locus of transformation to the characters’ identities. In both *Bimuyu* and *Qiao tuanyuan*, rivers, and particularly the Yangzi River, are a site of identity transformation. More generally, Li Yu uses travel as a narrative device to effect changes to the identities of his characters. In *Bimuyu*, the river is a repeated site of identity transformation for many of its main characters. Liu Miaogu jumps into the river, abandoning her life as an actress to resume one as the chaste wife to Tan Chuyu. Similarly, the couple’s benefactors, Murong Jie and his wife, leave government service traveling by boat to live in the remote seclusion of the mountains. While travelling on the boat, in scene 12, “Contented Reclusion,” Murong Jie and his wife shed the trappings of official rank by assuming new names, and tossing their official headwear into the river. They performatively shed their old identity as scholar-official and wife, assuming new identities as scholar-recluse-fisherman and wife. Murong Jie changes his name to “Old

Fisherman Mo” (Li, “Bimuyu” 144-5). Later, after the hero, Tan Chuyu, has succeeded in the examinations, he travels to his post by boat, and once again, the river is the locus of their transformation from actors to an official couple. On this journey, the river also becomes a vantage point from which the couple can test Miaogu’s mother. On their way to his government post, the couple passes by the town from which they fled Miaogu’s sale to the rich theater patron. They happen to pass by on the anniversary of Miaogu’s supposed suicide. Because Miaogu’s mother, Liu Jiangxian, will be performing at the same festival, they decide to anonymously hire the troupe, to see if, in performing the scene during which Miaogu leapt to her death, Jiangxian will show any genuine emotions. The couple watches from their boat as Liu Jiangxian proves that she does have maternal feelings toward Miaogu, becoming upset when she reaches the lines after which Miaogu jumped into the river to her supposed death. Here again, the river is the locus of authenticating Jiangxian’s true feelings. Circulation can threaten the authenticity of a literary commodity, but wide circulation, more than anything, validates the worth and singularity of a piece of literature. This suggests to me that for Li Yu, the value of his work was determined by market demand, more so than by the value lent to a work by patronage, which in large part enhances the reputation of the patron through his association with the author.

Within the field of restricted production, works are circulated exclusively, primarily amongst patrons and producers. With the exclusive circulation of literary products, their value depends precisely on that exclusivity. Li Yu’s relationship to the market and to patronage was complex. My own opinion is that while he did seek the support of patrons, he was heavily invested in marketing his work. Marketing his work

for as wide a circulation as possible validated the popularity of Li Yu's brand of genius, but would have made patrons feel as though his work was corrupted by mass consumption. Li Yu's "Sheng wo lou" and its *chuanqi* adaptation *Qiao tuanyuan* reflect some of the complex negotiations regarding restricted production and large-scale production that are infused within his fiction and drama. As we saw above, scenes aboard boats in his plays and stories are typically loci of shifts of identity. Commercial circulation has the dual possibility of corrupting art, and validating its worth.

## APPENDICES

### A. *Naihe tian* Scene Summaries

Roles:

*Sheng* 生—male lead

*Dan* 旦—female lead

*Xiaosheng* 小生—younger male, secondary male

*Xiaodan* 小旦—younger female, secondary female

*Laodan* 老旦—older female, secondary female

*Chou* 丑—clown

*Jing* 净—villain, spirit, supporting role

*Fujing* 副净—supporting role

*Wai* 外—older male

*Mo* 末—male

#### Scene 1: *Yaliu* 崖略 (Overview)

*Mo* 末—Prologue Speaker

The Prologue Speaker, taking on the voice of the playwright, touts the play as one of a kind and stresses that it breaks all the rules of *chuanqi*. He then summarizes the plot of the play, introducing at the same time the main characters. The scene closes with a quatrain whose four lines take as their subjects Que Lihou's wives, Que himself, his servant Que Zhong, and the spirit who transforms Que, respectively.

#### Scene 2: *Lü hun* (Planning the Wedding)

*Chou*—Que Sufeng 闕素封, courtesy name Lihou 里侯. Que is a native of *Sanchu* 三楚.

*Xiaosheng*—Que Zhong 闕忠. Que Lihou's steward.

*Fujing*—Yichun 宜春. A maid of Que Lihou's.

We hear from Que Lihou that he was orphaned at a young age and left in charge of his parent's estate. Despite the fact that he's just as romantic as Zuo Si<sup>1</sup> and Wang Can,<sup>2</sup> every inch of him is repulsive from head to toe. Before his parents died they arranged his marriage to a daughter of the Zou family. Que could not marry during his three years of mourning, but now that he's fulfilled that duty they can proceed with the wedding. He's been unable to pass the first level examinations despite over ten years of study. His stupidity is a small thing compared with his physical deficiencies. His eyes are not quite blind, but filled with white flecks. His face is not quite pock-marked, but covered in shadows. His hands are not quite bald, but his fingernails are scanty. His feet are not quite club-footed, he just walks on his heels. His nose is not quite red, but covered in tiny wine stains. His hair is not quite yellow, but the color of aloeswood. He doesn't quite eat his words, but stutters when he's nervous. He's not quite hunch-backed, it's just that the back of his neck is three inches too tall. On top of it all his mouth is spastic, sometimes moving at will, sometimes quiet, as though it's secretly being controlled by someone else. Then there's his eyebrows, too short on the outside, but connected in the middle; like a stack of firewood over his eyes. Not quite defunct, his deficiencies have earned him the nickname, "Not-quite Que."<sup>3</sup>

Que Lihou worries that if the government knows how much he's worth, they'll want to borrow money to secure the borders. Que Zhong, Que Lihou's steward, agrees that the government needs help defending its border, but that he has an idea. Que Zhong suggest that Que Lihou become like Bu Shi of the Han dynasty, who gave 100,000 in cash contribution toward military expenses and later was made a high official. He recommends that before he's asked for money, Que Lihou go to court himself and offer 100,000 cash to help the border effort. The court will be happy, and if the country is at peace he'll perhaps at least be awarded an official position.

Next Lihou asks Que Zhong to help with preparation for his wedding. Because he's so unappealing he's never been with a woman. He'd like to practice before the wedding night so that he can present himself to the best advantage. He decides to try and practice on an ugly maid, Yichun. When she refuses he threatens to beat her. When she begs him not to he threatens to sell her. She only agrees to do it with the promise that the lights will be out. He realizes that he can use the same method with Miss Zou on their wedding night.

### Scene 3: *You jia* 優嫁 (Concern over Marriage)

*Wai*—Zou Xianmin 鄒先民, courtesy name Wuhuai 無懷. A military officer. Miss Zou's father.

*Mo*—A houseboy of Zou Wuhuai

*Laodan*—Miss Zou

*Jing*—Miss Zou's wet nurse.

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<sup>1</sup> Wang Si (250?-305?)—known for his *shi* and *fu* poetry.

<sup>2</sup> Wang Can (177-217)—one of the seven famous literary men of the Jian'an reign period.

<sup>3</sup> "Not Quite Que" is Patrick Hanan's translation of 闕不全. See Chu and Hanan 7.

Zou Wuhuai is a military official. He laments having arranged his daughter's marriage too soon. He arranged the match given Que's prosperous family, thinking that he must have a lucky fate. Then his daughter grew up to be a talented and beautiful woman, and Que grew up to be a strange creature. Because the betrothal gifts have already been exchanged, there's no way to evade the arrangement. He decides to instruct his daughter before she leaves the household, but to do so without warning her about her husband's condition. Zou Wuhuai offers his daughter their entire library of books as a conciliatory gesture, so that she can reread them when she's feeling homesick. She refuses, having already read them to the point of being able to recite them from memory. Just as she's about to board the sedan chair sent to take her to Que's, she overhears her wet nurse says it's too bad she was married off to "Not Quite Que." When asked what she meant, the wet nurse says that she had called him "Perfect 10 Que" instead.

Scene 4: *Jing chou* 驚醜 (Surprised by Ugliness)

*Chou*—Que Lihou

*Fujing*—Yichun

*Laodan*—Miss Zou

*Jing*—Wedding Officiant

Que Lihou is in good spirits because it's his wedding day. All the preparations have been made, now he's just waiting for Miss Zou to arrive. He's enlisted Yichun to help with the wedding night to be sure that Miss Zou doesn't see him until after the marriage has been consummated. He asks her to make sure that once he's put out the lamps they're to be kept out to give them the cover of darkness while they become husband and wife. Yichun advises him that while his plan keeps her from seeing him, he hasn't made provisions for his three odors. He's never heard that he smells before, so she explains that as for his foot odor, once they're in bed she won't notice it. As for his body odor, it's coming from his armpits, so he should just keep his arms to his side so that she can't smell it. For his bad breath he'll just have to make sure not to talk much.

Just as they've finished going over the plan, Miss Zou arrives with a procession of drums and gauze lanterns. The couple is escorted into the nuptial chamber by the servants carrying lanterns. Que extinguishes the lights, blaming it on the wind and asks Yichun to relight them. As planned, she explains that it's said that the wedding candles shouldn't be lit twice. He concedes and the couple is left in the dark. He sings with his body facing her and his head turned away, comically preventing her from smelling his breath. Yichun laughingly wonders what Que Lihou will do with the lights out. She decides to listen outside the door. After only a moment, she hears Que's snoring from inside the room. Then she hears the sound of Miss Zou retching.

Miss Zou flees the nuptial chamber singing about the stench. Once again, she vomits. She complains that she can't sleep because of the smell. Trying to stay positive, she reasons that she still hasn't seen his face. If, in fact, he's as handsome as her wet nurse said, she can get over the smell by cleaning him up a bit. She impatiently waits for the morning to see his face. From offstage Que calls Miss Zou repeatedly. When she doesn't answer he enters with bare feet, messy hair and clothes thrown on, and Miss Zou

asks why a ghost has come out of their nuptial chamber. Que explains that he's her husband, and that certainly she should know him after the night they shared together. Miss Zou cries uncontrollably, declaring that she's married a strange creature. Que tries to get her to stop crying, until Yichun counsels her that the more she tries to get her to stop, the harder she'll cry. Yichun commiserates with Miss Zou, saying she knows her troubles, and that she'd better wash her face, comb her hair, and maybe take a look in the library to ease her mind. As soon as she enters the library, Miss Zou determines not to come out, to make the study her devotional sanctuary and commit herself solely to the Buddha so as to avoid her wifely duties.

Scene 5: *Yin du* 隱妒 (Hidden Jealously)

*Sheng*—Yuan Ying 袁滢, courtesy name Zhuobing 濯冰. Yuan is a highly ranked military official. He has been cursed with an ugly and jealous wife, but has two beloved concubines, Miss Zhou and Miss Wu.

*Wai*—Servant of Yuan Zhuobing

*Jing*—Yuan Zhuobing's ugly wife

*Fujing*—Maid

*Xiaodan*—Miss Zhou, Yuan Zhuobing's concubine

*Dan*—Miss Wu, Yuan Zhuobing's concubine

Yuan Zhuobing is a native of Jiangling 江陵 in Chu 楚. As a highly-ranked military official, he's been asked to help with the unrest along the border, but because his orders still have not arrived, he still has several days of rest to spend at home. When Yuan Zhuobing was young he knew that there would be a city-toppling beauty to match his talent, but he ended up marrying a *Momu* (莫姆—legendary ugly wife of the Yellow Emperor). Unfortunately, all ugly women are jealous and all jealous women are fierce. Luckily, so far his wife has not been fierce. He's recently taken two concubines, one name Zhou, and the other Wu. Zhou's looks are short of a perfect ten, but she's a capable household manager and frees him of domestic worries. Wu's looks and talent are unmatched.

Mme. Yuan enters, followed by a maid. She echoes the reasoning oft repeated in the play that because she's ugly, she's had the good fortune to marry the most talented man. Unfortunately he's recently taken two beautiful concubines, a fact that is unsupportable to Mme. Yuan. Because of the unrest at the borders, her husband has been called to help the effort there and due to the serious nature of his duties he won't be bringing his two concubines along. Mme. Yuan decides that she'll get rid of them while he's gone. She arranges for them all to have a family celebration together so that her husband won't suspect her of ill-treating the concubines while he's gone.

Yuan returns, having changed out of his official costume, and the couple invites the two concubines to join their meal. Miss Zhou and Miss Wu serve wine and Yuan becomes drunk, but Mme Yuan refrains from drinking so that she can control the situation. A messenger arrives to pass on orders for Yuan Zhuobing to make an inspection of the southern border. Yuan instructs his wife to look after his two concubines while he's gone. She assures him that she'll take care of them. Mme. Yuan leads her husband by the hand to retire, and he turns to look at his two concubines as he

follows her offstage. Miss Wu laments their loneliness and Miss Zhou explains that of course Mme. Yuan is meant to be happy because she's ugly and they're meant to be miserable because of their beauty.

Scene 6: *Tao Chan* 逃禪 (Fleeing to Buddhism)

*Laodan*—Miss Zou

*Fujing*—Yichun

*Chou*—Que Lihou

In the month since she's been married to Que Lihou, Miss Zou has been successful in avoiding encounters with her husband by setting up a devotional sanctuary in their house's former study. She's waiting until she's finished with the preparations and for an auspicious day to explain her plan to Que Lihou, as she is afraid that otherwise he will not agree to let her renounce her marital duties out of devotion to Buddhism. Now that the deed is essentially done she's decided it's time to settle the matter. She calls in Yichun to get the ritual objects together in preparation for consecrating the room. She changes into religious garb.

Que Lihou enters saying that it's now been one month since his happy marriage to Miss Zou, and the same length of time since her retreat to Buddhist devotion. He happily assumes that she's committed herself to Buddhism now so that she'll be favored with sons. So when he sees a statue of the Buddha, he prays that he'll reward her with three sons during their first year. Yichun asks him how this would be possible and he says that it would be if Miss Zou had one son and Yichun had twins, or if Miss Zou had twins and Yichun had one son. Yichun spits. When Que sees Miss Zou he's quite surprised that she's dressed as a nun and asks her to change immediately. She informs him that she's not committed herself to the Buddha in order to bear male heirs, but instead to live in seclusion in the devotional sanctuary for the rest of her life. She tells him that he's free to take a concubine to provide him heirs, and that he needn't consult her on the matter, because from that point forward their marital bond is broken. He begs her to reconsider, and she bows to get him to leave. He has no luck trying to pull her away, and bows in return. He asks Yichun to try and persuade Miss Zou to continue her wifely duties, otherwise it will be she who will be left to minister to his wants.

Once the two are alone, Yichun explains that she's also afraid of Que and asks if she can join Miss Zou in the seclusion of the meditation room. Miss Zou agrees and decides to lock the doors from the inside. When Que returns to ask Yichun to help him entertain a guest, he sees that they've both locked themselves inside. He begs, kneeling, for them to come out. They beat the wooden fish and Buddhist gong, neglecting his pleas. When Zou refuses to open the door despite his pathetic pleading, he threatens to starve them out, by not allowing food to be brought to their retreat. When this threat has no effect, he swears to marry a new wife many times prettier than Zou, or his name isn't Que.

Scene 7: *Mei qi* 媒欺 (Matchmaker's Deceit)

*Dan*—Mme. He

*Xiaodan*—Miss He

*Fujing*—Zhang Yima 張一媽, matchmaker

Mme. He is a white-haired widow, followed by her shabbily dressed daughter, Miss He. Mme. He has no sons and is unsure of how she'll care for herself in her old age if she doesn't find a wealthy man to be her son-in-law. She laments the fact that good looks and talent never go together — that the rich men are stupid, and talented men are poor. She wonders how long she'll have to wait to find her son-in-law. They are joined by the matchmaker Zhang Yima, who's been hired by Que to find a city-toppling beauty to take revenge on Miss Zou for retreating to Buddhism. Zhang Yima knows that Mme. He is looking for a rich son-in-law, and that her daughter is extremely beautiful, so she reasons that He and Que would be a good match, except for the fact that Que is so ugly.

Instead of lying to Mme. He outright, Zhang Yima decides she'll simply bend the truth. For her part, Mme. He is concerned about finding a match for her daughter's incredible beauty. The matchmaker assures her, and offers to do divination if she's unsure. Mrs. He would rather see the prospective match for herself. Turning in an aside, the matchmaker says that this won't be a problem because she can just send in a good-looking substitute to accompany Que, and fool both the mother and daughter. They plan to get a look at Que the next day during a visit to the temple.

Scene 8: *Qian you* 倩優 (Hiring an Actor)

*Chou*—Que Lihou

*Xiaosheng*—Que Zhong

*Sheng*—Actor, Que Lihou's stand-in

Que Lihou enters, declaring that he's hired a matchmaker and promised her one silver ingot to find him a city-toppling beauty. Because Mme. He and her daughter will not agree to the match until they've seen the intended, the matchmaker has told Que that he'll have to find a stand-in. But with such a private matter, who can he ask? He thought about it last night and decided that Que Zhong was good-looking enough. He calls him in, and Que Zhong asks for his orders. Lihou tells him he's got a secret to discuss with him, and asks him if he can act as his stand in for the prospective bride. Que Zhong hesitates because of the boundaries required between master and servant, and the fact that they would be deceiving Miss He, besides the fact that that would make things more complicated once she arrived in the household. But, he does know who Que can hire, a good-looking *zheng sheng* actor of such and such a troupe (name left blank for the actors performing the play to fill in). Que is happy with this idea and asks Que Zhong to have the actor to come in.

Que Zhong returns with the actor and Que Lihou explains the situation. When the actor agrees to serve as Que's stand-in, Que asks Que Zhong to give the actor one of his outfits to change into. The actor changes his clothes. At first Que tells Que Zhong to go with the actor to the temple and report back, but Que Zhong advises him to go along to the temple so that he can see Miss He for himself, and so that he'll be able to blame the deception on the matchmaker if it comes up. He can tell her that it was the matchmaker who pointed to the wrong person at the temple, and the deception was hers, not his. Que Lihou agrees to go.

Scene 9: *Wu xiang* 誤相 (Mistaken [Son-in-law] Inspection)

*Wai*—Abbot

*Chou*—Que Lihou

*Sheng*—Actor, Que Lihou's stand-in

*Xiaosheng*—Que Zhong

*Dan*—Mme. He

*Xiaodan*—Miss He

*Fujing*—Zhang Yima

The old abbot explains that visitors to the temple are either faithful women coming to burn incense or men coming to fulfill wedding rituals. He's prepared the tea and fruit for libations, but still needs to sweep the Zen Hall for people who want to burn incense. He feigns leaving, but stays onstage. The actor and Que Lihou enter, dressed in finery, followed by Que Zhong. Mme. He and Miss He enter with the matchmaker, Zhang Yima. The abbot enters with two monks who are chanting, playing Buddhist instruments, and carrying flags. Mrs. He and her daughter pay their respects. The abbot asks the two women to come into the Zen Hall to drink cleansing tea. Zhang Yima responds that they'd first like to walk at their leisure for a bit, and then they'll go to the hall to have tea. The monks exit.

Zhang Yima bids Mme. and Miss He to look into the distance to get a good look at Que. The actor enters with Que and Que Zhong. Both parties try to get a good look at one another. The actor, Que Lihou, and Que Zhong exit. When Mme. He asks which of the men was Que Lihou, Zhang Yima misinforms her, saying that he was the good-looking one. Mrs. He approves and asks what her daughter thinks. Miss He says he's good-looking, but that he looks a bit like an actor. Zhang Yima tells her not to blame him for that. It's just because literati like to perform in plays as amateurs that he looks like an actor. Zhang Yima asks whether she'll agree to the match. Miss He says she still wants to get a better look at his facial features. Zhang Yima suggests that they follow the men into the Zen Hall for a closer look. They exit.

The actor enters with Que and Que Zhong. The actor observes that Miss He is a world-class beauty, and asks Que Lihou if he's made his decision to agree to the match. Que asks the actor to get a closer look at her face. Que asks about her face, eyebrows, manner, and how big her feet are, then finally concludes that she's a ten, and the actor agrees that she's a matchless beauty. Miss He and her mother enter. Zhang Yima instructs them to go to the left side of the room to get a closer look at Que, who is standing on the right. Miss He takes Zhang Yima aside and asks who the ugly man with Que is. Zhang Yima says that he's accompanying Que to the hall. Miss He laughs to herself at Que. Que sees her laughing and thinks that she must be content with the match. Mme. He tells her daughter that she's seen enough of Que and that she should agree to the match. Miss He responds that she'll submit to her mother's decision.

Mother and daughter feign leaving. Zhang Yima says to the actor that Mme. and Miss He have agreed to the match and that all that's left to do is choose an auspicious day. Que laughs in delight. In an aside the actor sings at how surprised the bride will be when she finds out the truth. The actor, Que Lihou and Que Zhong exit. Zhang Yima brings

Mrs. and Miss He back to tell them that that they just need to set an auspicious day for the wedding.

Scene 10: *Zhu bian* 助邊 (Aiding the Frontier)

*Xiaosheng*—Que Zhong  
*Wai*—Pacification Minister  
*Laodan*—Runner  
*Fujing*—Runner  
*Mo*—Local Official

Que Zhong attests to his loyal and honest character, explaining that it's only because of his family's decline that he serves the Que household. Due to the unrest along the border, Que Zhong has proposed that Que Lihou donate 100,000 taels of silver as a show of loyalty to the state. Que Zhong arrives at the *yamen*, planning to meet with the Pacification Minister.

The Pacification Minister of Jingxiang 荆襄 complains that his funds are inadequate to the task of provisioning the troops along the border. As such, he sent runners out to requisition extra funds from local officials. Just then, the runners return. When the Pacification Minister asks them how much they've collected, the runners report that they reluctantly returned empty handed because the local officials told them that it was a lean year, and people have absolutely nothing to spare. Fearing suspicions that they'd fallen short of their duties, the runners have brought along a local official to report the situation himself. When the local official explains that he hasn't been able to requisition any money from residents of his locality, the Pacification Minister responds with the suggestion that he ask to borrow the funds instead, to which the local official replies that locals have no money to lend.

After the local official takes his leave, the Pacification Minister is presented with Que Zhong's letter of contribution. The Pacification Minister reads the letter with surprise and evokes Bu Shi of the Han Dynasty, just as Que Zhong had done when he outlined the plan to Que Lihou. The Pacification Minister bids Que Zhong be brought in. The Pacification Minister asks whether he is Que Sufeng. Que Zhong clarifies that Que Sufeng is his master, he's come on his behalf. The Pacification Minister is impressed with both Que Lihou and Que Zhong. He promises to memorialize to the emperor of their patriotism and generosity. Que Zhong asks to deliver the 100,000 taels of silver to the border himself, to ensure that it gets where it needs to be, and is not appropriated by corrupt officials on its way. The Pacification Minister predicts that their act of generosity will win both Que Zhong and Que Lihou high rank in the future.

Scene 11: *Zui jin* 醉罇 (Nuptial Drunkeness)

*Chou*—Que Lihou  
*Xiaosheng*—Que Zhong  
*Xiaodan*—Miss He  
*Fujing*—Maid  
*Jing*—Maid

Que Lihou opens the scene wearing ceremonial clothing. He declares that because he was able to hire an actor to be his stand-in, today is his wedding day. With regards to consummating the new union, he knows that he can burn incense and have the lamps blown out again, but that will still only work for one night. He hopes to think of a solution that will continue to work. Que Zhong joins his master to report on his trip to court to announce Que Lihou's donation to help the military effort at the border. Making no effort to conceal his motivations, Lihou asks him whether he was awarded an official position yet. Que Zhong reports that they've yet to confer him an official rank. He continues, reporting that he was asked why Que Lihou hadn't come himself, to which he told them that Lihou had business to attend to. Que Lihou replies that he doesn't have time now to worry about those things and if his 100,000 taels is gone and he has no title, Que Zhong should just deal with it and not augment his worries. When Que Zhong inquires as to why Lihou should be so stressed on the day of such a happy event, Que confides that he's worried because he no longer has a stand-in to keep the truth from his bride. Que Zhong advises him that once she arrives in his house, she is his. There's no need for him to try to cover up the truth. He should show himself from the beginning, and if she refuses to consummate the marriage he should beat and curse his servants as a warning to her. He says women aren't naturally courageous, and after a strong display of his authority, she won't resist. Que is happy with this idea and asks Que Zhong to withdraw.

Que practices looking intimidating, and then threatens to give the maids all thirty lashes if the nuptial chamber has not been properly prepared for Miss He's arrival. They acknowledge him from offstage and announce the arrival of the sedan chair, telling him that he needs to go to the hall to perform the ritual bowing. With drumming and music sounding from offstage, Lihou puts on an intimidating air and exits.

From offstage the attendants of the bride and groom direct the ceremony and chant. When the recitation is finished, the music and drumming resume. A lamp is brought into the nuptial chamber. In a procession of lanterns, music, and drumming, the newlyweds are escorted to the nuptial chamber followed by two maids. The couple sits facing each other and Que Lihou asks everyone to leave. When the maid removes the bridal veil, Miss He gets her first look at her new husband. With great surprise she says to herself in an aside, "Ah! This is the man who was with the man I saw the other day! Why isn't that man here, and I'm with his friend at the wedding ceremony. I understand! I understand!" Then she points to Lihou and sings that he's substituted a celestial groom with a crude one. She looks at him again and says that, "yes, there are ugly people in the world, but how can there be someone this ugly? If I look more closely, I see that it must be because he's a ghost. How will I consummate the marriage with him?" She decides to simply not deal with him.

Que Lihou instructs the maid to pour the nuptial cups. They do, and Lihou tries to get Miss He to drink. He says, "Wife, you're a member of my house now. You shouldn't be sorrowful. I urge you to drink a few cups to sleep well." When Miss He hides her face and begins to cry, Que Lihou follows his plan and becomes angry. He says, "What?! I'm your husband and I've asked you to drink wine, and not only do you not drink it, you hide your face and cry. You've only just arrived and already you defy my orders!" Then he calls in a maid and orders her to get Miss He to drink every drop of wine, or she'll get 30

lashes. The maid pours the wine and tries to get her to drink, but Miss He will not. Que asks the other maid to see whether the cup is empty. She replies that it's still completely full. Que becomes angry and orders that the first maid be beaten. He says he'll show Miss He what a severe husband he is. The second maid does as she's bidden and beats the first. Que says to the second maid that now she's to urge Miss He to drink and if she doesn't she'll get 30 lashes. The second maid kneels and pleads with Miss He to drink. She says that she's a sickly person and she can't take the beating, and pleads with her to drink the cup. Miss He says in an aside that Que is beating the maids to scare her. She decides to get drunk to the point of death to show him. The maid continues to pour and she continues to drink. She drunkenly slumps on the table. Que Lihou is happy that his clever plan worked and she's now obedient. He asks the maid to make the lamp bright and help him take her to bed.

Scene 12: *Fen quan* 焚券 (Burning the Receipts)

*Xiaosheng*—Que Zhong

*Mo*—Que Yi, Que Zhong's younger brother.

Que Zhong is prepared to travel to the border to bring the 100,000 taels of silver. His younger brother, Que Yi, has come to take his place while he's gone and manage all of Que Lihou's accounts. Because Que has more money than he can use, Que Zhong will help him accumulate merit by burning the receipts for all the loans owed to Que Lihou. Que Yi asks what Que Lihou will do, and Que Zhong instructs Que Yi to wait until after he's left and then to give the report. After they've burned the receipts, Que Zhong leaves on horseback for the frontier, equipped with a bow and arrow and side sword.

Scene 13: *Ruan kuang* 軟誑 (Tender Deceit)

*Xiaodan*—Miss He

*Chou*—Que Lihou

Miss He laments her marriage to Que Lihou, complaining that she's a prisoner to his desires. On their wedding night, she wanted to die, but she was afraid for the maids, so she drank herself unconscious, and when she woke up the marriage had already been consummated. Que is uglier and smellier, she declares, than a macaque. Rumor has it that Que Lihou already has a proper wife. She's also heard Buddhist bells and drumming, but only after she asked the maid did she find out that Que had already married a woman named Zou. Because Que is so repulsive, Zou waited one month and then retreated into her devotional sanctuary and refused to sleep with Que. Upon finding this out, Miss He knows that she's been tricked not once, but twice. Then she reasons, if the first wife can't stand the situation, how can she? She's determined to think of a way out, and decides to ask Miss Zou for help. Que Lihou is heard coughing offstage and asks a maid to bring him tea. When Miss He hears Que Lihou coming, she decides to fake a happy demeanor so that she'll be able to trick him.

Coughing, Que Lihou joins Miss He. He's pleased that the two days since his marriage have been so romantic. Today is the third day, and his waist is tired from so

much bowing to those who've come to offer their congratulations. He asks Miss He to pound his back to help the pain. Miss He massages his back and waist and Que sings. He hugs her trying to massage her as well, and she pushes him away saying that he's being fresh with her despite his cough. Even if he's consumptive, he replies, he still wants his romance. He kisses her, and she spits. Clueless at her repulsion, he asks her why and then announces that he has a "spring wind" blowing in the crotch of his pants.

Miss He asks him to sit down so that she can talk to him. She tells Que Lihou that she heard from the maids that he already married a wife and that her name is Miss Zou and she lives in a sanctuary where she practices her devotion to the Buddha. Is it true? Que confirms that it is, but asks why she would want to know. Playing the good wife, Miss He replies that Miss Zou must be the most unfeeling person. They say that one night between husband and wife makes for 100 years of kindness, after only two nights look how much they love each other! How could Miss Zou abandon him after only one month, and why didn't he drop her after that? He says that while Miss Zou is unfeeling, he also hasn't paid her any attention. For his part Que says he never sees her, and only has some bowls of food sent in to feed her; she's like having a dog or a pig. Miss He responds that she's furious for him, and that she'd like to go over and give Miss Zou a piece of her mind on his behalf. Lihou says he'd be grateful.

Li Hou explains that before he married her he had it out with Miss Zou, and warned her that he'd marry an unmatched beauty. If Miss He goes in and Miss Zou sees how beautiful she is, she'll be ashamed to death. Miss He agrees that it's settled. She heard that Miss Zou has a shrine to the Buddha, so she'll bring incense to pray before she talks to her. Que Lihou says he'll escort her there personally tomorrow.

#### Scene 14: *Jiao tuo* 狡脫 (Crafty Escape)

*Laodan*—Miss Zou

*Fujing*—Yichun

*Chou*—Que Lihou

*Xiaodan*—Miss He

*Jing*—Maid

Dressed in Daoist garb, Miss Zou explains how happy she is that Que Lihou has not tried to bother her since she's been living in her devotional sanctuary. Since then she's been able to apply herself fully to Buddhist cultivation. She heard that Que Lihou had betrothed a Miss He from an official family. Even before she moved into the household, Miss Zou has been apprehensive for her. She doesn't know when they were married, but she wonders how Miss He will deal with Que's advances, and will she be able to sleep with him? To feed her curiosity, she asked the maids to report back. To her surprise the maids reported that Miss He is unusually beautiful, two times more than Miss Zou, and when it was time to drink the nuptial cups, not only did she not mind, but she wasn't even bashful, but what's even more strange is that she got dead drunk, happily went to bed with Que, and slept peacefully.

Yichun enters and announces that Que Lihou has asked them to sweep the temple and arrange the incense because he's going to bring over his new wife. Miss Zou replies that she's happy because this will give her a chance to see what the new wife is like. Que

enters, leading Miss He, followed by the maid, who carries incense and candles. Que asks Yichun to light the candles so that Miss He can pray. He immediately asks Miss Zou to take a good look at his new wife to see whether or not she isn't, in fact, several times prettier, just like he said she would be. In an aside Miss Zou admits that with a wife like that, no wonder he's bragging. Miss He bows and prays. Facing Miss Zou she says, "This must be Reverend Zou?" Yichun responds affirmatively. Miss He asks to kowtow to Miss Zou. Miss Zou says that even though she's living in the Que household, she's given up her position in the house, so there's no reason for her to stand on ceremony. Miss He bows and when Miss Zou can't stop her, she bows as well. Que Lihou becomes angry with Miss He and says that she's the primary wife and should not be bowing to Miss Zou. Miss He says that Que has misunderstood. She's bowing to Miss Zou as a disciple to her master, not as a concubine to a wife. She says to Miss Zou that, because she didn't practice Buddhism before, she had to follow a villainous path and ended up marrying a monster. In order to correct this she's devoting herself to Buddhist study from here on out. She swears to abandon the fate that has led her to him. Que Lihou wants to know why such a good wife would change as soon as she got to the sanctuary. Just yesterday she'd said that he should cut Miss Zou off, and now she wants to become her disciple!? He faces Miss Zou and says that Miss He has gotten things backwards, and she should pay no attention. Que bows and pleads with Miss Zou to persuade Miss He not to join her in the devotional sanctuary. Miss Zou questions Miss He on the strength of her intentions, but Miss He maintains her intention to become Zou's disciple. Que, in an aside, reasons that Miss He is sensitive, so if he shows any anger, she'll change her mind. He threatens to beat her, and makes as though he's going to punch her. Before leaving Que Lihou finally threatens to make Miss Zou resume her wifely duties if she cannot persuade Miss He to continue the task.

Questioning Miss He further, Miss Zou realizes that she is steadfast in her intentions. Besides that, she'll be gaining a companion, so Miss Zou agrees to let Miss He join her in the devotional sanctuary.

#### Scene 15: *Fen rao* 分擾 (Separate Campaigns)

*Jing*—Ruler of Darkness  
*Xiaodan*—Ruler of Light

The Ruler of Darkness, a turncoat general, explains that his father used to be a prominent general who worked to defend the northern border region. During his service powerful officials at court slandered him saying that he'd provoked trouble along the frontier instead of preventing it. His father was so troubled by the false accusation that he died. The Ruler of Darkness and his younger sister were so outraged at their father's death that they've turned against the dynasty and formed two separate camps, consisting of one male army and one female army. He is the general of the male army, while his sister leads the female army. The two are meeting today to test their military strategies.

Their strategies are like night and day, so they decide to implement them separately. His army employs the strategy called "Many Tigers Herd the Sheep" (*zhonghu zan yang* 眾虎攢羊). Her all-female army uses the strategy "The Hundred Birds Pay Court to the Phoenix" (*bainiao chao feng* 百鳥朝鳳). They agree that he'll go to the

west, and she to the east. They'll each follow their own strategies, and the first to take the capital will be the emperor.

Scene 16: *Du qian* 妒遣 (Jealous Dispatch [of Concubines])

*Wai*—Servant of the Yuan household

A servant in the employ of the Yuan household explains that that all women's diseases can be cured, except jealousy. The reason he brings up the topic, he lets us know, is that his master is a romantic genius. First he married an ugly woman and was furious. Then he married two concubines for love and an heir. Before half a year passed, he had to leave because of his official duties. Who would have thought that his wife, taking advantage of his absence, would send away his two beloved concubines while he was gone. She asked the servant to engage a matchmaker to find two homes to get rid of them, and that was the end of the sad affair. The servant worries that when Yuan returns he'll be blamed for following his wife's orders. From offstage he's told that Mme. Yuan wants an update on his progress in getting rid of the two concubines, and that the matter needs to be settled within three days. The servant replies that they will be married off, it's just a matter of waiting a few more days. He laments that if he follow his mistress's wishes, he'll be committing an offense against his master, and vice versa.

Scene 17: *Zan yang* 攢羊 (Herding Sheep)

*Sheng*—Yuan Zhuobing

*Mo*—Scout

*Jing*—Ruler of Darkness

*Dan*—Captive woman

*Xaodan*—Captive woman

*Laodan*—Captive woman

Yuan Zhuobing is strategizing how to defeat the Ruler of Darkness and his armies. He sends an envoy to find his armies and report on how fast they're progressing. Yuan is hesitant to send troupes out because of a big snowstorm, but decides to wait to see what he hears back. The envoy returns saying that the enemy is not stopping to rest or recuperate, but that because of a heavy snowfall, they've stopped. The scene then shifts to the Ruler of Darkness, who reasons that because the snow has covered their path forward, they're no longer able to continue marching, and that the imperial troops will likewise be unable to attack them. Forced to rest, he asks that the captive women be brought to him so that he can choose from amongst them. He chooses his favorite and tells his men to share the rest. Because there aren't enough women to go around, they decide that two men will share each woman. They grab women in pairs and head offstage to drink and sleep.

Yuan decides to send troupes out into the snow to attack while the enemy is still tired. He plans to ambush the army of the Ruler of Darkness by having all his troops dress in white, so they'll blend with the snow. They defeat the enemy by using the same

strategy that the Ruler of Darkness had planned on using. The enemy had not been expecting the attack and Yuan Zhuobing and his army capture the Ruler of Darkness.

Scene 18: *Gai tu* 改圖 (Change of Plans)

*Chou*—Que Lihou

*Fujing*—Zhang Yima

Que Lihou opens the scene. He complains that his two wives are shut up in their devotional sanctuary like a couple. Even with two wives, he lives like a widower. He decides he has no choice but to take a third wife. This time he'll only accept an average-looking woman to spend his days with—not a smart and beautiful one. Zhang Yima enters, asking him whether he'd like to send away one of his current wives, or marry another. He says he'd like to marry another. Zhang Yima has two women in mind, he'll just have to choose between them. She explains that they're from the Yuans household, one surnamed Zhou and the other Wu. Zhou is good with household affairs and managed Yuan's entire household. Wu is prettier than either of his two wives combined. Que says that he doesn't want to hear anything about beauty, so they need only discuss Zhou and not Wu, but that he won't marry Zhou without seeing her. Zhang Yima replies that a first-place provincial exam candidate is coming to see Wu tomorrow, so he can see Zhou at the same time.

Scene 19: *Bi jia* 逼嫁 (Forced Marriage)

*Xiaosheng*—Han Zhao 韩照, courtesy name Mengyang 孟阳, an exam graduate from Sichuan

*Mo*—Servant of Han Mengyang

*Fujing*—Zhang Yima

*Dan*—Miss Wu

*Chou*—Que Lihou

*Za*—Extra (servant of Que Lihou)

*Xiaodan*—Miss Zhou

*Jing*—Mme. Yuan

Han Mengyang has arranged with Zhang Yima to meet Miss Wu. He's worried that when it comes to seeing Miss Wu he'll mistake a seven for a ten. He doesn't know if he can be discerning enough. When he sees Miss Wu he thinks she's beautiful enough, but wants to test her intelligence. His fan has a picture, so he asks her to compose a poem about it. Miss Wu asks him to set the rhyme. He sets it to *hun*. Her poem is about his visit, and he's more than pleased with it. He's so impressed that he wants to give the betrothal gifts before he leaves.

When Que Lihou arrives, Zhang Yima instructs him to wait to see Miss Zhou. When Miss Zhou sees Que she flees. Zhang Yima lies and says it's because she's embarrassed at seeing a man. Que decides that if a dignified man such as Han Mengyang has found tomorrow to be auspicious enough for a wedding, that it's good enough for him too. Que tells Zhang Yima that he'll pay the betrothal price now and marry Miss Zhou

the following day. After Que leaves, Zhang Yima asks Miss Zhou why she fled their meeting. Miss Zhou says it was on account of his frightening looks. She swears that she'd rather die than become his wife. Afraid this might cause trouble, Zhang Yima reports Miss Zhou's reluctance to Mme. Yuan. Mme. Yuan promises to force Miss Zhou into marrying Que Lihou the following day.

Scene 20: *Diao mei* 調美 (Switching the Beauty)

*Mo*—Han Mengyang's steward

*Fujing*—Zhang Yima

*Jing*—Mme. Yuan

*Chou*—Maid

Han Mengyang's steward opens the scene reiterating the theme that *caizi* are not matched with *jiaren* in reality. He explains that Han Mengyang is unable to marry Miss Wu because Yuan took the imperial exams in the same year as his father. Han realized this only after sending over the betrothal gifts. Because Han Mengyang feels that the marriage would be improper, he's sent his steward to retrieve the betrothal gifts. When he arrives at Yuan's house he calls for the matchmaker, Zhang Yima. Zhang Yima says that Miss Wu is ready, why hasn't he come with the lanterns and sedan chair to bring her to Han's house? He replies that because Han Mengyang is the "exam nephew" of Yuan, it wouldn't be appropriate for Han to marry Miss Wu. He's been asked to come to retrieve the betrothal gifts. Zhang Yima thinks the reason strange, and needs to consult with Mme. Yuan. Mme. Yuan agrees that the gifts must be returned, and does so. Yuan's steward laments the ruin of the potential match, then exits.

Mme. Yuan complains that her plan to get rid of Miss Wu has failed, and Zhang Yima reassures her that they'll be able to get rid of her. Just then, the sedan chair from Que Lihou's house arrives. First the matchmaker calls repeatedly for Miss Zhou, but gets no answer. Then Mme. Yuan calls repeatedly, still getting no response. Mme. Yuan becomes furious that Miss Zhou won't come when she's called. Angry, she calls a maid in to fetch Miss Zhou. Mme. Yuan asks her to help pry open the door of Miss Zhou's room. They pry open the door and realize that Miss Zhou has hanged herself. Mme. Yuan worries what will happen when Yuan Zhuobing gets back to find that Miss Zhou has been forced into suicide. Zhang Yima tells her not to worry, she can simply tell her husband that Miss Zhou died of an illness—he won't find out the truth. Mme. Yuan explains to the matchmaker that Miss Wu will certainly tell Yuan Zhuobing the truth of what happened.

The matchmaker comes up with a plan to solve both problems. Because Miss Wu was so happy about the proposed match to Han, they'll simply say that the sedan chair from Que's house is actually the chair from Han's come to get her. Then Mme. Yuan will be rid of her, and she won't be able to tell Yuan Zhuobing what really happened to Miss Zhou. Mme. Yuan is satisfied with the plan and tells Zhang Yima to go straight away to lie to Miss Wu and get her in the sedan chair.

Scene 21: *Qiao bu* 巧怖 (Exquisite Terror)

*Dan*—Miss Wu

*Chou*—Que Lihou

*Jing*—Maid

*Fujing*—Yichun

*Laodan*—Miss Zou

*Xiaodan*—Miss He

The scene opens with the arrival of Miss Wu's sedan chair and a procession of lanterns and drums. Que Lihou enters. When he and Miss Wu bow to one another, they're both shocked. Que Lihou asks everyone to leave. Que is amazed that his bride is so much more beautiful than she had been, and wonders whether or not it's not his ugliness that makes women more beautiful. He gets up his courage to sit facing her. In an aside, Miss Wu wonders why the handsome man she was betrothed to yesterday is today a strange creature. She quickly realizes that after Miss Zhou's suicide, she's been sent as her replacement. She's determined to think of a way to protect her chastity so that when Yuan returns from his service at the frontier, she can go back to him. Sitting facing the groom, she coldly laughs, and asks if he's Que Lihou and whether he remembers the face of the woman he was matched with yesterday. Que responds that he remembers that she wasn't as pretty as her. Miss Wu then explains that he has forced Miss Zhou to commit suicide and that she's been sent as her replacement. She explains that she and Miss Zhou were Yuan's favorites, but that Mme. Yuan was jealous, so took her first opportunity to marry them off when Yuan left. They'd both decided to commit suicide in loyalty to Yuan when their sedan chairs arrived, but Miss Zhou couldn't wait and hanged herself before her chair's arrival. For his part, Han knew that Miss Wu would remain loyal to Yuan, and withdrew his betrothal gifts. Following Zhang Yima's advice, Miss Wu elected not to commit suicide at Yuan's house. She said it would be better to wait to die at Que's house, so that she still has a chance to plead her case with Yuan. Miss Wu says she decided to stay and marry Que firstly to stay true to Yuan, secondly to avenge Miss Zhou, and thirdly to have Que buy her a nice coffin. Que is dejected at the thought of being responsible for two deaths. Miss Wu removes her sash and wraps it around her neck to hang herself. Que pleads with her to stop, but she continues, so Que calls for help. He asks Yichun to get Miss Zou and He from the devotional sanctuary to talk her out of it. Miss Wu says that the only way she'll not commit suicide is if Que promises her her own room to sleep in, so she can preserve her chastity to Yuan, and to bring her back to Yuan when he returns. She says that if he does this, he'll be absolved of guilt for Miss Zhou's suicide. He kowtows in concession. He says he has a study where she can stay that also houses Miss Zou and Miss He.

The two wives enter with Yichun, carrying a lantern. The three wives meet and realize that they all share the same lot. They go together to the devotional sanctuary where Miss Wu asks why they haven't given the place a name. She cleverly proposes that they name the room *Naihe tian* (what can you do about fate?) and Miss Zou and He agree. Miss Zou remarks that while she is clever, and He is beautiful, Miss Wu is both clever and beautiful. Miss He agrees. Miss Wu promises that when she talks to Yuan, she'll make a case for him to save the two of them as well.

Scene 22: *Chou xiang* 籌餉 (Military Provisions)

*Xiaosheng*—Que Zhong  
*Jing*—Innkeeper  
*Wai*—Runner  
*Mo*—Emergency Provisions Collector

Que Zhong enters with an armed retinue. He's been travelling for a month and still has not made it half way to the border, where he will deliver Que Lihou's donation of 100,000 taels of silver. He decides to stop at an inn so his retinue can refresh themselves with food and drink. The innkeeper waits on Que Zhong, who tells the porters to eat in the servant's quarters. They exit.

A runner and an emergency provisions collector from the imperial army arrive at the inn on horseback. They dismount, complaining of hunger and fatigue. They sit together with Que Zhong and he gets a chance to hear about the conditions along the border where he's headed. Que Zhong learns that the imperial army has been unable to defeat a fierce woman general. When he inquires into the price of rice, the emergency provisions collector tells him that at the border money is like dust, and rice like gold. The military men pay and leave. Que Zhong decides to exchange his money for rice before arriving at the border, so that he'll be sure to be able to provide for the commoners and troops at the border. Momentarily he worries about exchanging the silver for rice, because the letter he's carrying has specified a cash donation, but then he reasons that it would be easy to trade the rice in for cash once he's there if necessary. He leaves to find somewhere to buy provisions.

Scene 23: *Ji zou* 計左 (Botched Plan)

*Wai*—Yuan Zhuobing's steward  
*Chou*—Que Lihou  
*Mo*—A servant of Que Lihou's  
*Sheng*—Yuan Zhuobing  
*Fujing*—Oarsman  
*Dan*—Miss Wu

Yuan Zhuobing's steward declares that his master has won accolades for defeating the male army of the Ruler of Darkness. He's been ordered to stay in the north to defeat the all-female army of the Ruler of Light. In Yuan's absence, the only problem has been the issue of Yuan's two beloved concubines. One of them was forced by Mme. Yuan to commit suicide, and the other was married off to Que. The steward has secretly sent word to Yuan to let him know what was going on before his return. Que joins the steward, telling him that he'd like to return Wu. Because he's heard that Yuan Zhuobing's boat will be arriving shortly, he has come to speak with him about returning Miss Wu to him. He pays the steward to act as a go-between.

Yuan Zhuobing's boat arrives. He explains that he's passing by his hometown, so took the occasion to stop and rest. The only problem is, he received a secret message

from his steward that his wife's jealousy has caused one of his concubines to commit suicide, and the other to be married off to a commoner. He sends servants ahead to prepare for his stopover at his home. He's worried that if his wife is still upset, they'll fight and people will talk, inappropriately. Just then, his steward, Que Lihou, Miss Wu, and Yichun arrive hurriedly in a boat. The steward tells Miss Wu to wait until he's had a chance to discuss the situation with Yuan before she boards the boat.

The steward pleads Miss Wu's case, but Yuan says that she's already been married to someone else and that there's nothing to discuss. The steward informs Miss Wu that Yuan is unwilling to meet, but that she'd better try to talk to him personally.

She boards his boat and tells him that she's experienced extreme hardships since he left for service. He gives no response other than a cold laugh. In an aside, Miss Wu speculates that he's being cold to her to put on a strong face in front of other people. If she can speak to him alone, he'll show his affection for her. She decides that she'll move towards the back of the boat to try to speak to him alone. Yuan Zhuobing tells her to stop. He says she's well-read and literate, doesn't she know that "spilt water is hard to collect?" He questions why she didn't commit suicide if she wanted to maintain her chastity to him. How is marrying another man staying chaste? She assures him that they've been sleeping separately, and that she's been chaste, but how, he asks, is he supposed to prove that? Yuan is certain that she's only come back to him because she's been married to an ugly man. If she'd be able to marry First-Place Exam Candidate Han, she wouldn't be returning. Yuan asks to speak to Que Lihou. The steward says he's on the small boat, and Yuan requests that he board the boat.

Que Lihou is scared to board because he fears that Yuan bears him ill will. He boards the boat. Que begins to explain, but Yuan tells him that he understands, and not to worry about it. It's all on account of his jealous wife. As for Zhou's suicide, it has nothing to do with him. As for his marriage to Miss Wu, they must be fated for one another and he doesn't blame Que. Que says that Miss Wu is unwilling to consummate the marriage. Yuan admonishes her, saying that beautiful women have sad fates and that she's obviously fated to be married to Que.

When they return, Miss Wu tries to escape to the devotional sanctuary, but Que won't let her. Miss Wu appeals to all the beautiful women in the audience to be contented and happy so long as their husbands are not quite as ugly as not-quite-Que. Que calls to the maid to tell her to prepare the lanterns—this time he wants to consummate his marriage with the lights on.

#### Scene 24: *Lu jun* 擄俊 (Handsome Captives)

*Xiaodan*—Ruler of Light

*Nizu*—Female Soldiers

The Ruler of Light opens the scene with four women generals. Her campaign has been successful and she's defeated every city in her path. She's found that the central plains are wanting in real men. There are men of letters, and military men, but this place has neither. She's heard that there are many good-looking men inland. She orders her four generals to find handsome men for her to choose amongst to serve as her companion. If any of them should secretly try to keep a man for herself, she'll be decapitated, and her

head will be presented as an example to the others. She orders them to present her with any attractive man they capture, she'll choose those she likes, and give the rest to the generals. Just then, four young men run onstage, the four generals capture them and present them to the Ruler of Light. None of these men is acceptable to her, so she gives them to her generals. They thank her, but ask how they're to take them with 8 people and only four horses. She instructs them to ride facing one another on the horses, as though the saddle and bridle were beds and bedding, and to have a good time. The generals each grab a man and ride off, singing happily.

Scene 25: *Mi chou* 密籌 (Secret Plan)

*Sheng*—Yuan Zhuobing

*Xiaosheng*—Que Zhong

Yuan Zhuobing enters with his retinue. He complains that while he has troops, there's not enough to feed them. He fears that the troops are on the point of surrender, and the generals are on the point of suicide. From outside, he hears hungry commoners pleading for provisions. With no help to offer, he has to turn a deaf ear to their pleas. He worries that if the troops have to go too much longer without provisions, they'll desert in search of food.

Yuan is surprised and delighted when he gets word from the Huguang 湖广 Pacification Minister that Que Lihou has donated provisions for the commoners and troops on the frontier. He recognizes Que's name and then remembers that he's the one who married Miss Wu. He remarks that you can't judge a man by his looks. Que Zhong is called in. He explains that he's come with provisions. Yuan Zhuobing is thankful and commends the generosity and loyalty of both Que Lihou and Que Zhong. Reading the document, he initially worries that Que Zhong will first have to exchange the money for rice, and with rice prices so high, there won't be much left to distribute. Que Zhong reassures him that he already exchanged the money for rice en route, and that there's plenty for the troops, and enough left over for the commoners.

The Pacification Minister immediately enlists Que Zhong as an assistant strategist, and straight away gives him an official's cap and belt to change into. Yuan further promises him that once there is peace and quiet along the border, he'll recommend that both Que Lihou and Que Zhong are given official rank. Finally, he asks everyone else to leave so that he can speak to Que Zhong alone. He explains that as for the distribution of provisions, he'll entrust that duty to Que Zhong, but he also has a secret mission for him, but is afraid he won't agree to it. In reply, Que Zhong says his only fear is that he's not up to the task, if he can perform it, he certainly will. Yuan explains that the Ruler of Light is looking for a Song Yu or Pan An (both proverbially handsome men) to accompany her. Could Que Zhong try to infiltrate her camp? He agrees to try.

Scene 26: *Shi jie* 師捷 (Military Success)

*Xiaodan*—the Ruler of Light

*Xiaosheng*—Que Zhong

*Sheng*—Yuan Zhuobing

The Ruler of Light opens the scene with her four women generals. Que Zhong enters hurriedly, dressed in finery and is grabbed and brought before the Ruler of Light for her inspection. Getting a close look at him, she's pleased, thinking him better looking than Pan An or Wei Jie. She asks him if he'd be willing to serve as her husband in the encampment. He says he's willing. She then asks Que Zhong to report on the status of the imperial troops. According to plan, he tells her that they're all starving and ready to desert their posts in search of food. She instructs her generals to choose a horse for Que Zhong, so they can all ride together. They all exit.

Yuan enters with his retinue. He's looking for a place to set up an encampment. There's a tall mountain in the area, and he asks his attendants to report on its name. The mountain's name, he hears, is Phoenix Mountain. He believes this to be lucky because the phoenix is the king of birds. He decides to camp his troops on Phoenix Mountain. They exit.

The Ruler of Light enters, with Que Zhong. Her generals report back that the area has a tall mountain, on top of which they saw the flags of the imperial forces, and suspect that they've made camp there. The Ruler of Light wants to send a scout to report on the situation at the camp before she launches an attack. Being a Southerner, she doesn't think Que Zhong would be suspected, and asks him to go. Que Zhong feigns reluctance to leave her, in case he should be caught. She's touched by his feeling for her, and fully convinced by his ruse. She then orders her generals to employ the formation, "A Hundred Birds Pay Court to the Phoenix."

Que Zhong heads to the encampment to report to Yuan. He says that he was able to infiltrate her camp and become her favorite. The enemy is fierce, and has already arrived at the base of the mountain, waiting on him to report back. He advises Yuan that first he should have his troops feign defeat, then return during the night at third watch. Que, having gone to bed with the Ruler of Light will hear them signal their attack with an explosion. Then, he'll behead the Ruler of Light and rejoin Yuan and his forces. To forestall any chance that he be suspected, he tells Yuan to have someone chase him from the encampment when he returns to the Ruler of Light. They exit.

The Ruler of Light asks the name of the mountain where the imperial forces are encamped. When she hears they're on Phoenix Mountain she's worried that her "Hundred Birds Pay Court the the Phoenix" strategy might be ill-fated. From offstage they hear, "Catch the spy!" and Que Zhong rushes onstage. He reports that the imperial forces are unprepared and disorganized. In a show of empty intimidation, they're moving down the mountain to attack. He advises the Ruler of Light to counterattack. Her troops march forward, and Yuan and his troops feign a quick defeat and return up the mountain to their camp. With darkness approaching, there is not enough time for The Ruler of Light's troops to climb the mountain and launch an offensive. She decides that they'll rest for the night, and head up the mountain in the daylight. Que Zhong grabs the Ruler of Light and leads her off to bed. Just as the troops are singing they hear the beating of the third watch, and an explosion. The generals rush to report back. They call offstage to warn the Ruler of Light of the attack. Que Zhong responds for her. He instructs them that the enemy will be easy to defeat—dispatch them quickly so the Ruler of Light can sleep peacefully. Yuan and his troops confront the female troops. During the attack, Que Zhong rushes out carrying the Ruler of Light's head. When her troops see her severed head, they

flee in all directions. Yuan credits Que Zhong for their victory, and says he'll notify the emperor immediately of his and Que Lihou's service. He assures him that they'll doubtlessly be rewarded high office.

Scene 27: *Xi qi* 錫祺 (Auspicious Reward)

*Sheng*—Fortune-Granting Spirit Official of the Heavenly Realm

*Wai*—Offense-Pardoning Spirit Official of the Earthly Realm

*Mo*—Disaster-Mitigating Spirit Official of the Aquatic Realm

The Fortune-Granting Spirit, the Offense-Pardoning Spirit and the Disaster Mitigating spirit open the scene followed by an otherworldly judge and a spirit. The three spirits consult their registers to see who deserves reward and who deserves punishment. They see that Que Lihou, helped by his righteous servant Que Zhong, has both released his debtors from their obligations to him, and given 30,000 stone worth of provisions to the aid the shortage of food along the border. They consult the register further to see if he's previously committed any acts of demerit. His only offense, they find, was in precipitating a woman's (Miss Zhou) suicide, but that was not his fault. His life has two main afflictions, the first being his long list of bodily deficiencies, and the second being beautiful women. As for the beautiful women that afflict him, he's already married to three, so there's nothing to be done. The only afflictions to be resolved are his bodily deficiencies. They propose to send the Form Changing Spirit to transform him into a handsome man. They decide to write a memorial to the Jade Emperor requesting that Que Lihou be relieved of his strange form in because of his benevolent deeds.

Scene 28: *Xing bian* 形變 (Changing Form)

*Jing*—Form-Changing Spirit Envoy

*Chou*—Que Lihou

*Dan*—Miss Wu

*Wai*—Messenger

*Mo*—Messenger

*Fujing*—Yichun

The Form Changing Spirit Envoy enters, carrying a hatchet, chisel, and carpenter's plane—the tools of his trade. He explains that he has the power to change forms and has been sent by the Jade Emperor to change Que Lihou as a reward for his generosity. Que Lihou enters. His wife urges him to bathe in preparation for receiving the official title he's being awarded by the emperor for his help at the border. He asks Yichun to help him bathe. She does so, cursorily, then leaves. In order to conceal himself in plain sight, the Envoy of Transformation turns himself into a maid just after Yichun leaves. As he scrubs Que, the Envoy remedies each one of Que's deficiencies. When Miss Wu first sees Que Lihou after his bath she doesn't recognize him. Shocked to find an unknown man in her home, she asks him which guest he is. Surprised at her reaction, Que calls Yichun to come and hold up a mirror so that he can see how he's been transformed. First he thinks that it was all of Yichun's hard work scrubbing him in the bath that yielded

these results. When Yichun says that she left after only a short while, they decide that there must have been spirit intervention.

Scene 29: *Huo cu* 夥醋 (Group Jealousy)

*Laodan*—Miss Zou

*Xiaodan*—Miss He

*Fujing*—Yichun

Miss Zou and Miss Wu open the scene. Miss Zou remarks that Miss Wu has already been peacefully married to Que Lihou for half a year and still hasn't died from the stench. She wonders when they'll be able to escape their confinement, and how Miss Wu is able to bear a situation that both of them found insupportable. They've heard that Que has earned an exalted title from helping at the frontier. Miss He asks whether or not Miss Zou will allow Miss Wu to accept the title that would have been hers.

Yichun enters and tells them that there's news, but that she's afraid they won't believe it when they hear it. They ask her to quickly explain. She tells them that the master has been transformed. They say she's talking nonsense. She sings an aria explaining all of his transformations. They don't believe her. She informs them that he's coming to give thanks to the Buddha for his good fortune, so they can see for themselves.

Que Lihou comes in dressed in finery and with an elegant manner. Miss Zou and Miss Wu sneak a peek at him and are surprised. He gives thanks to the Buddha. Trying to charm him, they coquettishly congratulate him and ask him to have a seat. He pays them little attention and leaves. Miss Zou decides to go before Que and Miss Wu the following day before the imperial decree arrives to plead her case. Even if they don't win back their original places as first and second wife, they'll at least have a way of freeing themselves from the confinement and isolation of the meditation sanctuary.

Scene 30: *Nao feng* 鬧封 (The Fuss Over the Title)

*Xiaosheng*—Que Zhong

*Wai*—Imperial Messenger

*Mo*—Porter of Ceremonial Vestments

*Dan*—Miss Wu

*Fujing*—Yichun

*Laodan*—Miss Zou

*Xiaodan*—Miss He

Que Zhong enters in official clothing. An imperial messenger and the porter of ceremonial vestments follow, carrying the imperial edict and official robes. Que Zhong had been given the rank of assistant strategist, and has now been promoted to rank of official in charge of quelling uprisings. Que Zhong has heard that since he's left his master married another woman, three altogether. Strictly speaking, only the primary wife should receive a title, and not the concubines. Because both the first wife and third wife are bound to claim the title, he realizes that if only one is bestowed with a title there will be endless fighting between them. Because his master isn't skilled at handling women,

Que Zhong has gone to great trouble and personally asked the emperor for three titles. Que Zhong instructs the porter of ceremonial vestments to first present Que with his cap and belt along with one set of ladies headgear and clothing. He's to present the ladies' vestments one at a time to make the wives appreciate their titles fully.

Miss Wu enters. She's afraid that the other two wives will try to take her title away from her, so she decides to order that the door to their meditation sanctuary be locked for one day until she's had time to accept her title. When she orders the maid to go lock the door, the maid finds that they've already left. Having fled their seclusion, Miss Zou and Miss He come upon Miss Wu. The two have shed their religious garb. The three begin exchanging jabs immediately. When, referring to herself, Miss Wu says the title belongs to the primary wife, Miss Zou says sarcastically, "So, Yuan has also been honored with a title! May I ask, sister, when you'll be returning home to accept the title?" Each wife in her turn claims herself to be the primary wife, with rights to the title.

When Que Lihou enters and sees the two "celestial nuns," he asks what they are doing out of their meditation sanctuary. Miss Zou informs him that she's come out to accept her title. Que Lihou coldly replies that not only did they arrive too late, but that they also left too early. When the porter of robes brings out only one set of ladies clothes, the three wives begin to fight over them. Miss Zou wears the hat, Miss He the collar, and Miss Wu the jade belt. When Que Lihou sees this he laughs and says that only one of them can have the title. They ask him to decide which one. He says that by rights it should go to Miss Wu, but that now that he's a nobleman and not a commoner, he must strictly look upon Miss Zou as the first wife, so it'll go to her. Miss Wu complains that Miss Zou renounced her duties as the first wife and fled to the seclusion of devotional sanctuary because she couldn't stand sleeping with her husband, but is only now coming out of seclusion because a title is being awarded. Que Lihou tries to compromise with Miss Wu by promising her that she'll get all the perks of the title—Miss Zou will get it in name only. Miss Wu is still reluctant to give up the jade belt, but Que reasons that she has to, because she's the last wife to arrive. Joking, Yichun argues that in that case, the title should be hers! She tries to break the jade belt, Que Lihou stops her and gives it to Miss Zou.

When the porter of ceremonial vestments brings in the next set of ladies ceremonial clothes, Miss He and Miss Wu resume fighting. Once again Que has to pick who should get the title. Que reasons that he's got to abide by the previously established order—Miss Zou being the primary wife, Miss He the second, and Miss Wu the third. Miss Wu firmly asserts that the first title belonged to her, so certainly she should be given the second. She grabs the clothes, then Miss He grabs them, and finally Que takes them away. Evening the playing field, Miss He asks Miss Wu, "Neither one of us was willing to marry him, and we shouldn't accept the title, are you saying, virtuous lady, that you were willing to be with him?" Then she turns to Que and reminds him that at their first meeting, Miss Wu promised that when she rejoined Yuan, she'd make a case for him to save Miss Zou and Miss He as well. Que says that she needn't point the finger at Miss Wu. All three of them had disloyal intentions until his transformation, when they all became loyal. As for the titles being awarded today—not a single one of them deserves one. Continuing to order the women by how long each had been in his household, he gives the second set of clothes to Miss He, who immediately puts them on. Miss Wu exclaims that now that the other two wives have returned to the world, she'll renounce it.

When she tries to leave, she's stopped by Que. Just then, the porter of ceremonial vestments returns with the third set of clothes. The third set was just like the first two, but more heavily embellished with embroidery. Que Lihou remarks that Miss Wu has been rewarded for waiting, and tells her to put on the clothes. As she does, the other two wives realize the loss their impatience has caused. Once again, Yichun reasons that now it's her turn to get the fourth set of vestments. She asks the porter of whether he has another set to give to her.

Music is heard from offstage and Que Zhong enters with the imperial edict. Que's achievement is said to be as high as Bu Shi of the Han's, and accordingly he is awarded the title Shangyi jun 尚義君 (Lord who Loves Uprightness), and Zou, He and Wu are made titled ladies. After the reading of the edict Que Lihou gives Que Zhong credit and tries to bow to him. Que Zhong then tries to kowtow to Que and his wives. Finally, Que declares that from now on they'll no longer know each other as master and servant, but as uncle and nephew. They all four bow together.

## B. *Bimuyu* Scene Summaries

Roles:

*Sheng* 生—male lead

*Dan* 旦—female lead

*Xiaosheng* 小生—younger male, secondary male

*Xiaodan* 小旦—younger female, secondary female

*Laodan* 老旦—older female, secondary female

*Chou* 丑—clown

*Jing* 淨—villain, spirit, supporting role

*Fujing* 副淨—supporting role

*Wai* 外—older male

*Mo* 末—male

### Scene 1: *Faduan* 發端 (Starting Out)

*Mo*—Prologue Speaker

The first scene of the play is an introductory scene in which the Prologue Speaker, in the voice of the stage manager/playwright, introduces broadly the play's main characters and themes. Here he notes the originality of the material, the hero and heroine's extreme devotion to one another, and the help consequently accorded them by their benefactor, Fisherman Mo, and the spirit Lord Pacifier-of-Waves.

### Scene 2: *Er re* 耳熱 (Burning Ears)

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu

*Wai*—Male theatergoer

*Fujing*—Male theatergoer

*Laodan*—Female theatergoer

*Chou*—Female theatergoer

*Jing*—Monk

*Mo*—Friend of Tan Chuyu

The action of the play itself starts in scene two, when in accordance with drama conventions we meet the play's hero Tan Chuyu. Tan introduces himself as the typical, unmarried, wandering scholar who, after being orphaned at a young age is forced to write drama lyrics for a living. Tan Chuyu had made plans to see a play's performance, but is slowed by the antics of a less cultured crowd. These antics include slapstick humor derived from the fact that the crowd consists of a mix of men and women and a monk.

One man is cursed for pinching a woman's backside, and the monk is cursed for stealing a woman's shoe. Tan is too late to watch the performance. Tan eventually runs into two friends who tell him of the extraordinary beauty of the play's leading woman, Liu Jiangxian. Tan Chuyu makes plans with one of his friends to attend Liu Jiangxian's next performance.

Scene 3: *Lianban* 聯班 (Assembling a Troupe)

*Xiaodan*—Liu Jiangxian

*Dan*—Liu Miaogu

*Fujing*—Liu Wenqing, Miaogu's father

The third scene opens with Liu Jiangxian introducing herself. She explains that she has always done all she can to earn as much money as she can for her husband and family. She explains that her hard work coupled with her good looks, voice and memory, has earned her a large fortune. Her daughter, on the other hand, has yet to learn all but the most bookish aspects of their trade. Liu Jiangxian says that since she is at home without much to do, she will teach her daughter her family secrets for earning money. She calls in Liu Miaogu, her superior in terms of looks and talent, and begins explaining to her how she can make the most off each of her suitors by practicing the "Three do's and three don'ts," whose basic idea is to lead on men but don't, in the end, give in to them, so as to keep them hooked for as long as possible. Liu Miaogu is shocked at the depravity and deception in her mother's instructions and refuses to do anything but perform the most virtuous roles. Liu Miaogu's father, Liu Wenqing, also makes his entrance in this scene. He tells his wife and daughter that he's filled all the positions to form a smaller troupe except a "great painted face." He plans on filling this role by posting an advertisement outside their gate. The two parents take Liu Miaogu's suggestion in naming the small troupe "Jade Bamboo Shoots" because, they reason, while the troupe is new and secondary to the "Colored Clouds Dance" troupe, it will still achieve its own separate greatness.

Scene 4: *Bie chang* 別嘗 (Distinguishing Tastes)

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu

*Mo*—Friend of Tan Chuyu

*Wai*—Actor

*Xiaosheng*—Actor

*Jing*—Actor

*Chou*—Actor

*Xiaodan*—Liu Jiangxian

*Dan*—Liu Miaogu

In scene four Tan Chuyu and his friend arrive at the theater early so that Tan's friend can point out Liu Jiangxian to him before the performance starts. As the actors and actresses enter, Tan's friend points out Liu Jiangxian, but Tan thinks that Liu Miaogu's beauty is far superior. The two begin debating which woman is more beautiful, until in an

aside Tan Chuyu decides to pretend to agree with his friend so that Liu Miaogu's beauty will be kept quiet and he can reach her before anyone else has had the chance. Tan Chuyu decides that he must win Liu Miaogu, and in order to do so he will start by following her home after the performance in order to see where she lives and eventually find a way to get closer to her and her family.

Scene 5: *Ban zei* 辦賊 (Dealing with Bandits)

*Xiaosheng*—Murong Jie  
*Laodan*—Murong Jie's wife  
*Jing*—Maid  
*Wai*—Envoy

Scene five introduces *Bimuyu*'s secondary plot. The scene begins with Murong Jie introducing himself. He is a general in Tingzhou, Fujian, and his duty is to suppress a group of bandits. The main theme of this scene is both his and his wife's wish to retire to a simple life. Murong's wife urges him to retire as soon as possible, but Murong insists on staying in office until he sees that the situation with the bandits has been taken care of. Towards the end of the scene, Murong gets word that the bandits are about to come down from the mountains to attack. He explains to his wife that he has designed clever strategies to assure defeat over the bandits.

Scene 6: *Jue ji* 決計 (Deciding a Strategy)

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu

In the sixth scene Tan decides whether or not he should fill the position of "great painted face" that he saw advertised when he followed Liu Miaogu home after the performance. He is reluctant to stoop as low as to become an actor, especially a painted face, but finally decides he should take the position so he can gain easy access to Liu Miaogu.

Scene 7: *Ru ban* 入班 (Entering the Troupe)

*Fujing*—Liu Wengqing  
*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu  
*Wai*—Actor  
*Mo*—Actor  
*Jing*—Actor  
*Chou*—Actor  
*Xiaosheng*—Drama Teacher  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu

The seventh scene all but seals the marital bond between Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu. Tan is admitted into the troupe and meets the drama instructor who explains Erlang's position as the patron spirit of drama. He then lectures on the rules that must be

upheld in order to avoid negative consequences, such as sickness and misfortune that can be imposed by Erlang if the players do not behave as they should. Liu Miaogu sees that Tan has joined the troupe and knows his intentions in doing so. She then expresses her willingness to marry him.

Scene 8: *Kou fa* 寇發 (Bandit Uprising)

*Fujing*—Shan Dawang  
*Chou*—Beastly Soldier  
*Xiaosheng*—Murong Jie  
*Wai*—General  
*Mo*—General  
Troops

At the beginning of scene eight, Shan Dawang, the leader of the bandits, introduces himself. He is part beast and part human, and hopes to lead his vicious and beastly army to defeat Murong Jie's troops. Murong Jie defeats the bandits by setting up unexpected explosions along their path. The bandits are left burned and charred, but some are able to flee to the mountains.

Scene 9: *Cao zha* 草札 (Drafting a Letter)

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu

In the ninth scene Tan Chuyu writes Liu Miaogu a love letter, which he plans to throw to her secretly while the troupe is rehearsing. For security, he writes the letter in hard-to-read classical language, to prevent trouble should anyone find it. His letter expresses his desire to be promoted to the role of leading man so that he can work more closely with Liu Miaogu.

Scene 10: *Bian sheng* 變生 (Changing to *Sheng*)

*Wai*—Actor  
*Mo*—Actor  
*Jing*—Actor  
*Chou*—Actor  
*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu  
*Xiaosheng*—Drama Teacher  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu  
*Fujing*—Liu Wenqing

In scene ten some of the players are being required to recite their assigned lines to the drama instructor. A couple of the players get mad at Tan Chuyu when he can recite not only his own lines, but their forgotten lines as well. When the drama instructor leaves, the actor of the troupe who plays the *sheng* (actually played by the *chou*), starts to fight physically with Tan Chuyu and tries to convince the actors to gang-up with him. When

Liu Miaogu comes to Tan Chuyu's aid he gives her the love letter. Miaogu responds to the letter by singing in classical language that she knows the other actors will not understand. She advises Tan Chuyu to threaten to leave the troupe in order to be promoted to leading man. When Tan Chuyu speaks to Liu Wenqing, he complains that the painted face role is beneath him. He says he accepted it thinking that he would get to play heroic characters, but rarely gets the chance. Liu Wenqing goes through all the possible roles, with Tan refusing each one, until he finally arrives at the leading male, which Tan accepts.

Scene 11: *Hu wei* 狐威 (Borrowed Prestige)

*Jing*—Qian Wanguan

*Mo*—Attendant

*Wai*—Local civilian leader (*difang zongjia* 地方總甲)

*Fujing*—Local civilian leader

*Laodan*—Local civilian leader

Scene 11 gives the audience an introduction to Qian Wanguan, the landlord and usurer who eventually plans to make Liu Miaogu his twelfth concubine. This scene establishes his character. As his name suggests, he is a rich man, primarily concerned with money, even at the cost of cheating the less fortunate. Qian Wanguan discusses who should play at Lord Yan's upcoming temple festival. Liu Jiangxian had played at the previous year's festival and Qian Wanguan had become her patron. Qian's friend informs him that the female lead of the "Jade Bamboo Shoots" troupe, Liu Miaogu, is even prettier than her mother, Liu Jiangxian. At the end of the scene Qian Wanguan decides that he must see Liu Miaogu for himself. This scene also adds to the play's side commentary on naming. A large portion of the scene is taken up with Qian Wanguan's demand and explanation of why he would like to be called "Honorable Master Qian" 錢老爺 instead of simply "Master Qian" 錢爺. His request is somewhat ironic given the fact that he has proven in this scene that he is anything but "honorable."

Scene 12: *Fei dun* 肥遁 (Contented Reclusion)

*Xiaosheng*—Murong Jie

*Mo*—Servant

*Laodan*—Murong Jie's wife

*Chou*—Servant, *Mo*'s wife

Because he has defeated the bandits, Murong Jie is allowed to retire in scene 12. This scene focuses on the symbolic change from "public servant" to "private recluse." In preparation for commencing their lives in seclusion, Murong Jie and his wife compose farewell songs for their black gauze cap and phoenix headdress. Murong throws his cap into the water, parting symbolically from his official post, and his wife does the same with her phoenix headdress. To make their transformations complete, Murong Jie, his wife, and his servant all change their names. Murong Jie becomes "Old Fisherman Mo," his wife is called "wife" (*niangzi* 娘子) instead of the more formal "lady" (*furen* 夫人)

and the servant's appellation is changed from "majordomo (*yuanzi* 院子) to "Fisher-boy" (*yutong* 漁童). The two couples travel by boat to a secluded place in the mountains of Zhejiang where they can build a small thatched hut and fish for a living.

Scene 13: *Hui jin* 揮金 (Throwing Money Around)

*Xiaodan*—Liu Jiangxian  
*Jing*—Qian Wanguan

In scene 13 Qian Wanguan has seen Miaogu and wishes to make her his twelfth concubine. At the beginning of the scene, Liu Jiangxian laments the fact that her daughter has failed to use her charms to make the family more money. Then she exits and Qian Wanguan expresses his intentions and says that since Liu Jiangxian is already fond of her, she will be unable to refuse his proposal, especially after she sees the thousand taels he is willing to offer as payment. The two meet, and after feigning reluctance because of Miaogu's age, etc., Liu Jiangxian gives in and agrees to sell Miaogu to him as a concubine for one thousand taels.

Scene 14: *Li bi* 利逼 (Pressured for Profit's Sake)

*Dan*—Liu Miaogu  
*Xiaodan*—Liu Jiangxian  
*Wai*—Porter  
*Mo*—Porter

Scene 14 builds up to the play's major climax. In this scene Miaogu sees the trunk that contains her betrothal money and asks her mother what is in it. Her mother tells her to guess. Miaogu guesses that it contains costumes, fabrics, or songbooks, but is horrified when her mother tells her that it contains her betrothal money and that she will be given away in marriage after her performance the next day. This revelation is followed by one of the most important dialogues in the play, in which Miaogu argues to her mother that she is already married. Her mother is astonished and asks how she could possibly be married without her parent's permission. Miaogu replies that her parents gave her permission to marry when they asked her to call Tan Chuyu her husband onstage. Liu Jiangxian scoffs, telling Miaogu she is absurd and cannot confuse what happens on stage for real life. Once Miaogu realizes she cannot persuade her mother she goes to her room and at first resolves to kill herself, but then decides that she should not die a quiet death.

Scene 15: *Xie wang* 皆亡 (Together in Death)

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu  
*Wai*—Actor  
*Mo*—Actor  
*Chou*—Actor  
*Jing*—Qian Wanguan

Scene 15 is arguably the most important scene in the play. Qian Wanguan arrives pompously at the theater, hoping that everyone will look at him and know he is about to acquire the play's beautiful female lead. When he sees Miaogu she asks him if she can select the scenes she plays, since this will be her last opportunity to perform. Qian Wanguan decides to indulge her. Tan Chuyu is angry and surprised at Miaogu's nonchalant behavior. Miaogu performs *The Thorn Hairpin*. In her performance she curses Qian Wanguan, and when she is supposed to jump into the water, she really jumps into the water beside the theater and Tan follows after her. Qian Wanguan leaves quickly, hoping to avoid trouble, but angry spectators run after him to accuse him at the *yamen* of causing the couple's death.

Scene 16: *Shen hu* 神護 (Spirit Protection)

*Wai*—Lord Pacifier of Waves  
*Fujing*—Otherworldly Judge  
 Spirits  
*Jing*—God of Earth  
*Xiaosheng*—Almsgiver  
*Laodan*—Almsgiver  
*Mo*—Daoist Priest  
*Chou*—Daoist Priest  
*Sheng*—Supplicant  
*Xiaodan*—Supplicant  
*Mo*—Local God of the Earth  
*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu  
*Zhong*—Shrimp, Snail, Crab, and Turtle Generals

In Scene 16 Lord Pacifier-of-Waves decides to save the two lovers from death, since they have both displayed virtuousness and loyalty in their fidelity to one another. In order to save the two, he calls on his underlings, a shrimp, a crab, a snail and a turtle, to help carry out the task. He changes Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu into a pair of sole fish. Then the shrimp, snail, crab, and turtle guide them safely to the net of Old Fisherman Mo. After they reach his net they will return to their original forms.

Scene 17: *Zheng li* 征利 (Fighting over Profit)

*Chou*—Corrupt magistrate  
*Xiaosheng*—Yamen runner  
*Dan*—Yamen runner  
*Wai*—Plaintiff  
*Laodan*—Plaintiff  
*Jing*—Qian Wanguan  
*Mo*—Porter  
*Xiaodan*—Liu Jiangxian

Scene 17 resolves the issue of who gets to keep the thousand taels of silver originally given to Liu Jiangxian for Liu Miaogu's betrothal. The townspeople who watched the two lovers jump into the water attempt to extract the money out of Qian Wanguan and Liu Jiangxian so that they won't bring the case to court. The townspeople, Liu Jiangxian, and Qian Wanguan all end up going to court to settle and a greedy magistrate finally ends up with the thousand taels.

Scene 18: *Hui sheng* 回生 (Returning to Life)

*Mo*—Fisherman Mo/Murong Jie's Servant  
*Zhong*—Shrimp, Snail, Crab, and Turtle Generals  
*Chou*—Servant's wife  
*Xiaosheng*—Fisherman Mo/Murong Jie  
*Laodan*—Fisherman Mo's wife  
*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu

In scene 18 Old Fisherman Mo's male servant is fishing and finds that his net is so heavy he cannot lift it himself. He calls his wife over to help and they lift the two large sole fish out of the water. The two fish are so entwined together that the servant's wife says she cannot stand to look at their embrace without becoming jealous. The two decide to cover the fish with their grass capes and call the master and his wife to see them. After they exit, the shrimp, crab, snail, and turtle enter and lead the *sheng* and *dan* to take the place of the sole fish underneath the grass capes of the two servants. When Old Fisherman Mo, his wife, and the two servants come back they are surprised to find that the fish are in fact two human beings. They ask Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu to tell them what has happened to them. After they recount their stories, Old Fisherman Mo asks the couple to stay with them and also hopes to see that they are properly married.

Scene 19: *Cun jin* 村醮 (Village Nuptials)

*Wai*—Woodcutter  
*Jing*—Farmer  
*Fujing*—Gardener  
*Xiaosheng*—Fisherman Mo  
*Chou*—Shepherd boy  
*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu

In scene 19 Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu are married in an outrageous country wedding. Because Old Fisherman Mo is just a "simple fisherman," and can't afford a grand wedding, he invites the old woodcutter, the old farmer, and the old gardener from his isolated mountain village to come join them and share in providing for the banquet. Each old man explains that he has stopped his work to go to the wedding for the sole purpose of getting drunk. All three of the men bring contributions, the fruit of their labor,

to supply the feast. The woodcutter brings a bunch of pine wood, the farmer brings his own brew of rice wine, and the gardener brings a homegrown basket of celery. They have to improvise with the music and with the attendants to the bride and the groom, and happily, the shepherd boy shows up in time to become the master of ceremonies. He adds a lot of spirited antics to the wedding, and when it comes time to get Miaogu to drink her share, he has to resort to threatening to bite off three inches of Tan Chuyu's penis before she will drink enough to satisfy him. What is interesting is that even though it is presented as a loose, country wedding, in the end it is still completely upright. In the beginning, Old Fisherman Mo announces that the women will be entertained inside, and that the men will gather outside. Even in his reclusion in the mountains, Old Fisherman Mo has not totally lost sight of Confucian propriety.

Scene 20: *Qie fa* 竊發 (Stealthy Sortie)

*Fujing*—Shan Dawang, with retinue  
*Jing*—Strategist

In scene 20 we find out that Shan Dawang is planning another attack. Since his defeat he has been hiding in the mountains and rebuilding his forces for his next attack. In order to not be defeated a second time he enlists the help of a military strategist. The abilities of the military strategist are said to surpass those of Chen Ping and Zhuge Liang.

Scene 21: *Zeng xing* 贈行 (Parting Gift)

*Xiaosheng*—Fisherman Mo  
*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu  
*Laodan*—Fisherman Mo's wife  
*Mo*—Servant  
*Chou*—Servant

In scene 21 Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu leave Old Fisherman Mo's residence to follow his advice that Tan take the upcoming official examinations. Old Fisherman Mo provides money for their travel expenses and the scene ends with the two couples parting.

Scene 22: *Ju ji* 譎計 (Deceitful Scheme)

*Fujing*—Shan Dawang  
*Jing*—Strategist

In scene 22 Shan Dawang and his military strategist come up with their plan to win victory. Shan Dawang is worried because he has heard that the court is hoping to find Murong Jie to ask him to return to service. The strategist suggests that they pay someone one thousand taels to impersonate Murong Jie by hiding in a somewhat remote location where he is sure to be found. After being found the imposter will be given Murong Jie's post and when he fights the bandits he will surrender his troops.

Scene 23: *Wei yin* 偽隱 (False Reclusion)

*Chou*—Murong Jie's impersonator

*Wai*—Yamen runner

*Jing*—Yamen runner

*Fujing*—Shan Dawang

In scene 23 Murong Jie's impersonator enters carrying a fishing pole and a bag containing a black gauze cap and round collar such as would be worn by an official. When the two yamen runners find him, he very briefly insists that he is not Murong Jie, to fool the runners into thinking with more certainty that he is Murong Jie. When the runner finds that the impersonator is carrying a black gauze cap and circular collar he is sufficiently convinced that he has found Murong Jie and Murong agrees to go with him to be reinstated to his former post. Shortly after his arrival the bandits attack and he surrenders after momentarily feigning resistance.

Scene 24: *Rong fa* 榮發 (Setting Forth in Glory)

*Dan*—Liu Miaogu

*Fujing*—Maid

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu, with retinue

Scene 24 demonstrates the marital unity between Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu. Liu Miaogu is staying in Tan Chuyu's hometown and eagerly awaits his return from the official examinations. He finally returns in glory and announces that he has been given the former post of Murong Jie in Tingzhou county. Liu Miaogu's first concern is whether she will be able to accompany Tan Chuyu to his post. Tan assures her that since he has already proven he was willing to give her his life, he will certainly not concede to live without her when he is in service. Miaogu suggests that while they are on their way they pay a visit to Old Fisherman Mo to thank him for his charity. She also suggests that they thank Lord Yan (Lord Pacifier-of-Waves) by hiring actors to perform on his festival day. The couple is worried that they will not arrive in time for Lord Yan's festival because it is only one month away. Tan decides to have a servant go ahead of him to bring Old Fisherman Mo a celebratory letter and to make preparations for the day of Lord Yan's festival.

Scene 25: *Jia shen* 假神 (Impersonating the Spirit)

*Xiaosheng*—Fisherman Mo

*Laodan*—Fisherman Mo's wife

*Wai*—Tan Chuyu's attendant

In scene 25 Old Fisherman Mo receives Tan Chuyu's letter. From the letter Old Fisherman Mo learns that Tan Chuyu will take over his former post in Tingzhou. He also learns that the couple will be stopping by on their way to pay thanks to their benefactor.

On hearing this news, Old Fisherman Mo's wife suggests that he give Tan Chuyu all the advice he needs to be successful at his post in Tingzhou. While Old Fisherman Mo would like to help Tan, he is reluctant to do so because he no longer wants to be involved in official life. He decides that in order to help Tan Chuyu succeed at his post, but still maintain a distance from political service, he will secretly give Tan Chuyu a "Things You Should Know" (*xuzhi* 須知) book of advice, naming Lord Pacifier-of-Waves as its author. Tan Chuyu will not be suspicious when he sees the book because Lord Pacifier-of-Waves has aided him in the past.

Scene 26: *Yi ce* 貽冊 (Bequeathing the Book)

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu  
*Jing*—Tan Chuyu's servant  
*Fujing*—Maid  
*Xiaosheng*—Fisherman Mo  
*Laodan*—Fisherman Mo's wife

In scene 26 Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu return to Old Fisherman Mo's thatched hut in the mountains to show their gratitude. During their visit they ask Old Fisherman Mo and his wife to come with them and live a life of splendor, but Old Fisherman Mo refuses saying that he could never again live in proximity to officialdom. When Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu are preparing to board their boat and leave, Old Fisherman Mo tells his wife to hide the book in her sleeve. She sees to it that it is hidden in the departing couple's luggage.

Scene 27: *Ding you* 定優 (Engaging the Troupe)

*Wai*—Tan Chuyu's servant  
*Mo*—Actor  
*Fujing*—Actor

In scene 27 Tan's servant arrives to make arrangements for Lord Yan's festival. Lord Yan uses his powers to postpone the festival with heavy rain so that Tan Chuyu and Liu Miaogu will be able to arrive in time. Tan's servant ends up employing Liu Jiangxian's troupe to perform at the festival and then leaves to relay the news to Tan Chuyu.

Scene 28: *Qiao hui* 巧會 (Marvelous Meeting)

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu  
*Wai*—Tan Chuyu's servant  
*Mo*—Actor  
*Xiaodan*—Liu Jiangxian  
*Laodan*—Actor

*Fujing*—Liu Wenqing

Liu Miaogu and Tan Chuyu arrive at Lord Yan's temple in scene 28. They arrive just before Liu Jiangxian is to perform and anchor their boat beside the stage. Liu Miaogu wants to see if her mother has true feelings for her, but does not want her mother to be swayed by her new wealth and status. In order to test Liu Jiangxian's sincerity, the couple does not reveal their identity (although it is obvious that they are people of wealth and rank). From inside the boat, behind a curtain, they request that the actors perform from *The Thorn Hairpin*, the same play that Liu Miaogu performed when she jumped in the river. Liu Jiangxian, playing the role of the heroine's husband, who doesn't know his wife is still alive, cannot help but breakdown with genuine feeling and call out to Liu Miaogu during one of her arias. This prompts Liu Miaogu to reveal herself to her mother. Once Liu Jiangxian is convinced that the couple is not a pair of ghosts, the family joins in a joyous reunion. Then, a servant arrives to inform Tan Chuyu that the bandits have invaded Tingzhou and that he must go as quickly as possible to his post. Tan tells Liu Miaogu that she will stay with Old Fisherman Mo until the bandits are no longer a threat. The servant brings Tan's attention to the Lord Pacifier-of-Waves' book of advice, and Tan never doubts that it is anything but another display of the spirit's power.

Scene 29: *Pan yuan* 攀緣 (Climbing the Ladder)

*Wai*—Elder of Tingzhou

*Mo*—Elder

*Fujing*—Elder

*Chou*—Elder

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu

In scene 29 three months have passed since Tan has taken up service in Tingzhou. Tan's good governance has earned him the people's support. Tan collects his forces in preparation for fighting against the bandits.

Scene 30: *Zou jie* 奏捷 (Memorializing Victory)

*Chou*—Murong Jie's impersonator

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu, with retinue

*Wai*—Armored soldier

*Mo*—Armored soldier

*Fujing*—Shan Dawang

At the beginning of scene 30, the impersonator of Murong Jie announces that if the bandits loose the battle he will flee. Tan follows the advice of his spirit book and is able not only to stop the bandits, but also to follow them to their hiding place in the mountains to destroy it and take Shan Dawang captive. Murong Jie's impersonator has fled, so when Tan Chuyu asks his generals to identify the traitor who surrendered to the bandits previously, the impersonator is nowhere to be found. One general offers to search for the traitor in the mountains of Zhejiang where he has heard Murong may be hiding.

Scene 31: *Wu qin* 誤擒 (Mistaken Arrest)

*Xiaosheng*—Old Fisherman Mo  
*Wai*—General, with two soldiers  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu  
*Laodan*—Fisherman Mo’s wife

The general arrives at Old Fisherman Mo’s thatched hut in scene 31. Upon seeing this man, Old Fisherman Mo thinks that he is being called back into service, so is already reluctant to admit his identity. Old Fisherman Mo, his wife, and Liu Miaogu are all shocked when they hear that Tan Chuyu is charging Mo with treason. The fact that Tan’s wife is residing with Old Fisherman Mo is not enough to convince the general of his innocence; so all three are brought to Tingzhou with the general.

Scene 32: *Hai ju* 駭聚 (Astonishing Reunion)

*Sheng*—Tan Chuyu  
*Wai*—General  
*Dan*—Liu Miaogu  
*Mo*—General  
*Xiaosheng*—Fisherman Mo/Murong Jie  
*Jing*—General  
*Chou*—General  
*Fujing*—Shan Dawang  
*Laodan*—Fisherman Mo’s wife

In the final scene of *Bimuyu* an angry Fisherman Mo is brought to plead his case in front of Tan Chuyu. When Tan Chuyu realizes that the “traitor” is in fact, his benefactor, he is shocked and saddened, but decides he must not let his personal feelings compromise his official duties. In an effort to be impartial, Tan Chuyu asks some citizens of Tingzhou if the man before them is, in fact, their former military leader. When the people confirm that he is, Tan Chuyu is all but convinced that he will have to punish Murong Jie as a traitor. Even after Liu Miaogu pleads Murong Jie’s innocence he is still not convinced. Tan Chuyu decides to sentence Murong to death, but because of their friendship Tan asks that they share a last cup of wine together. What is interesting about the dialogue between Murong Jie and Tan Chuyu is that while Tan Chuyu is accusing Murong of being a traitor, it is in fact he himself who is being disloyal to Murong Jie. Murong, still incensed by Tan Chuyu’s ingratitude, reveals to him that he wrote Tan’s “Things You Should Know” book of advice. Tan then tells Murong Jie of the events that Murong supposedly participated in that led to his being called a traitor and it becomes obvious that Murong was unaware of these events. In order to once again test his guilt or innocence, Tan has Shan Dawang brought out. Shan Dawang is angry with Murong Jie’s imposter for disappearing after they were defeated. Shan Dawang mistakes the real Murong Jie for the imposter and says to him angrily that he was paid one thousand pieces of gold and promised a share of their plunder for his impersonation of Murong, so his life

should not be spared simply because he fled in the end. This reveals the truth to Tan Chuyu and after an unexpectedly small number of apologies to Murong Jie, the play concludes with a happy *tuanyuan* ending. Tan Chuyu invites Murong and his wife to stay with them in Tingzhou and Murong refuses, but finally convinces Tan Chuyu to come live near them in the mountains of Zhejiang as soon as his period of service is over.

### C. *Huang qiu feng* Scene Summaries

Roles:

*Sheng* 生—male lead

*Dan* 旦—female lead

*Xiaosheng* 小生—younger male, secondary male

*Xiaodan* 小旦—younger female, secondary female

*Laodan* 老旦—older female, secondary female

*Chou* 丑—clown

*Jing* 净—villain, spirit, supporting role

*Fujing* 副净—supporting role

*Wai* 外—older male

*Mo* 末—male

#### Scene 1: *Xian sheng* 先聲 (First Intonations)

*Mo*—Prologue Speaker

A summary of the play is presented. The main character in the play is Lü Zaisheng, a young scholar with an excess of good looks, talent, and romantic appeal.

#### Scene 2: *Bi se* 避色 (Avoiding Sex)

*Sheng*—Lü Zaisheng

*Chou*—Lü Zaisheng's servant

*Xiaodan*—Maid

*Jing*—Servant of Xu Xianchou

Lü Zaisheng's is so superlatively good-looking and intelligent that he's had to ask his servant to deny women entrance to his residence for fear that the continued comings and goings of beautiful ladies will attract the scorn of his neighbors. Despite his immense popularity with women, he's been unable to find an equal to make his wife. His servant enters to inform him that he's just turned away a beauty from a good family—aren't there any women permitted entrance? Zaisheng clarifies that the only woman he'll receive is the famous courtesan, Xu Xianchou (her name means "Immortal Companion"), a beauty and a poet.

A maid enters, announcing that the young mistress next door would like to pay her respects to Zaisheng in a letter that she's coming to deliver. Zaisheng's servant warns the maid that he receives so many such letters from young women that he no longer has

time to read them all. The maid complains at Zaisheng's lack of feeling over her mistress's wasted effort, and exits.

Next, a servant from Xu Xianchou's house comes asking to personally deliver a new book of her poems, and deliver the message that he should stop by as soon as he gets the chance. Zaisheng informs the servant that he's no longer leaving the premises because the attention from women has gotten to be too much. If she'd like to see him, she'll have to come by. The closing couplet remarks that with regards to fondness for sex, men and women are equals, if a young bachelor is handsome, the virgins will come in waves.

Scene 3: *Hou mou* 伙謀 (Partners in Planning)

*Fujing*—Qian Ernaing, a prostitute

*Chou*—Zhou Yijie, a fat prostitute

*Jing*—Sun Sanjie, an old prostitute

Qian Erniang, a prostitute, opens the scene. She is the most popular prostitute in town and always has plenty of customers. Lately though, she hasn't had any customers and, in fact, it's been 35 days since she's had a single one. She knows that hers isn't the only business that's hurting. She's joined by Zhou Yijie, a fat prostitute, and Sun Sanjie, an old prostitute, whom she's invited to discuss how to deal with the drop in business. The prostitutes conclude that what their patrons want is a courtesan who is cultured and can use sophisticated language. Only after finding a woman who can offer this will he decide to remain for several days. Sanjie mentions Xu Xianchou from next door as an example. Since meeting Lü Zaisheng, her reputation has grown to the extent that she is always busy and men are always coming and going at her gate. They decide that the way to get more customers is to win Lü Zaisheng's endorsement. That will be difficult to achieve though, because Zaisheng, since meeting Ms. Xu, has walled himself in his compound and will entertain only Ms. Xu. For their part, not knowing whether Ms. Xu will accept his invitation, they will go and offer their services to him. Instead of the client coming to patronize them, this time they will go to him, plying him with sweet words and gifts, so that he won't be able to refuse their company, and their reputations will be restored.

Scene 4: *Qing er* 情餌 (Love Bait)

*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou

*Mo*—Xu Xianchou's attendant

*Chou*—Zaisheng's servant

Xu Xianchou opens the scene, accompanied by an attendant. She explains that she's a famous prostitute. She's been very lucky in life. Without parents, she's her own master. Recently, Zaisheng has invited her to stay with him, so she prepares to stay for several days. Her attendant announces her arrival at Lü's, just as his servant responds that he's coming.

Zaisheng enters, seeing that Xu Xianchou has arrived. Xianchou quotes the *Shijing* to express her feeling that even though only a day has passed since their last

meeting, it felt like three autumns. Zaisheng asks Xianchou if she will remain with him for a few years until he achieves success, and then they can get married. Xu does not see any reason to wait to get married. With her own money and resources, he won't need to support her, so there's no reason to wait for his success. Lü explains that he'd like to marry a proper wife, making her his second wife.

In an aside, Xu thinks to herself that it sounds like this arrangement would work, unless his new wife does not agree that he should take a concubine. But, if she were to pick his main wife herself, she could ensure the best outcome. She responds to Lü saying that she will take care of the arrangements and gifts for his wedding herself. Lü is immensely grateful.

### Scene 5: *Chou hun* 籌婚 (Planning the Engagement)

*Xiaodan*—Mrs. Cao

*Dan*—Miss Cao (Cao Wanshu)

Mrs. Cao opens the scene, followed shortly after by her daughter, Miss Cao, who complains in song that she's been unable to find an equal match. Mrs. Cao complains that she's been unlucky in not having a son, but she does have a daughter who tops all the women of their time in looks and talent. Because the daughter is now sixteen, they will need to hurry up to find an appropriate match for her. She chides her daughter on setting her sights too high. Wanshu is holding out for someone who has both looks and talent. In this world, she explains, we can only expect a man to have either looks or talent, to expect both qualities in one person—what are the odds of finding such a man? Quoting the ancients, Miss Cao states her intention to find the best man in both looks and talent. If she were to settle on looks and compromise on talent, then she'd end up being stuck with a mediocre man for the rest of her life—how is that any small matter? Mrs. Cao agrees, but adds that in all a woman's life the age of sixteen is her peak, and after she passes that her blossom begins to wither. She sings “at fifteen she reaches beauty, at sixteen she's more beautiful than she'll ever be. But, a man doesn't reach his prime until thirty, when his beard is white only then can you call him a man.” All the matchmakers around insist that Jinling is the one place to find men with both looks and talent. Why not ask one over to find out who the best man is? Miss Cao responds that marriage is very important and should not be entrusted into the hands of a matchmaker, who is an interested party. If the words don't come from an uninterested party they'll just be full of the self-interest of the matchmaker and can't be trusted. Her mother agrees and suggests that they put the matter in the hands of the reknowned prostitute, poetess, and lyricist Xu Xianchou, whose judgment will be free from self interest. They'll invite her over and then after she comes, the daughter can trust her to answer their questions.

### Scene 6: *Dao piao* 倒嫖 (Reverse Prostitution)

*Chou*—Zaisheng's servant

*Fujing*—Qian Erniang, prostitute

*Jing*—Zhao Yijie, prostitute

*Mo*—Attendant of Zhao Yijie

The scene opens with Zaisheng's servant. He describes how funny and agreeable things are these days. The master has closed his doors to guests, trying to keep women from coming to visit him, and yet they keep coming. The more he tries to keep them out, the more they try to get in. His front gate has become like a city market. People say that because he is so good looking and so talented, Lü Zaisheng would look down on any woman who wasn't his match. This fact only makes them want to visit more. Each of them tries to outdo the other with their letters to win him over. It's as though he were the courtesan and they were the patrons. It's gotten to the point that even by spending one night with him, a courtesan's reputation soars, so the women were lining up at his gate every morning to offer to be his guest and to bring their notes of supplication. How can one man deserve such good fortune? Now Lü's not home. Some of the women will know this and not come, but others will continue to come and bring their notes. Lü's clothes are all in his study, so the servant plans to dress up and act like Lü and entertain the women in his stead.

A prostitute enters, singing of being a female patron of brothels (referring to Zaisheng as the object of her affections) and announces herself as Qian Erniang. She says that herself, Zhao Yijie, and Sun Sanjie have discussed it and decided that they'll patronize Lü Zaisheng. When the three convened it had already been 35 days since they'd seen any income and now it's already been over two weeks since then. Zhao Yiniang caught an illness and has been unable to go out, but she sent word over this morning that she'd like to go today; she'll be here any time. Yao Yijie enters with her servant carrying a carafe of wine. Zhao Yijie also sings about being a female patron of a male prostitute. She sees Qian Erniang and tells her that lately Sun Sanjie has redoubled her efforts and has seen clients and her business has turned around from where it was before, as has the business of their other sisters. It is only the two of them who still don't have clients. They'll now bring wine over and try in earnest to seduce Lü Zaisheng. They walk there together and arrive asking if anyone is at home.

Lü's servant enters, elegantly dressed and adopting his most winsome demeanor. He inquires as to who the women are, why they've come, and collects their offerings of money. He says that they'll need to give more money. The women say that that's the amount they came prepared with so they can settle the rest later. When they inquire where Lü Zaisheng is, he replies that he is Lü Zaisheng. The women say that they know what Lü looks like and know that he is not Lü. In aside he decides how to proceed. He turns to them and says that actually he's just a stand in for Lü because since Lü has so many women who want his company, he doesn't have time to see them all and has asked him to see some for him and choose the best. They think that if he is Lü's stand-in, he must know how to read and write, so they'll want him to write Lü's name on a gold fan that they brought so that they'll have gotten the rise in reputation that they'll looking for out of the meeting. Of course, the servant does not know how to read or write, but he assumes that they do not either, so he quickly agrees that it'll be no problem to for him to write on the fan. He pretends to write and they ask him to make sure to leave the mark of his seal on it several times for extra proof. The two prostitutes take the fan back and offer the servant wine. He drinks a big gulp and sings that it's late in the night. The two women ask to go to bed. The scene ends with the servant saying that the only thing that's left for

them to discuss is who should be the first to sleep with him. Each woman defers to the other.

Scene 7: *Xian cu* 先醋 (First Jealousy)

*Wai*—Qiao Yi'an

*Xiaosheng*—Attendant

*Xiaodan*—Qiao Menglan

*Chou*—Maid

Qiao Yi'an, an elderly man supported by a cane, introduces himself. From Nanjing, he's already been retired for twenty years. His wives and concubines have all passed on and left him no heirs. He has one daughter, who, although old enough to marry, has not been able to find a man to match her looks and intelligence. Because he's practically deaf and senile he no longer wants the responsibility of choosing his daughter's husband. She'll have to deal with the choice for the rest of her life, so despite the "three obediences" expected of women, he's leaving the decision entirely up to her. A matchmaker is coming today, and he plans on showing her directly to his daughter. If they can't agree on a suitable match, there's no need for him to see the matchmaker and hear any of her chattering.

Qiao's attendant reports that the matchmaker has arrived. Because Qiao is nearly deaf, he has to be shouted at before he understands. He tells his attendant to escort the matchmaker directly to Miss Qiao. As predicted, the matchmaker first tries to deal with the father, until he insists that she deal with Miss Qiao directly.

Miss Qiao Menglan enters, accompanied by a maid. Before leaving her father tells Miss Qiao that in his senility he's leaving her to attend to all their household affairs, including her marriage. She resists on the grounds that it might be improper, but he assures her that so long as she bears children, she'll be doing her filial duty to him. He exits, reiterating that today's bad matches are all made by deaf old people. The matchmaker proposes that Miss Qiao marry the richest man in all of Nanjing. Miss Qiao retorts that he might be rich, but what about his looks and talent? Matchmakers always make the most ordinary men out to be immortals, so there's no sense in her believing her claims. There's only one man Qiao is interested in, and if the matchmaker can arrange the match, she'll be fairly compensated. The man's name is Lü, he's the most talented scholar of the time. After he passed by her gate one day, Qiao was compelled to inquire into his identity and her neighbor told her who he is. She knows Zaisheng is the only man fit to be her match, but doesn't know where he lives. The matchmaker says that the match might work, but that there's one thing that Miss Qiao might not agree to, so she'll tell her that first. She explains that Lü isn't arranging the marriage for himself, he's having someone do it in his stead and he'll agree to whatever match they propose. Miss Qiao asks why she would have a problem with that, to which the matchmaker explains that the person choosing his betrothed is not a man, but a woman, a famous courtesan named Xu Xianchou. Xu Xianchou will choose Lü's wife under the condition that she be willing to let Lü take Xianchou as a concubine after they've married. Miss Qiao changes color and replies in a loud voice, asking how can he already have designs on a concubine before his wife has even crossed his gate?! In today's peaceful world, how can such a woman exist?

Then Miss Qiao concedes that she would not only agree to letting Xu be Lü's concubine, but she'd also not allow Miss Xu entertain other clients anymore. Laughing, the matchmaker replies that their marriage isn't even settled, so there's no reason for her to be jealous already.

Miss Qiao is reluctant to accept the alliance between Zaisheng and Xianchou, and hopes to entrust the matchmaker, He Erma, with the task of sewing discord between them. He Erma resolves to employ three stratagems to this end. First, she'll fix things so as to run into Lü on the street, instead of going to see him at his home. Secondly, in dealing with him she will mislead Zaisheng into thinking she's acting on Xianchou's behalf, not on the behalf of Miss Qiao. Thirdly, before proposing the match with Miss Qiao, she will first propose matches with several other girls that he won't be happy with, so that when he sees Miss Qiao's looks and talent he'll comply more readily. The two decide to discuss the plans in more detail over a meal and wine.

#### Scene 8: *Yu xian* 遇賢 (Encountering Virtue)

*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou

*Mo*—Xu Xianchou's attendant

*Fujing*—Maid

*Xiaodan*—Mrs. Cao

*Dan*—Miss Cao

Xu Xianchou opens the scene, accompanied by an attendant. Since she's made an agreement with Zaisheng, she's made finding him a suitable match her first concern. Considering how superlatively good looking and talented he is, the task will not be easy. There are only two women in all of Nanjing who might be his equal, one named Qiao Menglan and the other, Cao Wanshu. Wanshu has a mother and no father, and Menglan has a father and no mother. Both of them are unrivaled beauties and talented poets and neither of them is betrothed. Xu decides to visit the Cao family first and if that doesn't come to anything, visit the Qiao family second.

She and her attendant knock at the entrance to the Cao household. A maid answers and announces that a lady guest has come. Mrs. and Miss Cao greet their guest with admiration, having appreciated her poetry all winter. After they've exchanged compliments, Xianchou asks Mrs. Cao whether her daughter is betrothed. Mrs. Cao replies that while she's already sixteen, her daughter is not yet betrothed because of her unmatched looks and talent. Xianchou knows the finest men around, perhaps she might propose a match?

At this point Xianchou asks Wanshu to speak frankly about her wishes for a mate. After Wanshu responds in song, Xianchou discloses that she does know a perfect match for Wanshu's looks, talent, and character, but that he's already made a lifelong arrangement with herself. He'll marry and Xianchou will be number two. If Wanshu will agree to the match, Xianchou will see to the arrangements herself. Mother and daughter inquire into the identity of the man. Xianchou explains that the man is Lü Zaisheng, not yet twenty. Hearing his name, Wanshu is pleased. She shares privately with her mother the fact that Zaisheng is an extraordinarily good looking man of letters, and that they'd

better accept the match. Speaking on her daughter's behalf, Mrs. Cao affirms that they'll agree to the match and can proceed with the arrangements.

Scene 9: *Mei jian* 妹間 (Between Matchmakers)

*Fujing*—He Erma

*Sheng*—Lü Zaisheng

*Chou*—Zaisheng's servant

He Erma opens the scene lamenting the fact that Xu Xianchou got to Zaisheng before her. She's still going to follow Miss Qiao's three strategies, the first of which was to not go to meet Lü at his house, but to wait for him in the street. She's heard he'll be out today and is waiting for him on a busy street.

Lü enters with an attendant and sings that it's been over three months since he's been out and about and he's afraid of running into women. Just as he's about to pass by and head off stage, he's called by He Erma, asking if he's Lü Zaisheng. He Erma explains that she's a matchmaker for an extraordinary woman and that he should listen to what she has to say. Having gotten his attention, He Erma does as Miss Qiao told her and tells Zaisheng that she's been sent on Miss Xu's behalf, who asked her to look for a good match for him. She's found someone and wanted to discuss the match with Zaisheng in person. Zaisheng inquires into her age, looks, and character. Just as Miss Qiao instructed previously, He Erma first tells of a girl she knows that Zaisheng won't be interested in. She says that the woman is looking for her second marriage, she's twenty-four or five, and as far as her looks go she's at least a 3.5 or a 4. Her father is a beef butcher and has money, so Zaisheng wouldn't be needing to borrow any. She's sure he'd be willing to make the match. Zaisheng is angry and says that he wouldn't even settle for someone who was an 8 or 9, let alone a 3 or a 4. And then there's the fact that she's not a virgin, how can he even continue to discuss it! He Erma feigns surprise and says if he doesn't even want a girl who's an 8 or 9—that means that he wants a girl that's a full 10! He advises her to open her eyes and take a look at him. How could he marry anything less!

Having laid the trap, He Erma proceeds to reel him in, leading Zaisheng to believe that Xu Xianchou is attempting to arrange his marriage to an ugly girl, so she can keep him all to herself. Zaisheng falls for the ruse immediately and is grateful for having run into He Erma. Having gained his confidence, the matchmaker proposes a true match for Zaisheng: Miss Qiao. Miss Qiao's father is over seventy and has left her entirely in charge of arranging her marriage. Her residence isn't far, why don't they go have a look at her?

Zaisheng and Wanshu each get a look at one another and write poems to one another affirming their mutual interest. One hitch is that because Master Qiao has no sons, he'd like Lü to be adopted into the family. In an aside, Zaisheng says this will be complicated by his promise to Xu Xianchou, but tells the matchmaker that he's alone and wouldn't mind going to her household.

Scene 10: *Min ce* 冥冊 (Otherworldly Register)

*Mo*—Otherworldly attendant of the incense burner before the God of Literature

*Wai*—Otherworldly examiner  
*Xiaosheng*—The God of Literature

The scene is opened by an otherworldly attendant of the incense burner of Wenchang, God of Literature and the celestial overseer of civil service exams and official careers. An otherworldly examiner enters, carrying a stack of registers. He announces that he's the Pearl-Robed-Otherworldly Official. The attendant inquires as to the contents of the registers and is told that just like on earth, heaven has departments for the military, agriculture, ritual, and music. For every worldly good official, there is a corresponding constellation. In order for the two worlds to work in harmony, not one name can be missing. This year is the year for the triennial palace examinations, and it's the God of Literature's job to oversee which candidate succeeds.

The God of Literature enters to the sound of music, followed by two primary attendants, and an entourage of other spirits. Because the harmony between heaven and earth depends on it, he must choose a candidate who displays both virtue and literary talent. He must choose not only the most well-written exam, but the one that displays the most moral integrity.

Scene 11 *Xin li* 心離 (Hearts Estranged)

*Sheng*—Lü Zaisheng  
*Chou*—Zaisheng's servant  
*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou  
*Mo*—Xu Xianchou's attendant

Zaisheng is preparing for his trip to take the exam. He's made arrangements to marry Cao Wanshu, but the marriage will not take place until after he's taken the exam. Zaisheng is purposefully cold to Xu Xianchou, because he believes that she's trying to set him up with an ugly wife. First she attempts to give him travel money, but Zaisheng refuses to accept it because they are not yet formally married. Finally, she asks a servant to put it in his luggage. Then, she tries to feast him with wine before his journey the following day, but he puts on a cold expression and refuses to drink. Xu Xianchou doesn't understand why he's so dismissive of her proposed match, when she's assured Zaisheng that she's first-rate.

Hurrying to make things ready for Zaisheng's departure, Xianchou is asked to reattach a bag to Zaisheng's clothing. While she's sewing she finds a letter in Zaisheng's sleeve on which a poem is written in Zaisheng's hand on one side, and in a woman's hand on the other. She reads it and discovers that it's a poem from a woman (Qiao Menglan) asking that Zaisheng marry her and not keep Xu Xianchou as concubine. Xianchou determines to win him over before he departs, and to make inquiries about his arrangements with the other woman while he's gone.

Scene 12 *Ru chang* 入場 (Entering the Examination Hall)

*Laodan*—Errand runner for the God of Literature  
*Fujing*—Errand runner for the God of Literature

*Xiaosheng*—Examination official  
*Wai*—Examination official  
*Mo*—Examination official  
*Jing*—Examination official  
*Chou*—Examination official  
*Xiaosheng*—God of Literature

The errand runners open the scene. They've come to the world of red dust to ensure that the right candidate is picked first in the exam, harmonizing the *yin* and *yang* realms. Today is the day of the examinations and the God of Literature must also travel to the exam and prepare to dictate which posts go to which candidate.

Scene 13 *Bao jing* 报警 (Report of Border Trouble)

*Dan*—Military scout  
*Jing*—Wang Zhen, eunuch

A military scout enters hurriedly on horseback. Tasked with reporting on the situation at the border, the scout explains that the Mongol troops number in the hundreds of thousands, and they intend to take the capital. The scout has returned to report as quickly as possible to advise the court of the imminent threat. The scout remarks that urgent and classified information must be reported to the eunuch, Wang Zhen, who will then deliver the message to the palace.

The eunuch, Wang Zhen (an historical figure) explains his powerful position at court. He says that while the high officials Yu Qian, Liu Qiu, and Li Shimian (all historical figures) are all against him, they will not try to wrest control from him, and aside from those three, the others all belong to his faction. He'd like to usurp the throne, but in order to make this possible, he first needs to tie up the imperial troops so that no one dare challenge his usurpation. He's tried to find a border dispute to get the military involved in. Only a little more than two thousand of the Mongols' tribute to the emperor of three thousand horses made it, and though that was not the intention of the Mongols, Wang Zhen has executed the Mongol envoy in order to provoke war.

The scout returns to report to Wang Zhen on the movements of the Mongols at the border. The scout informs him that there are a great number of Mongols troops are rapidly heading towards the capital.

Wang Zhen is pleased that the Mongols have been incited to war. He decides to suggest that the emperor take the field of battle himself. That way, if they defeat the Mongols everyone will know it was his (Wang Zhen's) doing. But, if by chance they should lose, the blame won't fall on his shoulders. He passes down orders to gather troops and provisions.

The triennial palace examinations have just finished, but the results have yet to be released. Wang Zhen sends down an additional order to send the exam candidates back to their native places, and not continue to wait in the capital for the results, which will be announced at a later date.

Scene 14 *Guai xu* 拐婿 (Kidnapping the Bridegroom)

*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou  
*Sheng*—Lü Zaisheng  
*Chou*—Zaisheng's servant  
*Jing*—Porter  
*Fujing*—Porter  
*Mo*—Zaisheng's servant

Xu Xianchou announces that because he's believed untruths, Zaisheng is going to marry Miss Qiao alone, and abandon her. She's heard that he's arranged to marry Qiao Menglan, as an adopted son at her house, after he passes the exams. Now that he's returned from the capital, he'll soon be leaving for Qiao's house to abandon her.

Zaisheng enters, saying it's been two days since he returned from taking the exams. Xu Xianchou arranges for a sedan chair to come and pick up Zaisheng so that he'll be out of the house when the sedan chair from Qiao's house comes to escort him later on. He happily gets into the sedan chair. When the sedan chair from Qiao's house arrives behind a procession of music and drumming, they are quite surprised to find that Lü Zaisheng is not at home. They are sent off a the forged letter of divorce written by Xu Xianchou, letting Qiao know that she should find another husband because she's free from any tie to Lü Zaisheng.

Scene 15 *Yin cha* 姻讫 (Wedding Surprise)

*Wai*—Servant of Xu Xianchou  
*Sheng*—Lü Zaisheng  
*Chou*—Zaisheng's servant  
*Dan*—Cao Wanshu  
*Jing*—Attendant of the bridegroom  
*Fujing*—Maid  
*Jing*—Maid  
*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou

The groom arrives and is surprised that he's not arrived at Qiao's house as planned. When he asks for an explanation, he's told that the bride wants them to be married in a place equal to their elegance, so she's chosen that location. Zaisheng is impressed.

Scene 16 *Suan bao* 酸报 (Sour News)

*Wai*—Qiao Yi'an  
*Xiaosheng*—Attendant  
*Xiaodan*—Miss Qiao  
*Fujing*—Maid  
*Jing*—Porter  
*Chou*—Attendant of the bridegroom

Master Qiao opens the scene, saying his daughter is to be married that night. He calls for her. Miss Qiao enters, dressed in finery. When the sedan chair arrives with the procession, they find that it's empty. They look to the note given to the sedan chair bearers for an explanation. Menglan believes the letter to have been forged by Xianchou because it was written on her own poetry stationary. Her maid advises her to forget the wolf-hearted Zaisheng, if it wasn't a fated match she's better off forgetting him. Menglan resolves to try to change her tender heart into a heart of stone.

Scene 17 *Tie zhao* 貼招 (Posting a Notice)

*Mo*—Xu Ashu, Xu Xianchou's servant

*Chou*—Yin Siniang, masseuse

A servant of Xianchou's named Xu Ashu enters with glue and posters. He says that his mistress blames a Miss Qiao for driving a wedge between her and her lover. Because of this she's hatched a plan to reclaim her love. He's been tasked with posting a poster claiming to be from Miss Qiao, pleading that someone find Zaisheng and return him to her. His second task is to find Yin Siniang, a professional masseuse in the area. He's to invite her to come and work on Zaisheng to dispel his worries and help him forget about Miss Qiao. However, he cannot let Siniang find out about the poster. If she knew, she'd broadcast the information everywhere, and the ruse might be found out. After finishing hanging the posters, he goes to see Siniang.

Yin Siniang inquires as to where Miss Cao has moved. Xu Ashu tells her that they are inside the Hanxi gate in the Little West Lake neighborhood. The house with the big garden, that's where she lives. Siniang says that her hands are agile, but they can only cure body aches, not heart ache. Miss Cao will have to tend to her heartache on her own.

Scene 18 *Qiu luan* 囚鸞 (Imprisoned Phoenix)

*Sheng*—Lü Zaisheng

*Dan*—Cao Wanshu

*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou

*Fujing*—Maid

*Chou*—Yin Siniang

Zaisheng explains that while he's happy with his wife, Miss Cao, and his concubine Xu Xianchou, he still regrets that he didn't get to marry Miss Qiao. The only problem is that the two women are constantly keeping watch over him and won't let him out. He's wants to write a secret letter to give to the gardener to deliver, but with both of them watching him all the time, he doesn't even dare write it. There's nothing for him to do at the moment, but do as he's told like a prisoner.

Xu Xianchou and Miss Cao join him in drinking fine tea. They ask the maid to bring the chess board. When Zaisheng loses Xu Xianchou suggests that it's because his mind is wandering and calls for brush and ink to be brought so they can all write all their thoughts down to rhyme. Miss Cao agrees, saying that they'll all take turns composing in

rounds until late at night. They ask Yin Siniang to massage them while they compose poems and then they take a stroll together. The maid asks the mistresses of the house why the doors are all locked. They explain that it's because Zaisheng cannot be content with his lot, and they want to keep him from wandering. They warn the maid not to spread the news, they don't want people saying that Zaisheng is being sequestered.

Scene 19 *Jie zhao* 揭招 (Taking Down the Notice)

*Wai*—Bystander

*Mo*—Bystander

*Xiaosheng*—Bystander

*Chou*—Yin Siniang

The scene is opened by bystanders. They're going to keep a lookout for posted notices to take advantage of any money there is to be had. They see the notices posted in Miss Qiao's name, making an inquiry as to the whereabouts of Lü Zaisheng. Seeing the gathering by the poster, Yin Siniang approaches to see what she can overhear. When she hears them read the poster, she knows that they're talking about Lü Zaisheng, and having just found out where he's moved to, she knows his whereabouts exactly. Siniang and the locals are eager to claim the reward and she takes a copy of it the notice.

Scene 20: *Zu bing* 阻兵 (Blocking the Troops)

*Xiaodan*—Qiao Menglan

*Jing*—Attendant

*Chou*—Yin Siniang

The scene opens with Miss Qiao. She feels terribly wronged by Zaisheng. She is only 70% convinced about the letter supposed to be from him to her. For one thing, the handwriting isn't the same, and secondly, he didn't give her the letter himself. She decides to send a servant and a matchmaker out to make inquiries.

Yin Siniang enters the gate and asks if it's not the Qiao household. The servant asks her why she's come. She says only she will know Zaisheng's whereabouts, so she's come to report. When Miss Qiao finds out that a poster has been written in her name, and that it's a poster that brings shame upon her reputation, she's furious. She calls for her manservants to be her male army, and her maids to be her female army, because she's ready to deploy her troops. Yin Siniang tells her it will be impossible to seek redress because Xu Xianchou is so much more experienced and worldly. She makes the job seem impossible in order to get the most money out of Miss Qiao. She urges Qiao to wait for several days until the shine has worn off his new marriage. She assures her that Lü is certainly still thinking of her.

Yin Siniang promises that she can resolve the situation so that all parties are satisfied. Menglan tells Yin Siniang that she trusts her advice on the matter. Yin Siniang warns Menglan that she's going to have to give up the idea of having Zaisheng all to herself. Only if the wives are able to share him equally will the plan work. Menglan entrusts the job of convincing Wanshu and Xianchou to Yin Siniang. Yin Siniang assures

Menglan that she's known as the female Su Qin or Zhang Yi because she's so persuasive. Siniang asks Menglan if she's still intent on being the first wife. Menglan replies that of course she is, and Siniang says if that's the case then even spirits and immortals couldn't make that happen and advises Menglan not to think about that. Obviously, the first wife now, Miss Cao, would be the first wife. As for Xu Xianchou, she's long had a secret alliance with Zaisheng that's deep rooted, so she'll be hard to displace. Siniang asks Menglan to come to an agreement about the reward she will be given. Menglan says she'd pay three hundred taels to be first wife, but won't initially discuss the possibility of being second or third wife. Siniang eventually gets her to agree to give two hundred taels for second wife and one hundred for third wife.

Scene 21 *Fan juan* 翻卷 (Shuffling Exams)

*Xiaosheng*—The God of Literature

*Wai*—Otherworldly exam official

*Mo*—Head examiner

The God of Literature opens the scene with an otherworldly exam official. They review exams, hoping to determine which candidate displays the most moral integrity. When it comes to Zaisheng's exam, the exam official informs the God of Literature that Zaisheng is incredibly good looking and most admired by women. He avoids lasciviousness and bad behavior, and while his choices in marriage have been a bit frivolous, it was not by his own doing, and he should be given the honor of being made *zhuangyuan* 狀元 (first place). They move his exam from second place to the top of the stack, then tuck themselves away.

The head examiner enters with a gatekeeper and scribe. Because the emperor is personally going to take the field of battle, the examiner has been asked to choose and release the exam results quickly. When he decides to take a closer look at the exams he notices that the one he placed in second (Zaisheng's exam) is now at the top of the stack. He reads the exam again and reaffirms his earlier decision that while he writes well, the candidate displays a frivolous and romantic spirit not suited to a *zhuangyuan*. He returns the exam to second place.

After the examiner exits, the God of Literature remarks that the former is a stubborn examiner, getting in the way of divine machinations. The otherworldly examiner addresses the possibility that appointing Zaisheng as *zhuangyuan* might incite sex and lasciviousness. The God of Literature decides to once again move Zaisheng's exam into first place, but to include an additional comment on his exam saying that while the candidate does inspire romantic feeling, he does so without harming the Confucian ethical code, and therefore merits first place.

Scene 22: *Hua ce* 畫策 (Sketching a Plan)

*Chou*—Yin Siniang

*Sheng*—Lü Zaisheng

Yin Siniang opens the scene. She's already managed to turn the poster she overheard being read into 50 taels of good silver (she's been hired by Miss Qiao who'd like her to arrange her marriage to Zaisheng). Siniang knows that Zaisheng himself won't have any objections to the match, but that Xianchou and Wanshu might take more convincing. Because all parties involved have their own money, she intends to milk a share from each of them before settling the matter.

She arrives at Zaisheng's when both Xianchou and Wanshu are out, happy to be able to speak with Zaisheng alone. Zaisheng complains that he's living like a lady sequestered in the woman's quarters. He'd like to send Menglan a letter to let her know that she should find another man to marry, but hasn't been able to under the watchful eyes of his two mates. Yin Siniang questions why he'd want Menglan to choose another mate, when she went to the lengths of posting a wanted poster and hiring herself to advocate on her behalf, and intends to take her life if she and Zaisheng can't be together. Zaisheng is delighted that Menglan bears him no ill will. He asks Siniang to use her powers as a strategist to help him. She agrees when he offers her one hundred taels in payment. With confirmation of payment, Siniang immediately conjures a plan that Zaisheng is eager to hear about. She advises Zaisheng to complain to his two companions to convey his discontent. Then he should feign illness, refusing to drink or eat, only repeating that he wants to die. The two women will be so worried they'll naturally come to her. She'll lead them down the right path, and their goal will be achieved. Zaisheng wonders how he'll survive without food or water. Yiniang replies that with money, she could go get him ginseng to put at the head of his bed and keep him alive. He gives her more money, telling her to handle everything.

Scene 23: *Chuan jie* 傳捷 (Announcing Success)

*Wai*—Professional announcer of examination success

*Mo*— Professional announcer of examination success

*Xiaosheng*— Professional announcer of examination success

*Xiaodan*—Eunuch

The announcers open the scene. They are eager to report the exam results because they're always offered handsome rewards for bearing the good news. A court eunuch enters and they quickly ask him if the exam results, already late in coming, have been decided. They're eager to know the name and location of the *zhuangyuan*. The eunuch describes the *zhuangyuan* as being more divine than this-worldly, explaining that originally the examiner had placed his exam in second, but then by some divine power his exam was moved to the top and two lines of commentary were added. When the emperor saw the comments, he simply attributed them to the examiner, but when he brought them to his face for a closer look, they disappeared, making the emperor suspect that it was an act of divine intervention. He accorded the candidate the first place. The announcers are eager to travel the three days to Nanjing give the news to the *zhuangyuan*.

Scene 24: *Jia bing* 假病 (Feigning Illness)

*Dan*—Cao Wanshu

*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou  
*Xiaosheng*—Doctor  
*Wai*—Blind fortuneteller  
*Xiaodan*—Assistant  
*Fujing*—Daoist Priest  
*Wai*—Daoist Priest  
*Mo*—Daoist Priest  
*Xiaosheng*—Daoist Priest  
*Chou*—Yin Siniang

The scene opens with Wanshu and Xianchou puzzling over why Zaisheng is suddenly ill one month into their marriage. Xianchou worries that his illness is serious, and dreads losing Zaisheng. Yin Siniang has recommended a nationally renowned doctor, who is said to be able to cure any illness. They've also invited a blind fortuneteller, and asked Yin Siniang to invite Daoist priests gifted in magical arts.

The doctor arrives with an attendant carrying his medicine bag on his back. The wives go to fetch Zaisheng and return, supporting him, while he feigns sickness. The two wives promise the doctor fifty taels each if he's able to cure Zaisheng. The doctor says that there is something lodged deep down in Zaisheng's heart. If they're able to coax it out, his illness will be cured.

The blind fortuneteller arrives with his assistant. Before knocking he reminds her not to forget Siniang's instructions. The blind fortune teller and his assistant prepare the divination. They consult the *Yijing* and interpret it as indicating that there is an extreme excess of *yin* battling with *yang*, weakening and depleting both vital forces. He then asks what the women want him to divine. When the two women reply that they want him to divine the fate of a sick person, the fortuneteller stresses the gravity of the illness. He advises them that the only thing that will cure the illness is to arrange an event of great joy, such as a wedding, to dispel it. After the blind fortuneteller leaves, the two women conclude that perhaps if they allow him to marry the "jealous woman," it will cure his illness.

The Daoist priests arrive with their instruments of magic, followed by Yin Siniang. Once at the gate, Siniang reminds them to go along with what they agreed on, and that she'll require half of their payment. The priests explain that in order to bring about a cure, they will first have to go to the *yin* realm to determine the sick person's predestined lifespan. While they're in the *yin* realm they won't move, and they may even appear as though dead. If Zaisheng's allotted span is up, there will be nothing left to do but make arrangements for his death. If he still has remaining years, then they will proceed to find the source of the problem and a method of solving it. Xianchou and Wanshu request that while they're in the *yin* realm, they ask about their own life spans as well, to see how many decades each woman has left. The Daoist priests accept the task, perform the magic, and then lie on the ground as though dead. Siniang is quick to point out to the two women that this must mean they've crossed over into the *yin* realm.

When one of the priests begins to stir, the women are eager for him to report. He says that he borrowed the register from the otherworldly judge to look at Zaisheng's allotted life span. While he still has over thirty years left, he's been made ill by the oaths of a woman whose marriage to him was put off. He's been given the illness to bring him

to the point of death so that he can go to the netherworld and have his case reexamined. The complaint also mentions two women, who will accompany him.

Xianchou and Wanshu ask the priest if he was able to look at their predestined life spans. He replies that he did find this out, but that the otherworldly judge warned him about leaking the secrets of the netherworld. The women cry, fearing that they'll be separated by death. Now that they've heard the same diagnosis from three sets of experts, they're completely convinced of the problem. They ask the priest what there is to be done. He says the illness can only be dispelled if they can get to the root of the problem.

Scene 25: *Du hui* 妒悔 (Regretting Jealousy)

*Xiaodan*—Qiao Menglan

*Fujing*—Matchmaker

Qiao Menglan opens the scene. It's been several days since she's gotten word from Yin Siniang and she's waiting for her to report back with news. The matchmaker whom she previously engaged to arrange her marriage to Zaisheng comes over to try to arrange another match. Menglan explains that she's still hoping to resolve the match with Zaisheng. The matchmaker is intent on knowing who is profiting from the match, and deduces that it must be Yin Siniang mediating between the parties and making a hefty profit in the process.

Scene 26: *Duo ji* 堕计 (Failed Plan)

*Dan*—Cao Wanshu

*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou

*Chou*—Yin Siniang

Wanshu enters, explaining that since they've discovered that Zaisheng has been made gravely ill by the oaths sworn by Qiao Menglan, she's willing to have Menglan married into the family to cure his illness. First she'll see if Xianchou will agree to the arrangement.

Once joined by Xianchou, the two women decide to hire Siniang to negotiate the match between Zaisheng and Menglan. Siniang arrives and they ask her to arrange the match. She insists that Menglan won't agree to it. Through all her dealings with them, Zaisheng had become like her own husband, and even thinking of him with another woman hurts her. Once convinced to arrange the match, the three women decide that Siniang should proceed quickly to Menglan's, try to be tactful and agreeable, and report back as soon as possible. In an aside, Siniang notes that she has no need to go, having already made arrangements with Menglan, so she'll just wait a while before returning.

When Yin Siniang returns, she reports to Wanshu and Xianchou that Menglan is full of ill will toward Zaisheng, constantly swearing oaths against him and them in hopes that they'll take effect. She claims that as soon as Menglan heard of Zaisheng's illness, she danced and laughed out of joy that her oaths had had their desired effect. She'll only stop when she's brought about Zaisheng's early death. In the face of such a display, how would she even have been able to bring up the subject of marriage? The two women are

desperate to arrange the match and pay Siniang an addition hundred taels to make a second attempt.

Yin Siniang returns with the intention of making even more money off Wanshu, Xianchou, and Menglan by orchestrating a struggle over who will take the position of primary wife. She expects one of the women to pay her handsomely for the title. Siniang reports that Menglan will agree to the arrangement on three conditions. First, she must be second wife, second, they must all move to her house, she will not come to theirs, third, the two must redress the wrong they did to her by posting the poster that brought shame to her name. The conditions enrage Xianchou, and both wives agree that they'll have to hire Siniang yet again to help mediate on their behalf. Siniang says that as for redressing the wrong they did Menglan, they can simply give her an apology. As for them moving to her residence, they could solve the problem if they pooled their immense resources and all purchased a home together, that way they could even the playing field between all three wives. Both women are pleased with this solution and ask Siniang to make the arrangements without any delay. When she drags her feet, both women give her more money, and she agrees to set to the task immediately.

Scene 27: *Zuo nan* 作難 (Making Trouble)

*Xiaodan*—Qiao Menglan

*Jing*—Attendant

*Chou*—Yin Siniang

Qiao Menglan enters and reveals that she is furious that Yin Siniang has not returned for days to report back on arranging her marriage to Zaisheng. Yin Siniang enters and explains to the audience that when a client wants her to hurry, she goes slowly, when a client wants her to delay, she rushes in. This way she makes more money. Once Yin enters Menglan's residence, she explains to the latter that she's been so busy dealing with a sick person, she's not even had the time to return to her own home, let alone come to Meng's. When Menglan inquires as to the identity of the sick person, Siniang reveals that it's Lü Zaisheng, saying in an aside that even though the illness is fake, she'll tell her it's real to get more money out of her. Siniang explains that the doctor, the fortuneteller, and the priest all say that his illness is grave, and to expect death to be imminent, so Xianchou and Wanshu have begun making preparations for his death. Once Menglan hears that the Daoist priest suggested that an occasion of great joy would dispel Zaisheng's illness, she's eager to see that the marriage is arranged quickly to save his life. As to the matter of their rank, Siniang says that they've agreed that Cao will be first wife, Xu the second, and Qiao the third. Menglan protests that perhaps Cao could be the first wife, but how could Xu, as a prostitute outrank her? As to the matter of where they'll all live, Menglan is still insistent that they move to her house, instead of her moving to theirs. Siniang again suggests that they all pool their money and buy a house that each person has a stake in. Menglan finds this to be a reasonable solution.

Scene 28: *Wu jian* 悟奸 (Discovering Treachery)

*Fujing*—He Erma, matchmaker

*Dan*—Cao Wanshu  
*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou

The matchmaker, He Erma is furious that Yin Siniang, through her devious machinations, has purloined all the money from the match that she'd arranged between Qiao Menglan and Lü Zaisheng. She's resolved to battle it out with Siniang for her share.

Cao Wanshu and Xu Xianchou enter. They've arranged for the marriage between Zaisheng and Menglan to go forward, and have purchased a residence for all of them to share. Since all there is left to do is choose an auspicious day, it's a bit strange, they reason, that Siniang has not come back to report. He Erma enters, beginning with an apology to the two women for arranging the match between Qiao and Lü in the first place. They ask her why Menglan is still holding up the marriage. He Erma tells that that she's heard that Siniang said that they are the ones causing trouble and holding up the wedding. Wanshu and Xianchou are shocked to hear that they haven't been getting the whole truth from Siniang. Erma tells the women that Menglan is so anxious that the marriage go smoothly that she's been embroidering chemises for each of them. Wanshu and Xianchou conclude that not only is Menglan not a shrew, but she's instead a woman of great virtue. They ask He Erma to quickly settle the wedding arrangements.

Scene 29: *Wen jie* 聞捷 (Hearing of Success)

*Sheng*—Lü Zaisheng  
*Jing*—Attendant  
*Dan*—Cao Wanshu  
*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou  
*Wai*— Professional announcer of examination success  
*Mo*— Professional announcer of examination success  
*Xiaosheng*— Professional announcer of examination success

Zaisheng opens the scene, still feigning illness, supported by an attendant. He laments the fact that he's having to feign illness while Yin Siniang sorts out his marriage arrangements to Qiao Menglan. Because he's been instructed not to eat or drink, his feigned illness is causing him a great deal of actual suffering. He suspects that Yin Siniang is holding out because she hasn't yet received her thank-you gifts.

When a servant comes in to bring him medicine, Zaisheng asks why his two wives, who usually stick to him like glue, are suddenly nowhere to be found. The servant replies that they're in a great rush making clothes. Zaisheng learns that they're rushing to embroider garments for the bride, as a way to thank her for the care she took in making each of them a chemise. Hearing this, Zaisheng happily dumps the medicine, which worries the attendant, who calls Wanshu and Xianchou for assistance.

His wives are surprised to see him so well, and inquire what brought on the change. Zaisheng says he doesn't know why, he just suddenly got better. Just then the announcers of examination success enter. They inform Zaisheng that he's taken first in the examination. They further explain that the circumstances are a bit unusual. First he was placed in second, but then his exam was moved into first place. The emperor read the comments giving the explanation of his placement, but when it they were shown to the

head examiner, the comments were no longer there. This revealed that it'd been through divine intervention that he'd been made *zhuangyuan*. It is decided to celebrate the wedding and Zaisheng's exam success at once. Zaisheng changes into his ceremonial clothing and parades the streets to show off his success.

Scene 30: *Rang feng* 讓封 (Ceding the Title) 讓封

*Xiaosheng*—Zaisheng's steward

*Dan*—Cao Wanshu

*Laodan*—Xu Xianchou

*Xiaodan*—Qiao Menglan

*Fujing*—He Erma

*Chou*—Yin Siniang

*Sheng*—Lü Zaisheng

The scene is opened by Zaisheng's newly appointed steward. He's employed at their new residence, purchased by his three wives together. They've named the residence "Chasing Phoenix Hall" (求鳳堂). Tonight will be a double celebration of their marriage and Zaisheng's proclamation as *zhuangyuan*. Wanshu and Xianchou arrive at the residence first, but they want to wait for Menglan to enter together as equals. When Menglan arrives they quibble over who will enter first, until finally they enter together. They all agree to let Zaisheng decide their rank. In an aside Wanshu and Xianchou decide that they're no match for the likes of Menglan. In her own aside, Menglan, too, concludes that she's no equal to their beauty. Xianchou and Wanshu each apologize for their part in bringing shame on Qiao by distributing the poster, but underline the fact that it was all Yin Siniang making trouble. They agree to capture Yin Siniang, should she come by.

He Erma enters, confirming with the three wives that once she began handling it, the situation quickly came to a happy resolution, it was Yin Siniang, who not only stole her commission, but also caused all of them so much trouble.

Yin Siniang enters. She's unsure as to why none of the three women have involved her in recent developments. Zaisheng was named as *zhuangyuan*, and the three wives bought a home so that they could all move into together. She'll go over now to see if she can get her thank-you gift. She offers the wives enthusiastic congratulations, to which they reply coldly. Both Wanshu and Xianchou are resolved to give the thank-you gift to He Erma, who resolved the situation honestly. He Erma and Yin Siniang exchange insults and come to blows over who deserves the matchmaking fee.

Zaisheng returns from parading his success. His wives ask him to resolve the matter of who will receive the matchmaking fee. He resolves that each woman gets half, at which point they take their leave. Then he's left to decide the matter of ranking his wives. Menglan and Wanshu each insist the other is more deserving. They propose that Xianchou get the title, to which she replies that her place has long been decided, she's to be number two. Zaisheng resolves to leave the matter undecided, and bring the issue to the emperor for his consultation.

## D. *Qiao tuanyuan* Scene Summaries

Roles:

*Sheng* 生—male lead

*Dan* 旦—female lead

*Xiaosheng* 小生—younger male, secondary male

*Xiaodan* 小旦—younger female, secondary female

*Laodan* 老旦—older female, secondary female

*Chou* 丑—clown

*Jing* 淨—villain, spirit, supporting role

*Fujing* 副淨—supporting role

*Wai* 外—older male

*Mo* 末—male

### Scene 1: *Ci yuan* 詞源 (The Play's Source)

*Mo*—Prologue Speaker

The first scene introduces us to the most salient elements of the story. We are told that Yao Ji, an orphan, dreams of a storied building. He purchases a man to serve as his father, and finds his mother captured. Miss Cao is captured by bandits, but cleverly avoids shame. In the end Yao restored to the home of his birth—the building in his dream, after liberating his mother and betrothed from bandits and discovering his hired father to be his true father.

### Scene 2: *Meng xun* 夢訊 (Dream Inquiry)

*Sheng*—Yao Ji

Yao Ji introduces himself. His courtesy name is Yao Kecheng, and he is from Hanyang. He was parted from his parents when he was a childhood. Every night he visits the same building in his dreams. He decides to try to visit the building in his dream once more to find out what the place is. He falls asleep, dreams of the building, and asks an old man nearby where the place is. The old man tells him that in the house he will find a chest that holds his childhood belongings from before he was separated from his parents. In the home of his dream, Yao Ji finds a chest with his childhood toys including clay figurines, drums, and toy weapons. Playing with the toys reminds him that his father was a cotton merchant, and gave him a jade ruler with the advice that if becoming a scholar-official did not work out, he should return to ply the family trade.

Scene 3: *Yi zhui* 議贅 (Discussing the Adoption)

*Xiaosheng*—Yao Dongshan, alias Cao Yuyu

*Xiaodan*—Yao Dongshan's wife

*Dan*—adopted daughter of the Yao's, Miss Cao

Yao Dongshan, alias Cao Yuyu, tells us he is from Sichuan, but has fled to Hankou. In disguise for his protection, Cao practices medicine and owns a medicine shop, having abandoned his government post because it was too dangerous. The Yao's/Cao's had gotten Miss Cao as a child to marry their son, but their son died before the two could be married. Now in this time of chaos they have their adopted daughter, a virgin, with them, and fear that without a son they face trouble if bandits come because of the risk to their adopted daughter and also because they have no one to pass on their estate to. They would like to adopt a son to marry their adopted daughter and have this son become their heir and have their adopted daughter become their daughter-in-law as was originally intended. Dongshan has in mind the young man who lives next to his study, but he would first like to test him to make sure that he is a suitable match and would be worthy as a son/son-in-law. Mrs. Cao also approves of the young man, but has heard that his name isn't really Yao, and that in fact he was bought at three or four years old. Miss Cao is delighted with the proposed match.

Scene 4: *Shi xian* 試限 (Testing Boundaries)

*Sheng*—Yao Ji

*Xiaosheng*—Yao Dongshan

Dongshan visits Yao Ji. Yao Ji says he's occupied with either reading or writing. Dongshan says that in a time of chaos scholarly pursuits aren't useful to save one's life. He says the only three useful/safe professions are to be a diviner, artisan, or a tradesman. The first two make a living off their skill. A tradesman travels from place to place. Anyone can be a tradesman, one just needs starting out money. Yao Ji says that he doesn't any skills or any capital to become a tradesman. Dongshan says that he can lend Yao Ji money to start out. Yao Ji will go to Songjiang to sell fabric.

Scene 5: *Zheng ji* 爭繼 (Fighting for the Inheritance)

*Wai*—Yin Xiaolou

*Laodan*—Yin Xiaolou's wife

*Mo*—Old man, relative of Yin Xiaolou

*Chou*—Child, relative of Yin Xiaolou

*Sheng*—Servant

*Jing*—Old man, relative of Yin Xiaolou

*Fujing*—Child, relative of Yin Xiaolou

*Xiaosheng*—Servant

Yin Xiaolou is from Yinyang in Huguang. He has an estate to pass on, but no heirs. He had a young son, but 15 years ago he went with other children to play on the mountain; all the children returned home except for his son. He believes his son was eaten by a tiger. Because he served as an official and has a fair amount of money, relatives come to give their sons to him to be his heir, hoping to profit from the inheritance. Two relatives come at the same time to parade their sons before Xiaolou and making offerings of wine and food. Xiaolou decides that he will have to go far away to somewhere where he isn't known so that he can find a son that has no knowledge of his position or his wealth.

Scene 6: *Shu pa* 書帕 (Writing on a Handkerchief)

*Dan*—Miss Cao

Miss Cao worries that while Yao Ji is off in Songjiang doing business he will find another woman to marry. She wants to make sure that their match is settled upon before he leaves. Because of the chaotic times, Miss Cao is worried that all families who have unbetrothed virgin daughters will be eager to marry off their daughters in order to protect them from being taken by the bandits. In this situation Yao Ji will surely be engaged to another woman by the time he returns. She decides that she must meet with Yao Ji in order that they can promise marriage to one another before he leaves. She decides that speaking to him would be too risky, so she'll write to him instead. She decides to use the first poem in the *Shijing* to allude to her feelings in writing. She inverts the man and the woman from the first lines of the first poem. She hides the note in her sleeve and waits to give it to him.

Scene 7: *Chuang fen* 闖氛 (Charged Atmosphere)

*Mo*—One-Armed Tiger, rebel general

*Wai*—Lone Wolf, rebel general

*Chou*—Scorpion, rebel general

*Fujing*—Rival to the Star of Heaven, rebel general

*Jing*—Li Zicheng, leader of rebel army

The rebel leader Li Zicheng (an historical figure), dispatches his generals One-Armed Tiger to Shanxi and Shandong, Lone Wolf to Henan and Shanxi, Scorpion to Nanjing and Zhejiang, and Rival to the Star of Heaven to Huguang and Jiangxi. Li Zicheng doesn't assign troops to Beijing, Minguang, and Yungui because Minguang and Yungui are on the edge of the country and they will be defeated as a mere consequence of defeating the center of the country. As for Beijing, he will go there himself. He advises his men to loot whatever is valuable and also take as prisoners any women they come across so that they can be ransomed for a lot of money later.

Scene 8: *Mo ding* 默訂 (Silent Arrangement)

*Sheng*—Yao Ji

*Dan*—Miss Cao

Yao Ji hangs around Miss Cao's window and hears her singing about her love for him. Yao Ji is afraid to speak directly to Miss Cao because her father is his benefactor and it would be inappropriate. Miss Cao lets the letter drop and Yao Ji reads it and understands that Miss Cao is asking for a promise of marriage. He admires her cleverness. Yao Ji writes a reply on the jade ruler given to him by his father, a cotton cloth merchant. Yao also uses the *Shijing* to compose his reply. Their marriage is settled.

Scene 9: *Xuan biao* 懸標 (Hanging a Notice of Sale)

*Wai*—Yin Xiaolou

Xiaolou decides that if he wants to find a filial son he will have to advertise. He makes a poster that advertises himself for sale. He has traveled to Songjiang to be far away from his home so that he can find a filial son who doesn't know about his wealth and position. The poster says that he is for sale for 10 taels.

Scene 10: *Jie fen* 解紛 (Mediating a Dispute)

*Sheng*—Yao Ji  
*Fujing*—Young man  
*Chou*—Young Man  
*Wai*—Yin Xiaolou

Yao Ji is in Songjiang doing business. He decides to go for a walk and leaves the stage. Xiaolou enters and sees two young men coming to look at his poster. The young men have heard that a strange old man has put himself for sale and came to look. The two young men ask Xiaolou what kind of work he can do. Xiaolou explains that he has no skills at doing physical labor, but that he can give fatherly guidance. He says he should hit them for being disrespectful to an old man. They say that they will beat him to death. Xiaolou calls out for help and Yao Ji comes to his aid. The two talk and Yao Ji ends up agreeing to pay the ten taels to purchase Xiaolou as his father. They decide to go to a tavern to settle the matter and make it official.

Scene 11: *Mai fu* 買父 (Buying a Father)

*Sheng*—Yao Ji  
*Wai*—Yin Xiaolou  
*Mo*—Tavernkeeper  
*Fujing*—Young man  
*Chou*—Young man

The two men who were beating up Xiaolou over his advertisement go in to the same tavern that Yao Ji and Xiaolou have gone into to make their father-son contract. The two young men decide to play a trick on the other couple. One of them will pretend

to be a wealthy young man interested in buying Xiaolou as his father. He will offer him more than 10 taels and see what happens. Yao Ji gives Xiaolou all of his money because now that they are a family he thinks that his father should be in charge of the household money. One of the young men approaches and offers to pay twice what Yao Ji paid to buy Xiaolou. Xiaolou refuses all offers repeatedly and after the young man leaves Yao Ji pays respects to his father for his loyalty. Yao Ji inquires after his father's name and native place. Xiaolou decides that he'd better lie so that he can test whether or not Yao Ji is truly filial. He tells Yao that his name is Yi Xiaolou and he is from Huguang. Yao Ji asks that he be able to change his name to match his father's. Because it is a fake surname that Xiaolou told Yao, he insists that instead he will change his name to his son's. Father and son pay and leave. The three young men who tried to play the trick on Yao Ji and Xiaolou believe that the fact that Xiaolou was not motivated by money is very strange. With such odd things happening, like men having babies, women growing beards, they decide to go to the rebel leader to join the rebellion.

Scene 12: *Lüe yu* 掠嫗 (Taking Captive an Old Woman)

*Chou*—Rival to the Heavenly Star, rebel general, with underlings

*Laodan*—Mrs. Yin

The rebel general says that he has been sent by Li Zicheng to Huguang. Now they have arrived in Yunyang and want to break through the city wall. They are able to take the city because the wall isn't being protected. They arrive at a house with a big gate and decide to search it because it must be the house of an official. They go in and find that all of the men of the house absent—the only one who is left is an old woman, Mrs. Yin. They ask her where her husband and son are and where the family's valuables are kept. She replies that her husband is gone and her son is dead and she doesn't have anything of value. The bandits demand that she turn over her servants. They ask where her husband has gone, what his name is and what he does. She says that he's gone far away to adopt a son to give their estate to. They ask her again where the valuables are hidden. She says her husband took all of their savings with him and left only her at home. The rebel general decides to take Mrs. Yin as a hostage so that she can be ransomed to her husband when he returns. The bandits only find one chest of valuables and it is full of a child's toys. They take Mrs. Yin and leave.

Scene 13: *Fang ru* 防辱 (Guarding against Shame)

*Dan*—Miss Cao

*Xiaosheng*—Yao Dongshan

*Xiaodan*—Mrs. Yao

Miss Cao was hoping for the quick and safe return of Yao Ji so that they could be married. Since he has left the rebels have come and are creating chaos. Miss Cao knows that if they find her, she will be taken. She's trying to think of a way to protect her virginity if they find her. She ingeniously decides that she will carry special beans with her that she knows from watching her father will make the skin swell on contact. If the

bandits capture her, they will be afraid to make advances towards her because it will look as though she has a disease. In case her plan fails she also carries in her sleeve the jade ruler that Yao Ji wrote his response poem on so that she can kill herself with it before losing her honor. Her parents rush in and say that the bandits have breached the city wall. Her parents say that they should all flee together. Miss Cao says that she needs to stay behind to prepare her disguise. Her parents leave without her. She puts oil from the beans on her face and lies in the bed to wait for the bandits to come.

Scene 14: *Yan gui* 言歸 (Planning their Return)

*Wai*—Yin Xiaolou

*Sheng*—Yao Ji

Xiaolou enters and says that from the moment that he first saw Yao Ji it was as though he was his own son. Of all sons, he says, who is as filial as Yao Ji? Yao Ji comes back after going out to see if the bandits have really come. He confirms that they have, and that consequently, he and his father will have to escape and return home, but there are more people fleeing than there are boats. Xiaolou now explains to Yao Ji that he'd made up what he'd said earlier about himself. He actually is worth 10,000 taels of gold and has inherited an official position. He tells Yao Ji that he lied in order to find a son with true feelings. Yao Ji is worried about taking the cloth with him so that he doesn't have to return to Mr. Cao empty-handed and appear to have been a failure as a merchant. Xiaolou tells him the truth and says that there is no need to bring the cloth along because money is not a problem. Xiaolou says that the only other pressing matter is that of Yao Ji's marriage. Yao Ji explains that he's already made vows with a 16-year old girl in Hankou, but he has not presented the betrothal gifts. Xiaolou says he will bring money along for that.

Scene 15: *Quan jie* 全節 (Maintaining Chastity)

*Fujing*—Rival to the Heavenly Star, rebel general, shortened as “Heavenly Star”

*Chou*—Rebel general's underling

*Mo*—Rebel general's underling

*Laodan*—Captive woman

*Tiedan*—Captive woman (Li Yu seldom uses this name for this role type)

*Jing*—Captive woman

*Chou*—Captive woman

*Dan*—Miss Cao

Rival to the Heavenly Star questions his underlings, asking how many women and how much wealth they've been able to pillage. He then asks to see the women before he turns them over to Li Zicheng so that he can choose some of middling good looks to keep for himself. He looks them over and says that none of them are even somewhat good looking. An underling tells Heavenly Star that there is one good-looking girl, but she is sick and her face is swollen. Heavenly Star then orders for Miss Cao to be brought out for his inspection. He looks at her closely and orders that a doctor be called so that when she

is better he can make her his wife. Miss Cao warns Heavenly Star that her disease is contagious. Heavenly Star says that he would like to taste her palm. Miss Cao still has some beans left over so she touches them in her sleeve so that when Heavenly Star licks her hand he'll get sick. Heavenly Star licks her palm and thinks that it tastes wonderful, but directly afterwards he feels sick and has to rush to the toilet. Heavenly Star comes back with his face swollen and orders that a doctor be called for his stomach and her swelling. Heavenly Star is in pain and runs back to the toilet. When he returns he orders that Miss Cao be gotten rid of immediately, because the two of them are obviously not meant to be married. He says that she can be sold or whatever, but to get rid of her fast. He then has to leave to go to the toilet again. All exit except Miss Cao. She sings a song about her victory.

Scene 16: *Tu fen* 途分 (Separated en Route)

*Sheng*—Yao Ji  
*Wai*—Yin Xiaolou  
*Jing*—Boatman  
*Chou*—Boatman  
*Jing*—Passenger  
*Chou*—Passenger  
*Xiaoshen*—Passenger

It's already been two weeks since Yao Ji and Xiaolou left Songjiang and they are almost home. Xiaolou instructs Yao Ji that it is time to part ways. He is going to go home and see to his family affairs. He worries about his wife because she's been on her own for so long. He tells Yao Ji to go to Hankou to see that his marriage is properly arranged. Yao Ji worries about being separated from his father when the world is so chaotic. Xiaolou urges him not to worry, but tells him to return as quickly as possible. Yao Ji tells Xiaolou to pay respects to his mother and also to tell her that he will be there to do, so on his own as soon as possible. The winds are favorable and they quickly reach Hankou, where Yao Ji must get off to arrange his marriage. He asks to be let off. The boatmen say that the winds are too good and they won't stop. Xiaolou says that if they won't stop he'll have to take action himself. The boatmen agree to stop in that case, but insist that Yao Ji has to go ashore quickly. Xiaolou complains that the two of them still have a lot of things to say to each other before parting, but the boatmen won't allow them to idle. Xiaolou makes sure that Yao Ji takes 100 gold pieces for the betrothal gift and a bag of silver pieces to defray any other costs that might arise. As soon as Yao Ji is on the bank the boatmen start off again. The father and son exchange a tearful good-bye. Xiaolou worries that in their rush to part he might have forgotten to tell his son something important. He realizes that he has forgotten to tell Yao Ji his real name and where he lives. He asks the boatmen to turn the boat around and go back. They refuse on the grounds that there are 20-30 passengers besides him on the boat so it wouldn't be fair to turn around on his account, especially given the fact that everyone is fleeing danger and eager to get somewhere safe as quickly as possible. The other passengers curse him and threaten to beat him up, but another passenger comes forward to talk to Xiaolou reasonably to see what the situation is. Xiaolou explains the situation and then asks if the man will

intervene on his behalf to get the boat turned around. The man says that he will not but that he has an idea to solve the problem providing that Xiaolou's son can read. Xiaolou says that he can. The man suggests that all he needs to do is to post flyers all over town that explain and that tell where he lives and the problem will be solved.

Scene 17: *Pou si* 剖私 (Revealing the Personal)

*Laodan*—Mrs. Yin

*Dan*—Miss Cao

Mrs. Yin enters. She sings a song in plaint of having only her husband as family and no sons. She then announces that she is Mrs. Yin and has been captured by bandits and taken to their camp. She's been there for several days. She knows that she's been taken to the camp so that her family will pay a ransom to get her released, but her husband is far away and unaware of her situation and she has no other relatives to ask for help. She'd like to find another woman in the camp who she can commiserate with, but all the women she has seen are the type that cried for the first one to three days and then already began laughing. She's looking for a woman who is sighing and knitting her brows, but there is only one or two in every ten. There is one young girl whose face is sickly looking, who weeps constantly. It pains Mrs. Yin to hear her and so wants to go to Miss Cao to comfort her. She heard that because of her strange illness, not only have the men not tried to bed her, but the other women avoid her as well. Mrs. Yin decides that because she's already old she doesn't need to fear death and looks for the girl. She walks until she hears the sound of a woman crying and then calls out to her. She asks Miss Cao why she is crying so much. Miss Cao explains her situation. Mrs. Yin admires her chastity and efforts to remain pure for her fiancé. Miss Cao asks Mrs. Yin how she came to be at the bandit camp and Mrs. Yin explains that she and her husband lost their son and are now alone in their old age with no one to care for them. Her husband went away to look for a loyal son. Miss Cao explains that she is feigning illness to protect her virginity and Mrs. Yin praises her.

Scene 18: *Bian xiang* 變餉 (Trading for Provisions)

*Mo*—Lackey of Rival to the Heavenly Star

*Chou*—Lackey of Rival to the Heavenly Star

Two of Heavenly Star's men have been charged with ransoming the captured women for money. They've ransomed some of the women, but still have some left and have been wandering around trying to find buyers. One of them has an idea that they should sell the women as they would sell fish, by their weight. They decide to sell each woman for 5 cash per pound.

Scene 19: 驚燹 (Alarm at Fire [Damage])

*Sheng*—Yao Ji

*Mo*—Uncle Zhang, a beggar

Yao Ji enters carrying a bag. He remarks that the roads are empty of people and all of the homes are gone. It looks as though the bandits have come through and burned them down. He sees that his old study has been burned down and realizes that this means that something could have happened to Miss Cao. He has no way of knowing whether she was able to flee before the bandits arrived or whether she was taken by them. There isn't anyone around, not even people fleeing with their belongings. He sees a beggar off in the distance and decides to find out whether he is from the town so that he can get some information. The beggar enters and chases after Yao Ji to ask him for help. Yao Ji recognizes him and asks him whether he is not Uncle Zhang. The beggar lifts his head and recognizes Yao Ji and tells him that it is lucky that he has been gone doing business. Yao Ji asks why Uncle Zhang is in the state he is now, since before he left he had two or three thousand gold pieces. Uncle Zhang replies that his house and belongings were burned by the bandits, his valuables were taken, his son was killed, and his wife and daughter-in-law were taken away. Only he is left and he is starving to death. Yao Ji asks Uncle Zhang if he knows what's become of Mr. Cao and his family. Uncle Zhang explains that Miss Cao was taken away by the bandits. Yao Ji cries and explains to Uncle Zhang that the two were to be married. He then asks if Uncle Zhang knows where Miss Cao was taken. Uncle Zhang said that he heard that Mr and Mrs. Cao both escaped but that Miss Cao was carried away by the bandits. Yesterday someone told him that the bandits were living in Immortal Peach Village and that they were ransoming all of the women that they'd taken. Whether or not Miss Cao is among the women they are ransoming, it's impossible to know. Uncle Zhang says that if he really loves Miss Cao he should go up to look for her, but if not he can always marry another girl. He proceeds to ask for money. Yao Ji gives him some money and says that he's going to Immortal Peach Village to search for Miss Cao.

Scene 20: *Zhui zong* 追蹤 (Tracing Footsteps)

*Jing*—Yao Dongshan's steward

*Mo*—Official from the capital

Steward enters and explains that he's Yao Dongshan's (Cao Yuyu's) steward. He explains that the court has ordered that Yao be found so that he can stop the bandit uprising. An official enters and says that cannot find Yao. He has been to his house and there isn't anyone there. He doesn't know where to begin to even look for him. The steward says that he heard that Yao went to Hankou and is selling medicine there. They decide to go there to find him.

Scene 21: *Wen zhao* 聞詔 (News of the Decree)

*Xiaosheng*—Yao Dongshan

*Xiaodan*—Mrs. Yao

*Chou*—Boatman

*Mo*—Official

*Jing*—Steward

Miss Cao's parents fled Hankou to avoid the attack by bandits. They are thankful that in the chaos they've been able to stay together, but worried about Miss Cao because she did not flee with them and stayed behind instead. Since they've been traveling they've just been fleeing without any regard to where they're going. Now, they've come to a peaceful place and need to decide where they want to end up. They decide to take a boat and return back to Sichuan, going as far as they can by water and then traveling over land. Mrs. and Dr. Cao exit temporarily and the official and the steward enter with subordinates in tow. The steward points to the boat and says that the man in it looks like his master. Then he notices that Mrs. Cao is also there. He calls out to them and asks Dr. Cao to accept an imperial edict. Cao changes clothes and enters to listen to the imperial edict. The official of the previous scene instructs him to kneel as the edict is read. It asks him to come back to service to save the country from the bandits. The official explains that he's already been away for too long and needs to return to the capital. He exits. Cao calls for his wife and she congratulates him on his appointment. The couple wonders what has happened to Yao Ji since he went to Songjiang. If he has returned and they are not there he will not know what to do. Cao wants to save his daughter and hopes that he will be able to get her back when he defeats the bandits.

Scene 22: *Cha lao* 詫老 (Surprised by Age)

*Mo*—Lackey of Rival to the Heavenly Star

*Chou*—Lackey of Rival to the Heavenly Star

Soldiers

*Jing*—Fat woman captive

*Xiaodan*—Sick woman captive

*Fujing*—Hunch-backed woman captive

*Laodan*—Mrs. Yin

*Wai*—Man looking to buy a woman

*Xiaosheng*—Man looking to buy a woman

*Sheng*—Yao Ji

Heavenly Star's men enter together with two soldiers. They have been charged with selling off the captured women for ransom. Unfortunately, most of the women that were captured are either old or otherwise not good looking so they've been hard to sell. The two have decided that the only way to sell them will be to cover them and sell them by weight. A fat woman, a sick woman, a hunch-backed woman, and Mrs. Yin enter. They put them in bags and call out that they have goods for sale. Two men come to buy women. One of the lackeys explains that they will not be able to see the women but will have to pick from among the bags. If they want a big woman then choose a big bag, a small woman a small bag, a light woman a light bag, a heavy woman a heavy bag. One of the buyers chooses the fat woman and the other chooses the sick woman. The women are weighed and payed for. The first man opens his bag and is surprised to see a fat woman. She quickly yells at him and says that she's the master of the house and will need seven or eight people to wait on her, otherwise he'll have to pick up all the slack. He starts to leave, but the lackey pulls him back and threatens to cut off her extra weight if he doesn't

pay the money that he's short. He agrees to pay and then exits. The other man opens his bag and is surprised to see a sick woman. She says in a quiet, sickly voice that now that he's bought a sick woman, she's his responsibility. He's got to do something quickly or she'll die. The man complains and says he wants his money back. The other lackey offers him a child. The man exits with the sick woman instead. A third man and Yao Ji enter. Yao Ji is hoping to buy Miss Cao. Yao Ji tells the other man to go ahead before him and tells himself that since he cannot see who he's buying, choosing Miss Cao will be purely up to chance. He can either leave empty-handed, or buy a woman and hope it's Miss Cao. One of the lackeys instructs the men to choose a bag. The other man chooses the hunch-backed woman and Yao Ji chooses the Mrs. Yin. The women are weighed, priced, and paid for. The hunch-back woman is thrilled that the man that bought her will now be her husband and she instructs him to take her home. Yao Ji opens his bag and is surprised to see an old woman. He asks what he is supposed to do with her. She says that even though she's old, she's still a good person and that if he waits, she's sure that someone will come to ransom her and he won't be out the money that he spent.

Scene 23: *Shang li* 傷離 (Grieving over Separation)

*Wai*—Yin Xiaolou

We are reminded that Xiaolou parted with his son, Yao Ji, so that he could go home and check on his wife while Yao Ji saw to his wedding preparations. We learn that when Xiaolou arrived home he found that not only was his wife not there, but neither were his house or any of his servants. Only after asking neighbors did he find out that his wife was taken away by the bandits. Because he told his son a fake name in order to test him, he's afraid that when his son comes to look for him, he won't notice all of the fliers that he's had pasted everywhere, and that they won't be reunited.

Scene 24: *Ren mu* 認母 (Recognizing a Mother)

*Sheng*—Yao Ji

*Laodan*—Mrs. Yin

Yao Ji enters. He says that he went to buy a wife hoping to buy Miss Cao and ended up with an old lady. Because the woman is suitable neither as a wife or a maid, Yao Ji doesn't know what to call her. He decides that since he doesn't have any gifts to present his father, he'll give him the old woman to serve as his concubine. He calls the old woman and asks her what he should call her. Mrs. Yin is surprised and turns to say that she's afraid that if he's talking this way he must want to return her. She turns back and tells him not to over think the situation. Yao Ji assures her that he won't return her and says that because he lost his own mother, from now on he'll call her mother. She's surprised and says she dare not accept the honor. He tells her that he means it in all seriousness and starts to kowtow to her. She lifts him up. She turns and says that she never knew there could be such a kind man. She wonders how she'll repay him. Then she remembers that the bandits did have one beautiful girl. If he can buy her, and they can

become husband and wife, that will be her way to repay him. She tells Yao Ji about the girl and how she used her cleverness to avoid being violated by the bandits. He asks her to explain and but she says there's no time and that if he wants to buy her he'll have to hurry before she's sold. Yao Ji asks Mrs. Yin how he'll know the girl from all the rest. She says that all he'll have to do is feel the bags and she'll be the one holding something in her sleeve.

Scene 25: *Zheng gou* 爭購 (Dispute over the Purchase)

*Mo*—Lackey of Rival to the Heavenly Star  
*Chou*—Lackey of Rival to the Heavenly Star  
*Fujing*—Man looking to buy a woman  
*Jing*—Man looking to buy a woman  
*Sheng*—Yao Ji  
*Dan*—Miss Cao  
*Wai*—rebel underling  
*Xiaosheng*—rebel underling

Heavenly Star's lackeys enter. They say that they started out with seven or eight hundred women and now they only have one bag left. Two men and Yao Ji enter, each saying that he wants to buy a beautiful woman. One of the lackeys asks if they'd all like to buy a woman. They answer that they would. The lackey explains that he's got three customers and only one woman left, so he doesn't know who he'll sell the woman to. All three men want to buy the woman and offer increasingly higher amounts. Yao Ji feels the bag and discovers that it is in fact the woman that his mother told him about, so he offers more money. The lackey says that he's thought of a way to settle the dispute fairly. The bag that the woman is in is made of hemp. She can see out, but the men cannot see in. They will let the woman choose who buys her. Miss Cao of course chooses Yao Ji to buy her. Yao Ji says to himself that he'd better not take Miss Cao out of the bag, because if the other two see how beautiful she is, they might try to fight him for her. He tells the lackey to have two of his men carry the woman to his lodging. Rebel underlings pick up the woman and rush off stage. The lackey tells the other two customers that he has no more goods to sell and that they'll have to return home.

Scene 26: *De qi* 得妻 (Gaining a Wife)

*Laodan*—Mrs. Yin  
*Xiaosheng*—rebel underling  
*Wai*—rebel underling  
*Sheng*—Yao Ji  
*Dan*—Miss Cao

Mrs. Yin enters. She says that although she was unfortunate enough to be captured by bandits at her old age, she was fortunate to be bought by Yao Ji, who not only didn't return her to the bandits, but even calls her mother. In order to thank him she told him about the beautiful and faithful woman at the bandit camp so that he could buy

her as a wife. She wonders if he's succeeded or not. Yao Ji and the two rebel underlings carrying Miss Cao enter. Mrs. Yin sees the two men carrying the sack and is happy that Yao Ji successfully bought the woman. Yao Ji pays the two men and they exit, leaving Miss Cao on the ground. Yao Ji is happy to have gotten the woman home without having to fight the other two men for her. He tries to open the bag, but isn't able, so he asks the woman inside if she's Miss Cao. She replies that she is. She in turn asks him if he is Yao Ji and he affirms that he is. Yao Ji manages to open the bag and is happy to see Miss Cao. He asks her how she got sick. She says she'll explain, and then is surprised to see Mrs. Yin and asks her why she's there. Mrs. Yin explains that by providence Yao Ji had bought her the other day. She then asks Miss Cao if she'd already met Yao Ji before and Miss Cao explains that she and he are betrothed to each other. Mrs. Yin explains that she is now Yao Ji's mother and they all pay their respects to one another. Yao Ji asks Miss Cao to explain in detail how she used her intelligence to keep her honor after she was captured by the bandits. Miss Cao explains and Yao Ji commends her for being both chaste and smart. Yao Ji asks after Miss Cao's parents and says he's heard that a man resembling Dr. Cao was the assistant minister assigned to defeat the bandits, but that it can't be because Dr. Cao is just a commoner. Miss Cao explains that in fact her father is not her biological father, but that she was originally adopted to be the wife of his son who died. Dr. Cao is in fact a powerful minister, but fled and changed his name because of the chaotic times, so he was no doubt called back to service to defeat the bandits. Yao Ji fears that he won't be a good enough son-in-law for such a great man. Miss Cao explains that when they reunite it will be as father and son and that she, instead of being the daughter, will be called daughter-in-law, so there is nothing to fear. Yao Ji says that he doesn't understand and Miss Cao explains that the reason that Dr. Cao gave Yao Ji the starting out money to go into business was to see if he'd make a good son to pass on his inheritance to. Yao Ji understands but says that he's already promised another man to serve him as his son to the end of his days, so he cannot also do that for Mr. Cao. In the midst of this conversation Mrs. Yin explains that she and her husband are also without a son, and that it was when he went to look for a suitable son to pass his inheritance to that she was left alone and taken by bandits. Yao Ji tells her not to be upset, because now she has him for a son. He says that they'll wait until the morning and then board a boat to go be reunited with his father. Miss Cao says that she will write a letter to her father letting him know that she is safe with Yao Ji.

Scene 27: *Wen hao* 聞耗 (Hearing Bad News)

*Xiaosheng*—Yao Dongshan

*Xiaodan*—Mrs. Yao

Minister Yao (Dr. Cao) fears that his wife will not be safe with him while he commands the troops to fight the bandits. He calls her in to tell her that she'll have to stay behind. She says that she's got no sons or daughters and that she'd rather die than leave his side. Just then Minister Yao receives word that he's gotten a letter from his daughter. He is happy to read that she is well and that she was ransomed by Yao Ji from the bandits, but he is troubled by the fact that while she says that the two have become husband and wife, she still refers to Yao Ji as his son-in-law even though she knew of his intention to

make Yao Ji his son. He tells the messenger to have these two words taken out and return the letter.

Scene 28: *Tu qiong* 途窮 (No Way Out)

*Sheng*—Yao Ji

Young person

Old person

*Mo*—Important-looking man, with servant

*Chou*—Servant

Yao Ji enters. He explains that he has gotten off the boat to find his father. He will bring his wife and Mrs. Yin back with him after he finds him. The only problem is that his father forgot to tell him on what street he lived when they parted, so he doesn't know where to look. He realizes that the problem is easy to solve: because his father is an official, everyone in town will know who he is. And because he himself speaks the local dialect very well, all he'll have to do is ask anyone he meets and the problem will be solved. He asks a couple of people where official Yi lives. Both reply that there is no such person. Yao Ji thinks it very strange that people would say there's no such person of an important official. Yao Ji assumes that because the people he asked were just commoners, they don't know. He waits for someone who looks more important to come by and asks him. That person also replies that there is no such person and asks if maybe Yao Ji has misremembered. Yao Ji says that he hasn't. The man is a scholar and only interested in taking examinations and does not give Yao Ji much consideration because he's a merchant. Yao Ji feels slighted because he is also a *xiucai* (holder of the lowest civil service degree), and wonders if he should take the provincial examinations, which are still being held amidst the chaos. Because he searched in vain he has nothing to do but to turn around and go back to the boat.

Scene 29: *Die hai* 疊駭 (Surprise after Surprise)

*Laodan*—Mrs. Yin

*Dan*—Miss Cao

*Sheng*—Yao Ji

*Mo*—Messenger

Mrs. Yin advises Miss Cao to make herself ready to become a bride. Miss Cao insists that she's already been married for several days, but that it's Mrs. Yin who'll be remarrying upon Yao's return. Mrs. Yin protests that not only does she already have a husband, but that she's far too decrepit to be a bride. Miss Cao is eager for Mrs. Yin to acquiesce to Yao's desire that she be married to his father, but Mrs. Yin begins to anger at her suggestions that she not maintain her chastity to her husband, whom she believes to be alive.

Yao Ji enters, with no word of his father's whereabouts. Miss Cao has sent word ahead to her father and is confident they'll be able to stay there and enjoy wealth and honor. Just then, the messenger returns from sending Yao Ji's message to Yao Dongshan,

Miss Cao's father. When Ji asks whether Dongshan has sent a reply the messenger replies that, "he has and he hasn't." The two words he wrote in reply to Ji were, "stupid son-in-law." When asked if Dongshan had said anything, the messenger says he said eight words, "No sense! No sense! Too bad! Too bad!" Ji interprets the response to mean that Dongshan is unwilling to let him marry his daughter. Ji is distressed that not only can he not find his father, but his father-in-law won't have him. Then Mrs. Yin offers her home in Yunyang. She and her husband aren't filthy rich, but they are comfortable and have neither sons nor daughters. Ji protests that he already has a father, so he cannot act as another man's son. Ji decides to stay for another few days so he can sit for the provincial examinations.

Scene 30: *La yin* 拉引 (Pulled Forward)

*Jing*—Yao Dongshan's servant

*Mo*—Messenger

Dongshan's servant opens the scene. He's suffering from the pain of being beaten for not having found Yao Ji and Miss Cao as he'd been ordered. Now, he's been given three more days to find them, and has been warned that it will cost him his life if he does not.

Just then a messenger arrives with Miss Cao's letter requesting that they be allowed to stay. Hearing this news, Dongshan decides that he'd like to set out for Yunyang that day.

Scene 31: *Qiao ju* 巧聚 (Coincidental Reunion)

*Wai*—Yin Xiaolou

*Chou*—Attendant

*Laodan*—Mrs. Yin

*Sheng*—Yao Ji

*Dan*—Miss Cao

*Fujing*—Boatman

Yin Xiaolou opens the scene. He's scanning the distance, looking for any signs of his son's arrival. He climbs higher so he can see as far into the distance as possible. He feigns exiting the stage.

Just then Mrs. Yin, Yao Ji, and Miss Cao enter. Yin Xiaolou spots the boat and calls out for his son. Ji hears his father's voice and the two are delighted to be reunited. Xiaolou hurries to board the boat finding not only his son, but his wife as well. Mrs. Yin is just as shocked to see Ji embrace her husband as Ji is to see her embrace his father. Gradually, they discover the various coincidences that brought them together again and thank heaven for how fortuitous they were.

The four return to the Yin household in sedan chairs, where they install the young couple in the long unoccupied former room of their missing son.

Scene 32: *Yuan meng* 原夢 (Tracing the Origin of the Dream) 原夢

*Sheng*—Yao Ji  
*Dan*—Miss Cao  
*Wai*—Yin Xiaolou  
*Laodan*—Mrs. Yin

Once installed in the upstairs room, Yao Ji has an immediate feeling of familiarity. He shares this with his wife, who becomes more and more astonished as he accurately describes details of the room that he could not possibly know, including the toys in a chest behind the bed. He recognizes this is the room that he's been returning to in his dreams, and begins to suspect that the amazing reunion that has just taken place is all another dream.

Miss Cao calls for Yin Xiaolou and Mrs. Yin to witness Ji's strange knowledge of the room. Seeing her lost son's toys upsets Mrs. Yin, but the couple soon deduces that Ji must have connected to their dead son in his dreams. Miss Cao asks how their son disappeared. Then she suggests that perhaps he was not eaten by a tiger at all, but was kidnapped and sold. What if Ji is actually their long-lost child?

Xiaolou knows a way they'll be able to tell for certain, without a shadow of doubt. His son had an extra toe on his right foot, does Ji? Mrs. Yin takes a look and exclaims with great joy that he is, in fact, their son.

Scene 33: *Hua si* 嘩嗣 (Clamoring for an Heir)

*Xiaosheng*—Yao Dongshan  
*Xiaodan*—Mrs. Yao  
*Sheng*—Yao Ji  
*Dan*—Miss Cao  
*Wai*—Yin Xiaolou  
*Laodan*—Mrs. Yin

Dongshan and Mrs. Yao arrive at the Yin residence. Ji and Miss Cao rush out to greet them. Both Dongshan and Xiaolou intend on making Ji their primary heir. Dongshan is unwilling to accept that Ji could possibly be Xiaolou's biological son. Things become heated until Mrs. Yao concedes that Ji is Mrs. Yin and Yin Xiaolou's son, their son-in-law. Just then, messengers arrive with word that Ji earned fourth place in the provincial examinations. They feast their grand reunion and Ji's exam success.

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