

RETURN OF THE SOUL: INHERITANCE AND INNOVATION
IN THE PROCESS OF ARTISTIC CREATION IN MAJOR KUNQU PRODUCTIONS
IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA, 2001-2015

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE DIVISION OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF HAWAI'I AT MĀNOA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

IN

THEATRE

OCTOBER 2019

By

Ming Yang

Dissertation Committee:

Elizabeth A. Wichmann-Walczak, Chairperson

Julie A. Iezzi

Kirstin A. Pauka

Cathryn H. Clayton

Kate A. Lingley

Chin-Tang Lo, Ex-Officio

Keywords: Kunqu, inheritance, innovation, literature, performance, production

© 2019, Ming Yang

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation would not have been possible without the support of individuals and institutions dedicated to the studies of Chinese theatre and Chinese culture. I wish to express my most sincere gratitude to the Kunqu and Xiqu artists and scholars who granted me interviews, shared with me their knowledge and experience, and offered their insights on this dissertation. I am grateful to the administrators at the Northern Kunqu Opera Theatre, the Shanghai Kunqu Troupe, the Kunju Theatre of the Jiangsu Performing Arts Group Co., LTD, and the Suzhou Kunju Troupe for allowing me to observe their rehearsals and performances and for their help in introducing me to artists on the creative teams of productions in this research.

I would also like to acknowledge the following institutions for their financial support: the Asian Cultural Council and the Ah Kin (Buck) Yee Graduate Fellowship in Chinese Studies for their fellowships to help me initiate my study at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa; the John Young Scholarship in the Arts and the East-West Center Degree Fellowship for further supporting it; the UH-Beida (Peking/Beijing University) Exchange Program Award for the opportunity to conduct eleven months of field research in China; the East-West Center Field Research Fund for supporting the field research; and the Chun Ku and Soo Yong Huang Foundation Scholarship in Chinese Studies, the Faith C. Ai Memorial Scholarship Fund, and the Chiang Ching-Kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange for supporting the writing of this dissertation.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to my committee members at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa: Professor Julie Iezzi, Professor Kirstin Pauka, Professor Cathryn Clayton, Professor Kate Lingley, and Emeritus Professor Chin-Tang Lo. In particular, I wish to thank my advisor, Professor Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak, for her unflinching guidance, encouragement, and inspiration.

ABSTRACT

As a significant form of Xiqu (Chinese indigenous theatre), Kunqu (昆曲, lit. “Kun song”) dominated Chinese stages nationwide for nearly two hundred years, remains a national theatre form, and is a representative art form of China’s Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH), as designated by UNESCO in 2001. In this dissertation, I examine ten major Kunqu productions staged in mainland China between 2001 and 2015, as case studies of contemporary Kunqu development. Compared to Kunqu plays created prior to the 21st century, these ten productions display both similarities and differences. The similarities evidence the literary and performance traditions of Kunqu that have been preserved through inheritance and transmission, whereas the differences exemplify innovations in the literary, performance, and design aspects, including scenic and costume design. At the same time, similarities and differences also exist among those productions. The differences are primarily the result of distinctive choices made by the artists involved, as well as specific conditions for artistic creation. The commonalities consist of shared departures from tradition in literary, performance, and design aspects, innovations that may eventually transform into elements of the Kunqu tradition, and be inherited and transmitted in the future.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	III
ABSTRACT.....	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	V
LIST OF FIGURES	VIII
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Aim and Terms	1
1.1.1 Kunqu, Kunju, <i>Kunshanqiang</i> , and <i>Chuanqi</i>	1
1.1.2 Three Key Concepts in the Last 100 Years	2
1.1.3 The Seven Kunqu Companies and the Plays to Be Analyzed.....	3
1.2 Literature Review and Justification	6
1.3 Research Methodology	22
1.4 Limitations	23
CHAPTER 2: REDEFINING KUNQU.....	25
2.1 Introduction.....	25
2.2 Production Analysis	33
2.2.1 The Youth Version of <i>The Peony Pavilion</i> (YVPP).....	33
2.2.1.1 The play: <i>The Peony Pavilion</i>	34
2.2.1.2 The production: The Youth Version	35
2.2.2 The Jade Hairpin (JHP).....	39
2.2.3 Peach Blossom Fan: 1699 (PBF 1699)	42
2.2.4 The “Panda Version” of <i>Palace of Eternal Youth</i> (PEY)	45
2.2.4.1 The play	45

2.2.4.2 The Production	47
2.3 Conclusion	60
CHAPTER 3: EXPLORING ARTISTIC EXPRESSIVITY	69
3.1 Introduction.....	69
3.2 Production Analysis	75
3.2.1 <i>Ban Zhao</i>	75
3.2.1.1 Playwriting.....	77
3.2.1.2 Performance	105
3.2.1.3 Directing, Music and Designs.....	117
3.2.2 Gongsun Zidu.....	124
3.2.3 Zhang Xie the Top Graduate	137
3.3 Conclusion	144
CHAPTER 4: FULFILLING SOCIAL ENLIGHTENMENT.....	149
4.1 Introduction.....	149
4.2 Production Analysis	156
4.2.1 Gold Seal.....	156
4.2.1.1 From Grudge to Gratitude: A Statesman’s Growth.....	157
4.2.1.2 Inheritance and Innovation in the Adaptation.....	160
4.2.1.3 Summary.....	195
4.2.2 Jingyang Bell	198
4.2.3 Boundless Love.....	213
4.2.3.1 Inheritance.....	215
4.2.3.2 Innovations.....	219

4.2.3.3 Summary	222
4.3 Summary	223
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION	229
5.1 Cross-examination of the Productions with Different Focuses	229
5.2 The Propulsion of the Dynamics between Inheritance and Innovation	234
5.3 Further Study	236
APPENDIX A	245
APPENDIX B	264
BIBLIOGRAPHY	271

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 Twelve Flower Spirits in Embroidered Silk Dresses, YVPP	38
Figure 2. Backdrop with Chinese Written-characters of “Autumn River,” JHP.....	41
Figure 3. Stage Design Effect, PBF 1699	45
Figure 4. Scenes in <i>The Palace of Eternal Youth</i> —Hong Sheng, Sukun and Shangkun’s Productions	51
Figure 5. Productions Reviewed in Chapter 2	61
Figure 6. Plot Outline of <i>Ban Zhao</i>	88
Figure 7. Subcategories of <i>Dan</i> Role Type in Kunqu	115
Figure 8. Role Categories and Characters in <i>Zhang Xie the Top Graduate</i>	139
Figure 9. Role Category of Characters in Su Qin’s Family	165
Figure 10. Scenes of GS in Yongkun’s Production, the <i>Chuanqi</i> Play, and the <i>Zhezixi</i> Pieces	178
Figure 11. Inheritance of 18 <i>Zhezixi</i> Scenes in Post-Qing Dynasty <i>Tieguan tu</i> -based Productions	208

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aim and Terms

The aim of this dissertation is to identify inheritance and innovation in redefining Kunqu in the 21st century, to explore the artistic expressivity of Kunqu as well as the function of “social enlightenment” in this context, and to argue that it is the dynamics between inheritance and innovation—metaphorically the soul of Kunqu—that determines what Kunqu is and what it will be.

Kunqu (昆曲, lit., “Kun song”) is a significant form of Xiqu (Chinese indigenous theatre, lit., “theatre of song”). One of the oldest extant classical Chinese theatre forms, Kunqu dominated the Chinese stage nationwide for nearly two hundred years between the late Ming (1368-1644) and early Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. Although its popularity and influence declined, Kunqu has remained a national theatre form, along with Jingju (京剧, “Beijing Opera”).

1.1.1 Kunqu, Kunju, *Kunshanqiang*, and *Chuanqi*

Historically, Kunqu was referred to in different ways, as *chuanqi*, *kunshanqiang* and Kunju, and these references have often been interchangeable. Both a literary and a theatrical term during the Ming and Qing dynasties, *chuanqi* (传奇, “transmitting the marvelous”) can refer either to a style of playscript, or to a script written in the *chuanqi* style that is performed to a style of southern music, Nanqu (南曲, “Southern Tune”).

Kunshanqiang (昆山腔, “Kunshan tune”) is a musical concept. It refers to the local music that originated in the Kunshan area of South China¹ and after further developments later

¹ South China is rather a historical concept than geographical, as in present-day China, this Kunshan area is actually in east-central China. It is true with many, if not all, other expressions with “South” or “North” in them such as “Southern Tune” (南曲, Nanqu) and Southern Play (南戏, Nanxi).

gained nationwide popularity by the mid-Ming dynasty. Kunqu came into being after the *chuanqi* style of playscript was integrated with *kunshanqiang* vocal music and accompaniment. Today, *chuanqi* is basically confined to the discussion of literature. This is all fairly straight forward; the confusion mostly comes from the expressions Kunju (昆剧, lit., “Kun drama”) and Kunqu (昆曲, “Kun tunes”). For instance, some contemporary troupe and company names use Kunju, and others Kunqu. As the Chinese written-character *ju* 剧 indicates, Kunju is a theatrical term that contextualizes Kunqu in the process of theatre production.² This research uses the term Kunqu, to be consistent with the choice of the Chinese government, as well as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in its designation of Kunqu as a masterpiece of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH).

1.1.2 Three Key Concepts in the Last 100 Years

Three major events stand out in contemporary Kunqu development over a span of about 100 years, from approximately 1920 to 2019, which can be summarized with three key concepts. The first is the Suzhou Kunju Transmission Institute (苏州昆剧传习所, *Suzhou Kunju chuanxi suo*), established in 1921 for training new Kunqu performers. Its establishment was the result of an effort to revive Kunqu made by a number of Kunqu connoisseur entrepreneurs. A derivative concept related to the Suzhou Kunju Transmission Institute is the “Transmission Generation” (传字辈, *chuan zi bei*), which refers to the students from the first and only class (1921-1927) of the Institute. They are so-called because each of them was given a stage name with the written-character *chuan*

² The summary is based on information from John Hu, “Ming Dynasty Drama,” *Chinese Theater: from Its Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Colin Mackerras (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983): 60-91. and Lu Eting [陆萼庭], *Kunju yanchu shigao* [昆剧演出史稿, A draft history of Kunju performance] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1980), 7-10.

(传, transmission) in the middle. They did not bring about the expected revival of Kunqu at that time. But the revival did finally come some 30 years later, with a production performed by the “Transmission Generation” actors. That is the second key concept, the 1956 production *Fifteen Strings of Coins* (十五贯, *Shi wu guan*), which “set a good example for carrying out the policy of ‘Letting a hundred flower blossom and weeding through the old to bring forth the new.’”³ Known as the “one play that saved [an entire] theatre form,” the production caused an instant sensation and brought about a brief revitalization of Kunqu during the years between the mid-1950s and mid-1960s. The third key concept is ICH (Intangible Cultural Heritage). To a certain degree, the UNESCO designation resonates with the 1956 production of *Fifteen Strings of Coins*. They both led to favorable changes in the ecology of Kunqu. During both periods of revitalization, Kunqu companies and artists receive greater support from the government in the form of funding and policy. In the present period, various efforts include the Kunqu Art Festivals that are held to carry out the so-called Eight-character Guideline of “protection, inheritance, innovation and development” (保护、继承、创新、发展, *baohu, jicheng, chuangxin, fazhan*), which exemplifies the consciousness of inheritance and innovation in this process. Voices are also heard, discussing whether another revival will come, when it will be, or if it is already underway.⁴

1.1.3 The Seven Kunqu Companies and the Plays to Be Analyzed

Confusion and inconsistency are manifested in the different names of the

³ Zhou Enlai [周恩来]. *Guanyu Kunqu Shi wu guan de liang ci jianghua* (关于昆曲《十五贯》的两次讲话, Two talks on the Kunqu play *Fifteen Strings of Coins*). *Wenyi yanjiu* (文艺研究, Literature and Art Studies) 1 (1980): 4–7.

⁴ Yi, Yan [艺言], “Kunqu zhe shi nian” [昆曲这十年, Kunqu in the 10 Years], *People’s Daily*. 19 May 2011: 20.

professional Kunqu groups in mainland China. For instance, the one based in Beijing is called *Beifang Kunqu juyuan* (北方昆曲剧院, Northern Kunqu Opera Theatre), while its Shanghai counterpart is named as *Shanghai Kunju tuan* (上海昆剧团, Shanghai Kunqu Troupe). To facilitate the flow of narrative and avoid possible confusion in the following discussion, this research refers to the seven Kunqu performing organizations in uniform as “companies,” and uses abbreviations to address each of the specific groups as follows.

1. Beikun (北昆) for *Beifang Kunqu juyuan* (北方昆曲剧院, Northern Kunqu Opera Theatre) based in Beijing;
2. Shangkun (上昆) for *Shanghai Kunju tuan* (上海昆剧团, Shanghai Kunqu Troupe) based in Shanghai;
3. Shengkun (省昆) for *Jiangsusheng yanyi jituan Kunju yuan* (江苏省演艺集团昆剧院, Kunju Theatre, Jiangsu Performing Arts Group Co., LTD) based in Nanjing, Jiangsu province;
4. Sukun (苏昆) for *Suzhou Kunju yuan* (苏州昆剧院, Suzhou Kunju theatre) based in Suzhou, Jiangsu province;
5. Xiangkun (湘昆) for *Hunansheng Kunju tuan* (湖南省昆剧团, Hunan province Kunju troupe) based in Chenzhou, Hunan province;
6. Yongkun (永昆) for *Yongjia Kunju tuan* (永嘉昆剧团, Yongjia Kunju troupe) based in Yongjia County, Wenzhou City, Zhejiang province;⁵ and
7. Zhekun (浙昆) for *Zhejiang Kunju tuan* (浙江昆剧团, Zhejiang Kunju troupe)

⁵ Yongkun was established in the late 1990s on the basis of Yongjia Kunju chuanxi suo [永嘉昆剧传习所, Yongjia Kunju Transmission Institute], which was “the half” among the so-called “six and half” professional Kunqu companies between late 1970s and early 1990s.

based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province.

In addition, it is the guiding principle of this research that non-Chinese terms like opera and drama are not to be applied to Chinese theatre concepts such as Kunqu, Xiqu, and *chuanqi*. The only exceptions are for those for which official English names exist, as for Beikun's English title, given above.

This dissertation explores contemporary Kunqu practice by focusing on the dynamics between inheritance and innovation in the creation of major Kunqu productions in mainland China between 2001 and 2015. Through production-based analysis, this dissertation looks for answers to three questions: 1) what do its practitioners want Kunqu to be? 2) what do they want Kunqu to achieve artistically? and 3) what do they want Kunqu to achieve socio-politically? Ten productions have been selected for analysis, representing six of the seven major Kunqu companies established by October, 2015. These productions are approached from two major perspectives: 1) the inheritance of literary and performative traditions embodied in these works, and 2) the innovations that occurred throughout the creation process, from literary creation to the final stage presentation, including playwriting, music, directing, acting, and design. However, the analytic emphases are on the playwrights, performers and audience, the three interactive “players” in the three stages of Kunqu creation.

Ten productions have been selected for study, from among the 129 major new Kunqu productions presented between 2001 and 2015 and listed in Appendix A, because they meet the following criteria: they were fully-staged productions presented in major theatres; they were presented many times to large audiences; they received wide media coverage; they were staged continuously over long periods of time; and last but not least,

each of these productions received one or more major Xiqu awards. The ten productions analyzed in this dissertation are: the *Youth Version of The Peony Pavilion* (青春版牡丹亭, *Qingchun ban Mudanting*), the *New Edition of Jade Hairpin* (新版玉簪记, *Xinban Yuzanji*), *The Peach Blossom Fan (1699)* (1699·桃花扇, *1699-Taohuashan*), *The Palace of Eternal Youth* (长生殿, *Changshengdian*), *Ban Zhao* (班昭, *Ban Zhao*), *Gongsun Zidu* (公孙子都, *Gongsun Zidu*), *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* (张协状元, *Zhang Xie zhuangyuan*), *The Gold Seal* (金印记, *Jinyinji*), *Jingyang Bell* (景阳钟, *Jingyang zhong*), and *Boundless Love* (爱无疆, *Ai wujiang*).

1.2 Literature Review and Justification

The year 2001 stands as a hallmark in contemporary Kunqu history because in that year Kunqu was designated as a “Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage” by UNESCO. It is also the first year of the inclusive time period for the Kunqu productions selected for analysis in this dissertation. Prior to 2001, English scholarship demonstrated a mild and steady interest in the subject of Kunqu. The 1976 PhD dissertation *Tradition and change in Kunqū opera* by Marjory Bong-Ray Liu is an ethnomusicology study which draws upon “literary and dramatic views in order to reveal the aesthetic rationale for the Kunqu form and performance style” (175). It analyzes how Kunqu carried on the traditions of Yuan Zaju and brought in changes to the development of Xiqu, thus becoming both “a necessary step in the evolutionary development of Chinese opera” and “a consummate total art form that synthesized the science of tonal movement with the art of aesthetic expression” (176). In the text *Chinese Theater: from Its Origins to the Present Day*, published in 1983, Chapter III “Ming Dynasty drama” by John Hu, and Chapter IV “The drama of the Qing Dynasty” by Colin Mackerras, review

the development of Kunqu in the Ming dynasty and its decline in the Qing dynasty. The ups and downs of Kunqu after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 is partially discussed in *The Chinese Theatre in Modern Times, from 1840 to the Present Day*, an earlier work by Colin Mackerras published in 1975.

Scholars at the University of Hawaii at Manoa have produced a number of works on Chinese theatre. Even though they do not directly address the subject of the proposed study, their thorough observation and precise theorization offer great help to the discussion of the artistic creation and aesthetics in Xiqu in general. More importantly, some of them are specifically pertinent. In *Listening to Theatre: the Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera*, Elizabeth Wichmann speaks to the aesthetics of Kunqu when she says that “everything within the world of the play must above all be beautiful... Ultimately, beauty as an aesthetic value connotes conformance to the aesthetic aim and principles of Beijing opera—anything that is not within the aesthetic parameters of Beijing opera is not beautiful within that world” (2-3). For the new Kunqu productions created between 2001 and 2015, “beautiful” has been the very word used in audience responses to and media coverage of Kunqu productions, at first by producer Pai Hsien-yung and Sukun, and later by all other companies. The book *Chinese Aesthetics and Literature: a Reader* (2004) edited by Corinne H. Dale includes a chapter by Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak, analyzing some of Jingju’s basic aesthetics. On pages 130-134 of Chapter 8, “Beijing Opera Plays and Performance,” she succinctly summarizes Jingju’s aesthetic aim as being “to convey essence—a beautiful evocation rather than a realistic representation,” and explains that “the beautiful is the reigning value behind the three aesthetic principles of synthesis (“integration for one effect”), stylization (the elevation of the ordinary through

“roundness”), and conventions (setting, gesture, music, and role type)” (129). Guangren Grant Shen (沈广仁) discussed Kunqu theatre performance in his dissertation *Theatre Performance during the Ming Dynasty* (1994) and later developed it into the book *Elite Theatre in Ming China, 1368-1644* (2005). Sun Mei’s (孙玫) dissertation *Nanxi: the Earliest Form of Xiqu (Traditional Chinese Theatre)* came out one year later, settling the disputes over which was the earliest Xiqu form and the interrelationship between Nanxi and Kunqu. Their academic works help contextualize Kunqu in the history of Chinese theatre.

Since 2001, Kunqu has attracted English scholarship in young researchers of Chinese origin. At present, there are a number of PhD dissertation projects, completed recently or still ongoing, on different aspects of Kunqu, including those of: Xu Peng (徐芑) at the University of Chicago, on “Lost Sound: Singing, Theater, and Aesthetics in Late Ming China, 1547-1644” (2014); Ye Minlei (叶敏蕾) at Princeton University, on “Amateurs of Kunqu Opera: Taste, Nation, and Cultural Space in Republican China, 1900-1950” (as it is listed in the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange announcement of grant recipients for 2011-12); and my colleague Wei Juhua (魏汝华) at UH Manoa, on “Kunqu in Practice: A Case Study” (anticipated in 2018).

In her dissertation, Xu investigates “how singing exerted tangible effects on both the everyday lives of people in the late Ming and on the performing lives of *chuanqi* (传奇) plays,” and “remodels the cultural activity of ‘singing theater’ as an aesthetic object, unpacks its characteristics, and proposes a new reading scheme centered on singing and

song.” In addition, Kunqu is a key concept that permeates the discussion, even though Xu is quite resistant to viewing Kunqu, a “musical (singing) genre,” as the (most) popular dramatic genre in the late Ming, which she reserves for the *chuanqi* plays. Singing is approached mostly from a non-theatrical perspective, as the dissertation focuses on the music aesthetics.

Wei Zhou (魏周), in his 2011 dissertation titled “A *Peony* Transplanted: Pai Hsien-yung and the Preservation of Chinese Kunqu,” briefly touches upon many key concepts that I deal with in greater depth, such as the impact of the UNESCO designation on Kunqu, Kunqu productions after the year 2001, and the Youth Version of *The Peony Pavilion*. His dissertation offers a rich collection of the Chinese online sources regarding Kunqu’s development since 2001. It can also serve as a good reference for the English translations of the relevant Chinese terms and names.

I see the following limitations to the usefulness of Wei’s work for my research. He does not analyze Pai’s production of *The Peony Pavilion* from the perspective of theatre studies. As a PhD student in Chinese Studies with a background in Tourism English (BA) and Cultural Studies (MA), Wei writes mainly from the perspective of cultural studies, focusing on the “Publicity and Consumption” of Pai’s production. Wei does not explore the production from a literary, musical or performative aspect. Nor does Wei carry out a discussion of the “immediate counterparts” of Pai’s *Peony Pavilion*—other post-2001 Kunqu productions around the same time, even though he devotes nearly 100 pages of his 276-page dissertation to a historical review of Kunqu’s development between the late Qing and the mid-20th century. Those are significant gaps that my research proposes to fill.

It might seem that there was a direct relationship between UNESCO's 2001 *Proclamation* and the ensuing great surge in publications on Kunqu in Chinese scholarship. But as Director Liu Zhen (刘祯) of the Institute of Xiqu Research, Chinese National Academy of Arts (中国艺术研究院戏曲研究所) has observed, even though many publications came out after the UNESCO *Proclamation*, they were “actually started long before 2001 and have taken scholars years of effort to finish.” More likely, the coincidence in time was “not because researchers wanted to ‘follow the fashion’ (meaning the *Proclamation*) but because ‘their minds thought alike’” (2010). Nevertheless, works published in the same periods—before, at the time of, and after the 2001 *Proclamation*—can be shown to have common focuses that shifted over time. I categorize the publications according to the time they came out, as follows:

The first category is works that were published prior to the *Proclamation*, mainly during the 1980s and 1990s. These works used a traditional literary approach, focusing on *chuanqi*, the dramatic literature of Kunqu. The following books are representative: *Ming-Qing chuanqi gaishuo* (明清传奇概说, An introduction to Ming-Qing *Chuanqi*) by Zhu Chengpu (朱承朴) and Zeng Qingquan (曾庆权) in 1985 was the first book specifically dedicated to *chuanqi*. Guo Yingde (郭英德), a literature scholar, completed *Ming-Qing chuanqi shi* (明清传奇史, History of *chuanqi* in the Ming and Qing dynasties) in 1999, the first history of its kind. *Xiqu wenxue—Yuyan tuoqi de zonghe yishu* (戏曲文学—语言托起的综合艺术, Xiqu literature: An integrated art based on language), by Men Kui (门岿), published in 2000, for the first time claimed the supremacy of *chuanqi* in Chinese dramatic literature. This was an important new claim in Xiqu studies because, until

then, Wang Guowei's (王国维) theory (put forth in the 1920s) that Yuan Zaju (杂剧, Variety Play) was the greatest achievement still held sway in mainstream scholarship. In the year 2000, scholars at the Xiqu Yanjiusuo (戏曲研究所, The Institute of Xiqu Research) drafted the report to the Ministry of Culture which recommended Kunqu as one of China's 5 candidates for the designation "Masterpiece of Intangible Cultural Heritage."⁶ That recommendation eventually led to the UNESCO proclamation of Kunqu as a Masterpiece of ICH.⁷ The pre-2001 books listed above testify that there was already a call for reevaluating Kunqu's significance even prior to Kunqu's designation by UNESCO; these works may have helped lead to the Xiqu Yanjiusuo's nomination of Kunqu as a candidate for that designation, as well.

The second category consists of the works that came out immediately after the *Proclamation*. These works were unanimous in praising the significance of Kunqu as a theatre form. The following two books are representative: in *Zhongguo Kunqu qiangci gelühe yingyong* (中国昆曲腔词格律和应用, The tunes, lyrics, and prosody of China's Kunqu and their application) (2003), Sun Congyin (孙从音) starts by asserting Kunqu's identity as *baixi zhi zu* (百戏之祖, "common ancestor to hundreds of xiqu forms"), and goes on to declare it as the "quintessence of Chinese culture", and the standard-bearer for

⁶ The other four candidates are *guqin* [古琴, lit., "ancient *qin*," a seven-string plucked instrument], *Menggu changdiao* [蒙古长调, Mongolian long tune], *jianzhi* [剪纸, paper cutting] and *Chuanju* [川剧, lit., "Sichuan Opera," the major Xiqu form in Sichuan].

⁷ Based on published articles and conversations with interviewees, my understanding of the process of selecting Kunqu as candidate for the UNESCO ICH designation is as follows. In April, 2000, after the Ministry of Culture was notified by UNESCO about the initial selection process for masterpieces of ICH, the Ministry assigned either the Chinese National Academy of Art Research or its Institute of Xiqu Research (accounts vary here) to select China's ICH candidates for the UNESCO designation. The Institute came up with a list of 5 choices including Kunqu, and UNESCO decided to choose Kunqu as China's candidate. The following months were spent on multiple rounds of revisions of the application materials, in order to meet the submission deadline of March 31. Among the 19 masterpieces of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage, Kunqu was one of the four that were unanimously approved, which, in later Chinese news coverage, was rendered as Kunqu being "ranked number one" in the voting.

the “national character of China.” One year later, Yu Qiuyu (余秋雨), former president of the Shanghai Academy of Theatre, in his book *Di sheng he chu* (笛声何处, Where is the sound of the flute[?]), defines Kunqu as “the paragon of classical Chinese theater.” Since then, Kunqu has been widely acclaimed as the highest achievement in the history of Xiqu.

Works in the third category of publications that I identify, those that reached print during or after 2004, stem from the call for Kunqu researchers to closely follow productions of plays, in order to reinforce the interrelationship between academic research and artistic practice. In this vein, my research centers on the “New Aesthetics” of Kunqu, proposed by Pai Hsien-yung in the course of the following works: *Pai Hsien-yung shuo Kunqu* (白先勇说昆曲, Pai Hsien-yung talks about Kunqu) (2004), *Sedanbaotian yuzan ji: Qin qu shu hua kunqu xin meixue* (色胆包天玉簪记: 琴曲书画昆曲新美学, The story of Jade Hairpin)⁸(2009), and “Kunqu xin meixue: cong qingchun ban *Mudan ting* dao xinban *Yuzan ji*” (昆曲新美学: 从青春版《牡丹亭》到新版《玉簪记》), “The new aesthetics of Kunqu: from the youth version of *The Peony Pavilion* to the new edition *Jade Hairpin*”) (2010). These works describe the course of Pai’s development of his “New Aesthetics” of Kunqu, and emphasize how there is a close relationship between theory and production of plays. Pai’s published “New Aesthetics” only goes so far, however. Its theory is poorly articulated and scattered about in these publications. Meanwhile, Pai has offered four Kunqu courses at different universities since 2009, during which he has sought to flesh out a complete aesthetic structural system. I have synthesized an articulation of Pai’s Kunqu “New Aesthetics” by comparing and

⁸ Despite the conspicuous discrepancy in length between the Chinese and the English titles, the official published English title of this book is “The story of Jade Hairpin.”

combining his published works with his lectures,⁹ as well as examining their utilization in actual, staged productions.

To summarize, Pai's system of the "New Aesthetics" of Kunqu comprises two parts: 1. a set of aesthetic principles that apply to Kunqu, such as *chouxiang*, *xieyi*, *shuqing*, *shi hua* (抽象, 写意, 抒情, 诗化, lit., "abstract, writing meaning [essentialized rather than realistic meaning], expressing emotion, poeticized"), and 2. guidelines to help realize these aesthetics in practice, such as, "Having contemporary characteristics," "Respecting but not restrained by traditions," and "Utilizing but not abusing modern techniques." However, Pai seems to have later nullified the legitimacy of "newness" in his aesthetic system, for, in his own words, the aesthetic principles of Kunqu as laid out in item one (putting aside the question of their precision and comprehensiveness) are "the very essence of Kunqu" and "under no circumstances shall they be changed or compromised." In other words, Pai's "new" Kunqu aesthetics are in fact a restatement of the "old" ones, even though he allows for some "newness" in the design elements with which the aesthetics are presented; hence, to Ding Sheng (丁盛), Pai's "New Aesthetics of Kunqu" is, "if examined aesthetically, a kind of *wutai meixue* (舞台美学, lit., "stage aesthetics," i.e., stage, costume, and lighting design)."¹⁰

In this process, I have consulted the major works solely devoted to Xiqu aesthetics, including; three monographs bearing exactly the same title, *Xiqu meixue* (戏曲

⁹ I have collected full transcriptions and audio-visual records of Pai's series lectures, given by artists on his production teams for *The Peony Pavilion* and *Jade Hairpin*, at Peking University, Suzhou University and Taiwan University; I didn't have access to the lectures at Hong Kong Chinese University, but based on the online syllabus, it is fair to assume that the lectures are likely to have been quite similar to those given elsewhere, since they were given by the same lecturers on the same or approximately the same subjects.

¹⁰ Ding Sheng [丁盛]. *Lun Pai Hsien-yung de Kunqu xin meixue* [论白先勇的“昆曲新美学”, Pai Hsien-yung's New Aesthetics of Kunqu Opera]. *Wenyi lilun yanjiu* [文艺理论研究, Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art] 3 (2017): 37-43.

美学, Aesthetics of Xiqu), by Fu Jin (傅谨) in 1995, Su Guorong (苏国荣) in 1999, and Chen Duo (陈多) in 2001;¹¹ two books with the same title—*Xiqu meixue lun* (戏曲美学论, A study of Xiqu aesthetics), by Zhang Geng (张庚) in 2004, and Wu Yuhua (吴毓华)¹² in 2005; and *Zhongguo Xiqu meixue* (中国戏曲美学, lit., “Chinese Xiqu aesthetics”) by Zhu Hengfu (朱恒夫) in 2010.

These works focused on the aesthetics of Xiqu certainly include shared views, as well as different opinions. Zhang Geng’s book, though not dated the earliest, is comprised of three separate works published previously: *Guanyu Ju shi* (关于剧诗, lit., About ‘drama poetry’), in 1962; and *Xiqu de xingshi* (戏曲的形式, The form of Xiqu) and *Xiqu meixue san ti* (戏曲美学三题, Three topics in Xiqu aesthetics), in 1990. A senior Xiqu scholar with high-ranking positions since the Yan’an era, Zhang has exerted great influence on Xiqu scholarship extending to this very day, with his Xiqu aesthetic concepts including synthesis (综合性, *zonghexing*), conventionalization (程式化, *chengshihua*), combination of being stylized (虚拟, *xuni*) and realistic (写实, *xieshi*), likeness in spirit (神似, *shensi*), and three stages of artistic creation (艺术的三度创作, *yishu de sandu chuanguo*).¹³

¹¹ Published under *Zhongguo Xiqu meixue* [中国戏曲美学, Aesthetics of Chinese Xiqu] in 2010 by a different press.

¹² Fu and Wu are mainland Chinese scholars whose works get published by Taiwan-based presses. The coincidence/collision in the titles may indicate, more than the urge to vie for publication, a simultaneously converged academic attention to the same field of study by researchers on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. That speaks less convincingly for the reprinting in 2010 of Su’s earlier work under the same title as Zhu’s book, though this very well may have been a publisher’s decision.

¹³ A prolific and industrious scholar, Zhang did not found a system of theory. Rather, through the contentions raised by younger generations of researchers from various institutes, and the rebuttals made by Zhang’s colleagues and students at the Chinese National Academy of Arts’ Institute of Xiqu Research, his observations on Xiqu have been recognized and are becoming “established” as a theoretical system, for example, from “*Guanyu ju shi*” ([thoughts] about “drama poetry”) to “*Ju shi shuo*” (剧诗说, “drama poetry” [school of] theory).

Fu Jin approaches the subject with a historical review that contextualizes the conditions, purposes and functions of playwrights. He specifically talks about the *datuanyuan* (大团圆) structure of a “happy ending” and the underlying Confucian mindset, the division of *hangdang* (行当, role category), the understudied aspect of “writing reality” vs. the usually highlighted “writing meaning” in Xiqu, and last but not least, the evolution of “truth, goodness and beauty” as aesthetic criteria in appraisal of Xiqu works.

Following a vein of *meijie lun* (媒介论, mediation theory), Chen Duo proposes a Xiqu aesthetic system with four characteristics, which he summarizes in four phrases, each comprising four Chinese written-characters (字, *zi*): 1. *wu rong ge sheng* (舞容歌声, lit., “dance in appearance, song in sound”), pointing to the employment of song and dance as well as *hangdang* and *chengshi* (程式, convention); 2. *Dong ren yi qing* (动人以情, lit., “move people use emotion”), speaking to the development of plot with changes in emotions, as well as to free movement in time and space through a unique “Xiqu montage”; 3. *Yi zhu xing cong* (意主形从, lit., “meaning dominates, form follows”), reemphasizing Xiqu’s specific feature as “writing [the essence of] meaning” yet working towards a unity of both form and spirit; and 4. *Mei xing qusheng* (美形取胜, lit., “beautiful form takes victory”), which states Chen’s perception that the beautiful external form—through actors’ song and dance—is the center of the whole creation process, and that literary and musical creations—playwriting and melody composition—shall be tuned to serve the ultimate goal of achieving beauty in performance.

In face of the challenge that major (mainstream) theories have already been

articulated in the published scholarship, the later works strive for ingenious new approaches to the same subject. In first half of his book, Su Guorong conducts extensive comparative studies between Chinese—referred to as the descendants of the sun—and other peoples, in terms of philosophy, religion, history, culture, even cosmology, and thereby offers new perspectives from which to look at the now familiar characteristics of Xiqu in terms of playwriting, staging and performance. Su makes breakthroughs in the latter half of his book, especially in the two chapters on comedy and tragedy. By defining clearly the parameter of discussion—i.e., within Xiqu—and carefully avoiding the confusion that stems from the tempting comparison and contrast with western, specifically ancient Greek, counterparts, Su supports his discussion of the Xiqu comedies with detailed analyses of how the role category of *chou* (丑), literally the “ugly” character, creates beauty. He also analyzes and develops categories of tragedies, a classification system for leading characters in those categories, and explains how Xiqu tragedies can be sources of aesthetic pleasure. Wu Yuhua’s book is a collection of his papers, published over a span of more than twenty years, in which he employs the “aesthetic trinity” of truth, goodness and beauty within classical Xiqu. He claims that the primary principle of Xiqu aesthetics is the unity of truth and beauty; that the fundamental aesthetic state in Xiqu is the combination of emotions and conditions; that the basic creative methodology in Xiqu aesthetics is founded in imagery theory; and that the key characteristics of classical Xiqu aesthetics are the emphasis on mastery of artistry, and the value of novelty. As a textbook for university students’ general education in Xiqu aesthetics, Zhu Hengfu’s work virtually encompasses and reiterates all the major points covered in earlier publications, with a separate chapter analyzing well-known Xiqu characters to help

readers understand the different Xiqu forms, the role types, and the categories of comedy and tragedy. After reviewing the latest developments in Xiqu through the early 2000s, at the end of his book Zhu advocates that Xiqu return to the general public for future evaluation.

Kunqu meixue gangyao (昆曲美学纲要, An outline of Kunqu aesthetics), also by Zhu Hengfu (2014), is the first book specifically focused on Kunqu aesthetics, if we temporarily rule out Pai's publications on his "New Aesthetics of Kunqu. To a large extent, the *Outline* is modelled on the structure of Zhu's earlier publication on Xiqu aesthetics discussed in the preceding paragraph, with passages on Kunqu replacing those on related aspects of general Xiqu. There are other differences in the new book, too. For instance, the first chapter gives a historical review of Kunqu's development through the late Qing, and in the chapter following the one on "comedy," he abandons the term "tragedy" in the title and throughout the chapter, replacing it with the term *ku xi* (苦戏, lit., "bitter play"). In the Conclusion, Zhu proposes a set of *zhisu* (质素, qualities or factors) for describing the beauty of Kunqu: *yuanrong*, *yazhi*, *hedu*, *shi hua* (圆融, lit., "round [and] unobstructed"; 雅致, elegant; 合度, fitting; 诗化, poetic).¹⁴

Wang An-Ch'i (王安祈) publishes extensively on Xiqu. Her research covers the general Xiqu development and specific representative Xiqu forms such as Kunqu and Jingju as well as the influences they exert on each other. A number of her works are incorporated in this dissertation to facilitate the analysis, including: "Yanyuan juchang' xiang 'bianju zhongxin' de guodu—dalu 'Xiqu gaige' xiaoying yu dangdai Xiqu zhi xing

¹⁴ *Yuanrong* (圆融, lit., "round [and] unobstructed") was originally a Buddhist expression which means "a state free of conflicts and obstacles."

zhuanyan zhi guancha” [「演员剧场」向「编剧中心」的过渡—大陆「戏曲改革」效应与当代戏曲质性转变之观察, The transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama: an investigation of mainland drama reform and the transformation of the nature of contemporary theater]; “Kunju biaoyan chuancheng zhong Jingju yinzi de shenru” [昆剧表演传承中京剧因子的渗入, The influence of Peking Opera on Kunqu in the twentieth century]; “Chuangzuo yu pingjiang: yi ‘guojia wutai yishu jingpin gongcheng’ san bu ruxuan juzuo wei li” [创作与评奖: 以“国家舞台艺术精品工程”三部入选剧作为例, Creative Writing and Awards-Granting: Case Studies of the Three Plays Elected in the “National Project of Excellent Stage Art”]; and “Xilihutu xiao kan renjian—xie zai Zhang Xie zhuangyuan lai tai yanchu zhiqian” [稀里糊涂笑看人间—写在《张协状元》来台演出之前, Casually look at the world with a laugh—notes before the tour performance of *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* in Taiwan]. Hua Wei’s (华玮) study of “Shui shi zhujue? Shui zai guankan?—lun qingdai Xiqu zhong de Chongzhen zhi si” [谁是主角? 谁在观看?—论清代戏曲中的崇祯之死, Who is the Main Character? Who is the Viewer?—A Discussion of the Death of Chongzhen in Qing Dynasty Drama] offers a specific lens for me to approach the post-2001 Shangkun production of *Jingyang Bell* (景阳钟, *Jingyang zhong*), which is developed from the play *Tieguan tu* (铁冠图, lit., “Iron-crown” paintings), the focus in Hua’s discussion.

These scholarly English and Chinese publications offer a rich source of reference that is up-to-date and informative. However, these scholarships, whether they are predominantly theoretical, mainly based on the actual Kunqu and Xiqu productions, or striving to combine both, fail to address the study of the range of representative new

Kunqu productions from the decade and a half following the UNESCO *Proclamation* in 2001. Such theatrical works have been serving as a test field, as in the case of Pai’s experiment, and offer a rich stock of practical experiences to examine in pursuit of the theoretical construction of Kunqu’s contemporary practice. That is what this dissertation will accomplish.

To work towards that analysis, I found specific values in the scholarly works listed above, which I have used in the following ways. First, to map out the structure of this research, I model on Li Shiyong’s (李世英) layout in *An Intellectual History of Chinese Xiqu Art* (中国戏曲艺术思想史, *Zhongguo Xiqu yishu sixiangshi*), which starts with discussing “What is meant by Xiqu (何谓戏曲, *hewei Xiqu*)?” and then goes on to discuss “What does Xiqu do (戏曲何为, *Xiqu hewei*)?” Following this basic structure, my research begins with examining what Kunqu is, before exploring what Kunqu artists strive to accomplish artistically and socially. Second, Zhang Geng’s “Three topics on Xiqu aesthetics” points out the player in each of the three stages of artistic creation—playwright in the first stage for the creation of script, actor in the second stage for performance, and audience in the third stage for appreciation. Combining this with Wang An-Ch’i’s proposition that Kunqu represents a “transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama,”¹⁵ I define the literary and performative traditions of Kunqu

¹⁵ Wang An-Ch’i [王安祈]. “‘Yanyuan juchang’ xiang ‘bianju zhongxin’ de guodu—dalu ‘xiqu gaige’ xiaoying yu dangdai xiqu zhi xing zhuanbian zhi guancha” [「演员剧场」向「编剧中心」的过渡—大陆「戏曲改革」效应与当代戏曲质性转变之观察, The transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama: an investigation of mainland drama reform and the transformation of the nature of contemporary theater], *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* [中国文哲研究集刊, Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy], vol.19 (2001): 251-316.

as the focuses in my analysis, and study the roles of playwrights and actors as the principle authorities in the creative process. Third, the monographs on Xiqu aesthetics, especially Fu Jin’s narrative of Xiqu’s aesthetic functions,¹⁶ help me better understand the different aesthetic pursuits of playwright, actor, and audience in artistic creation, and more clearly identify the aesthetic functions of self-fulfillment, enjoyment, and social enlightenment during the process. Fourth, there are a large number of publications on individual Kunqu productions, including anthologies published after symposiums on each of the four major award-winning productions since 2001— *Ban Zhao*, *Gongsun Zidu*, *Palace of Eternal Youth*, and *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*. These publications and anthologies serve as important references for production analysis. Fifth and finally, two specific works on Jingju development that are not discussed above offer me a useful lens through which to deepen my investigation of inheritance and innovation in contemporary Kunqu productions. One is the 2010 UHM dissertation by Fan Xing (樊星) on Jingju Yangban Xi (京剧样板戏, Jingju Model Plays), later revised and published by Hong Kong University Press in 2018, as *Staging Revolution: Artistry and Aesthetics in Model Beijing Opera during the Cultural Revolution*. Fan reviews “traditional conventions, elements, and/or practices” and “comprehensive,” “epoch-making, original innovations” in the primary artistic components of Jingju Yangban Xi creation, including playwriting, acting, music, directing, and design.¹⁷ The second is the book, *The Soul of Beijing Opera: Theatrical Creativity and Continuity in the Changing World*, by Ruru Li (李如茹), in which she argues that:

¹⁶ Fu Jin [傅谨], *Xiqu meixue* [戏曲美学, Aesthetics of Xiqu] (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1995): 283-324.

¹⁷ Fan Xing, *Tradition and Innovation : The Artistry in Jingju Yangban Xi* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2010).

it was through each performer's personal responses to theatrical tradition and to external forces that Jingju was created and has been evolving. Performers and their endeavours in their new work re-form but also continue the tradition, and the dynamics between the creativity and continuity form the "soul of Jingju."¹⁸

Fan and Li's core elements on inheritance and innovation made up my dissertation title, together with the alternative title for *Peony Pavilion* I which borrowed from Tang Xianzu (汤显祖): *Return of the Soul: Inheritance and Innovation in the Process of Artistic Creation in Major Kunqu Productions in the People's Republic of China, 2001-2015*.

I see the significance of my research specifically in three ways. First, by focusing on major post-2001 productions, I have produced an overview of the whole body of contemporary Kunqu productions, and the first detailed, thorough analysis of representative works covering the full spectrum of play types and producing companies. My analysis of these specifically-selected productions will inform the theoretical study of Kunqu with substantial examples of the application of theory in the process of theatrical realization. Second, by approaching the selected contemporary productions from the perspectives of Kunqu and general Xiqu aesthetics, and integrating theory and practice, this research serves as one step taken towards constructing Kunqu's contemporary aesthetics. Most of the large collection of theoretical scholarship and works on practical subjects discussed above came out within the last 20 years, as did the productions that are examined, so that the outcome of my research will be truly "contemporary." This study complements and has the potential to enrich the contemporary theoretical development of

¹⁸ Ruru Li, *The Soul of Beijing Opera: Theatrical Creativity and Continuity in the Changing World* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010): 10.

Kunqu itself. Third, the analysis covers artistic works created within the temporal framework of 2001 to 2015. The period of 15 years here is similar in time to the 10-20 years of the brief Kunqu revival following the production of *Fifteen Strings of Cash* in 1956, and the length of the revival attempted through the Suzhou Kunju Transmission Institute in the 1920s. This research can thus also be taken as a period study on a significant part of contemporary Kunqu history.

1.3 Research Methodology

Three major methodologies have been applied in the research for this dissertation: library research, interviews, and observations of rehearsals and productions (live and/or in audio-visual records). Through library research at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa (August 2008 to August 2013, and July 2014 to April 2015), Peking University (September 2013 to June 2014), the China National Library (September 2013 to June 2014), and the Online Database of China Academic Journals accessed through my UH and PKU accounts, I have studied hardcopy and electronic publications on Kunqu, Xiqu, Chinese theatre and aesthetics. During my field research in China (September 2013 to June 2014), I conducted multiple personal interviews with Kunqu/Xiqu artists and researchers in Beijing, Shanghai, Nanjing, and Suzhou. I conducted a Skype interview with Pai Hsien-yung, while he was in California and I was in China. Also during my field research, I observed: the live productions of the *Youth Version of Peony Pavilion*, *New Version of Jade Hairpin*, *Palace of Eternal Youth*, *Dream of Red Mansions* and *Jingyang Bell*; and rehearsals of *Qiangtou mashang* (墙头马上, lit., “over the wall and on horseback”) at ShangKun, and *White Snake* in Suzhou. I collected recordings of other productions to be analyzed, and revisited them regularly.

Over several years at UHM, I gained strength in research and theatre practice. I was introduced to the UH Rainbow Kunqu Club at the beginning of my study at Manoa. Through the regular weekly practice sessions, with UHM and community artists and experts, I learned to sing, speak, read the special notation system of Kunqu, and understand the intricate, delicate, multi-dimensionality of Kunqu's literature, music, performance, and aesthetic reception. All this was further advanced through my participation in a six-month Jingju resident training program offered by the Department of Theatre and Dance, with master teachers from Jiangsu Jingju Company providing the training that culminated in the production of the English-language Jingju *The White Snake* in 2010. These precious experiences, and the knowledge gained through this intimate, first-and training and culminating performance, helped me deepen my understanding of Kunqu, Jingju and Xiqu in terms of artistic creation and aesthetics.

1.4 Limitations

Due to the constraints of time and the capacity of a dissertation, my research could not cover all of the Kunqu productions staged since 2001. As explained above, discussions are therefore focused on carefully selected representative productions, 10 in total, presented between 2001 and 2015. The analysis of these productions focuses almost entirely on Kunqu's literary and acting traditions, with greater attention given to design than music. Contemporary Kunqu musicians' creative work will be discussed, and Kunqu's musical aspect included in analysis, but only in as much as these things relate to playwriting and acting. In traditional Kunqu creation, the literati playwrights' creative work involved both literature and music; musical composition was largely completed after playwrights selected and arranged the particular *qupai* (曲牌), "fixed-melodies,"

and wrote the lyrics set them. Finally, as theatre research, this dissertation is focused strictly on discussions of artistic creation and social functions in light of Kunqu aesthetics, and abstains from exploring the commodification, popularization and historicization of Kunqu, in spite of the significance of academic pursuits in those directions.

CHAPTER 2: REDEFINING KUNQU

The examination of contemporary Kunqu productions begins with the question: what is Kunqu? The best answer may most easily come from the study of detailed examples of the Kunqu masterpiece works. Through the reproduction of these works, the essential characteristics (本质特征, *benzhi tezheng*) of the literary and performative traditions of Kunqu are represented. Also, it is in the process of reproduction that Kunqu is being redefined. The purposes of this chapter are to: (1) identify the essential characteristics of Kunqu in four representative Kunqu classic plays; (2) summarize how Kunqu is being redefined in the post-2001 Kunqu productions of those plays; and (3) examine the influences of transmission and innovation in this redefining process.. The four post-2001 productions selected for this chapter are: *Peony Pavilion* (牡丹亭, *Mudanting*) and *Jade Hairpin* (玉簪记, *Yuzanji*) produced by Sukun (苏昆); *Peach Blossom Fan* (桃花扇, *Taohuashan*) produced by Shengkun (省昆); and *Palace of Eternal Youth* (长生殿, *Changshengdian*) produced by Shangkun (上昆).

2.1 Introduction

An Intellectual History of Chinese Xiqu Art (中国戏曲艺术思想史, *Zhongguo Xiqu yishu sixiangshi*) adopted an approach that started with discussing “What is meant by Xiqu (何谓戏曲, *hewei Xiqu*)?” and then went on to discuss “What does Xiqu do (戏曲何为, *Xiqu hewei*)?” Following the basic structure of that book, this chapter looks at what Kunqu is, before later chapters explore what Kunqu artists currently strive to accomplish artistically and socially. This chapter therefore focuses on the definition of Kunqu, and, more specifically, at the process whereby Kunqu is redefined in

contemporary productions.

A ready definition of Kunqu is not easily found in the existing scholarship on Kunqu. What is usually offered in its stead is a statement identifying Kunqu as being, for instance, “the most influential art, musical and theatrical form,” followed by a descriptive narrative to historically contextualize that statement, such as “during the Ming and Qing dynasties,” “for over 400 years,” or “for over 600 years.”¹⁹ Indeed, a historical review may greatly facilitate an understanding of what Kunqu is, and two concepts call for special attention in this process—*kunshanqiang* (昆山腔, lit., “Kunshan tune”) and *chuanqi* (传奇, “transmitting the marvelous”). Also briefly known as *kunqiang* (昆腔, “Kun tune”), *kunshanqiang* arose in the Kunshan area in south central China and became one of the four major musical styles of Xiqu in the early Ming dynasty (1368–1644). About the mid-16th century, it was refined by a group of musicians centered around Wei Liangfu (魏良辅). This refinement was carried out in the areas of singing, accompanying instruments, and musical system, which eventually integrated the features of both the Northern musical style with a seven-note scale and the pentatonic Southern musical style. The refined *Kunshanqiang* was given the appellation “water polished tune” (水磨调, *shuimodiao*) for its “smooth and delicate” quality, and surpassed other contemporary

¹⁹ This summary is based on information from academic works focusing on or related to Kunqu, including: Li Xiao [李晓], *Zhongguo Kunqu* [中国昆曲, China Kunqu] (Shanghai: Baijia chubanshe, 2004); 1, 71-4; Dong Wei [董伟]. “Jiada qiangjiu baohu fuchi lidu, cujin Kunqu yishu kexue fazhan—zai Zhongguo Kunqu yishu lie ru lianheguo jiaokewenzuzhi ‘renlie koutou he feiwuzhi yichan daibiaozuo’ shi zhounian jinian dahui de jianghua” [加大抢救保护扶持力度, 促进昆曲艺术科学发展—在中国昆曲艺术列入联合国教科文组织“人类口头和非物质文化遗产代表作”十周年纪念大会的讲话, Enhance the efforts to rescue, protect and support, facilitate the scientific development of Kunqu—talk at the meeting for the 10th anniversary of Kunqu’s designation as the “representative of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization], *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2012* [中国昆曲年鉴 2012, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2012], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖] (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2012), 3-5; Marjory Bong-Ray Liu, *Tradition and change in Kunqu opera* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: UMI, 1976), 1; and John Hu, “Ming Dynasty Drama,” *Chinese Theater: from Its Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Colin Mackerras (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983), 69-72.

musical styles in popularity.

The history of *chuanqi* dates even further back, yet it is not to be confused with the Tang dynasty literary form *chuanqi* (“legends” or “tales”) for short stories, though the Tang “legends” did contribute to the plots for the *chuanqi* plays. The older theatrical form that *chuanqi* is immediately connected to is Nanxi (南戏, Southern Play) of the Song and Yuan dynasties. As its name indicates, Nanxi originated in South China in the Southern Song dynasty. It was the counterpart of Zaju (杂剧, “Variety Play”) that was based in North China during the Yuan dynasty. While Zaju “had largely disappeared from the popular theater” in the Ming dynasty, Nanxi “continued to grow in prominence” before it was taken over by *chuanqi*.²⁰ Disputes remain about whether Nanxi and *chuanqi* are two separate entities, or two different stages in the development of the same thing.²¹ In either case, a consensus seems to have been reached: the theatrical form Nanxi employed the very closely related predecessor of the *chuanqi* form of playscript, and the developing *chuanqi* form of playscript, which inherited the systems of playwriting and performance of Nanxi, went on to be performed with a variety of theatrical music. Meanwhile, innovations were made during the process of inheritance. For instance, the number of

²⁰ Stephen Owen, *An Anthology Of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 880.

²¹ Previous academic publications on this subject were presented in Fan Hongjuan [范红娟], “*Chuanqi* gainian de jieding he *chuanqi* yu Nanxi de lishi fenjie wenti” [传奇概念的界定和传奇与南戏的历史分界问题, Definition of the concept of *chuanqi* and question on the historical demarcation between *chuanqi* and Nanxi], *Liyun xuekan* [耘学刊, *Liyun Journal*] (*wenxue juan*) (文学卷, Volume of literature), (01) 2005: 229-237; Sun Mei [孙玫], “Guanyu Nanxi he *chuanqi* de lishi duan xian wenti de zai renshi” [关于南戏和传奇的历史断限问题的再认识, Re-understanding of the historical division between Nanxi and *chuanqi*], in *Ming Qing Xiqu guoji yantaohui lunwenji* [明清戏曲国际研讨会论文集, Anthology of international symposium on Xiqu in the Ming and Qing dynasties], eds. Hua Wei [华玮] and Wang Ailing [王瑗玲] (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Zhongguo wen zhe yanjiusuo chouben, 1998), 287-303; and Xu Jianzhong [许建中], “*Chuanqi* yu *chuanqi* fazhan de san ge lishi jieduan” [传奇与传奇发展的三个历史阶段, *Chuanqi* and the three historical stages in the development of *chuanqi*], *Wenshizhe* [文史哲, Literature, history and philosophy] 04 (1998): 90-93.

role categories expanded from the original seven in Nanxi to twelve in in the *chuanqi* of the mid-16th century, and went on to be subdivided even further over time.

The greatest innovation came when the prominent playscript form *chuanqi* was combined with the popular musical style *Kunshanqiang*. Through such a combination, a new form of theatre came into being—Kunqu. The milestone in this process was the play *Huansha ji* (浣纱记, *Washing Gauze*) by Liang Chenyu (梁辰鱼) (c. 1520-1594) in the mid-Ming dynasty. Although *Washing Gauze* might not have been the first effort to explore the combined presentation, as John Hu summarizes, the play achieved such an “immediate and lasting success” that after it was written and performed, Kunqu developed into a national form of theatre.²²

From the above historical review, a definition of Kunqu at the point of its origin seems possible: it is a theatrical form in which playscripts are written in the *chuanqi* style, in conformity with the *chuanqi* performative system based in and further developed from Nanxi, and performed in the *kunshanqiang* musical style of human vocalization and instrumental accompaniment.

Stopping this historical review at this point, however is probably a bit too hasty. Kunqu continued to change and grow quickly before reaching its heyday, which then lasted about one hundred years. A dynamic process of inheritance and innovation brought about the growth and development that led to that heyday, and was the basis of the various tactics employed to continue Kunqu’s existence after the heyday was over. Although Kunqu was appreciated for its refined elegance, especially by the literati, innovations were made to expand its popularity. During the Qing dynasty (1644-1911),

²² John Hu, “Ming Dynasty Drama,” *Chinese Theater: from Its Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Colin Mackerras (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983): 71-2.

the emergence of *shiju* (时剧, “contemporary plays”) as a new component in the Kunqu repertory exemplified such innovative practices. The concept of *shiju* is a relatively under-studied subject, and therefore remains a little obscure.²³ In general, it refers to the short programs that were absorbed into Kunqu from other Xiqu forms.²⁴ *Sifan* (思凡, Longing for the worldly pleasures) is one of those one-act contemporary plays. It is a solo piece that depicts a young nun’s aspirations for the happiness found in secular life and her resultant internal struggles. At the end of the piece, she casts aside the sacred rules along with her Buddhist nun’s robe, and rushes from the nunnery and down the hill to return to the earthly world. This very popular piece evidences the value that these borrowings from other theatre forms had in maintaining and expanding Kunqu’s popularity. Another example of innovative expansion of popularity is seen the development of *zhezixi* (折子戏), highlight scenes from full *chuanqi* plays extracted for performance in a bill of such scenes. Because highlight scenes employ the greatest concentration of performance techniques and abilities, *zhezixi* allow Kunqu performers to perfect and display their acting ability and technical skills; the performance of *zhezixi* became widely prevalent during the mid-Qing dynasty.²⁵ As a matter of fact, however, *zhezixi* appeared as early as the Ming,²⁶ when they were performed in situations for which they were more suitable and appropriate than full length plays, such as fairs and festivals, ceremonies including

²³ Jin Renbiao [金仁燮], *Kun chang “shi ju” yanjiu* [昆唱“时剧”探究, Research on “contemporary plays” in Kunqu] Diss. (Suzhou: Soochow University, 2012), 3-11.

²⁴ Hong Weizhu [洪惟助], ed. *Kunqu cidian* [昆曲辞典, Kunqu dictionary] (Yilan: Guoli chuantong yishu zhongxin, 2002): 27.

²⁵ Lu Eting [陆萼庭], *Kunju yanchu shigao* [昆剧演出史稿, A draft history of Kunju performance] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1980), 170-4.

²⁶ Wang Ning [王宁], *Kunju zhezixi yanjiu* [昆剧折子戏研究, On Kunju *zhezixi*] (Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2013): 24-29.

weddings and funerals, and celebratory family gatherings.²⁷

Meanwhile, as Guo Yingde (郭英德) observes, a new characteristic was added to the integrated form of Kunqu: “the literati’s aesthetic interest” (文人化的审美趣味, *wenren hua de shenmei quwei*).²⁸ Guo’s observation echoes what John Hu suggests, that: “Kunqu was established firmly as a respectable literary genre, and as a decent pursuit for literati as well.”²⁹ Guo and John Hu may very well speak to the high-class intellectuals’ dominant presence in the literary creation of *chuanqi*. Many of the Nanxi playwrights in the Song and Yuan dynasties were from lower social class, but the main body of *chuanqi* in the Ming and Qing dynasties was comprised of both prominent officials and renowned scholars. For instance, the early Ming Prime Minister Qiu Jun (丘濬) wrote *Wulun quanbei ji* (五伦全备记, Perfection of five cardinal relationships) with the intention to enhance the morality of society. Famous scholar Wang Shizhen is generally believed to be the author of *Ming feng ji* (鸣凤记, *Crying Phoenixes*), a “contemporary” play that depicts the very recent struggles between loyal ministers and evil courtiers at the Ming court. Such conspicuous tendencies certainly could not slip the notice by the Ming theatre scholar Shen Chongsui (沈宠绥) who notes, “Famous people and talented scholars follow the wake of *Pipa* and *Baiyue*, and compete for fame through *chuanqi*; now the size of plays written is like the mountain and sea, which is never seen before in history” (名才子, 踵“琵琶”“拜月”之武, 竞以传奇鸣; 曲海词山, 于今为烈, *Mingren caizi, zhong*

²⁷ Ibid, 14-22.

²⁸ Guo Yingde [郭英德], *Ming Qing chuanqi shi* [明清传奇史, History of *chuanqi* in the Ming and Qing dynasties] (Nanjing: Jiangnan guji chubanshe, 2001): 12.

²⁹ John Hu, “Ming Dynasty Drama,” *Chinese Theater: from Its Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Colin Mackerras (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983): 74.

Pipa Baiyue zhi wu, jing yi chuanqi ming; qu hai ci shan, yu jin wei lie).³⁰ Based on such notes, to the 21st century Xiqu researchers like Liao Ben (廖奔) and Liu Yanjun (刘彦君), “it seems unlikely that, talented as he is, Tang Xianzu would not compete for winning in the arena of theatre” (有才如汤显祖, 不可能不在曲场一竞雌雄).³¹ The early Qing playwrights Hong Sheng (洪升) and Kong Shangren (孔尚任), who respectively wrote the two *chuanqi* plays to be analyzed shortly after, were also known for both their own talents and the family tradition in scholarship.

At the time, the terms *chuanqi* and Kunqu were used interchangeably, probably because the literati playwrights’ creative process involved both literature and music. The lyrics of arias were set to *qupai*, hundreds of pre-existing “fixed-melodies,”³² which the playwrights selected and arranged, thereby to a large extent performing what in the present day would be considered the composer’s responsibility.

The literati’s literary work was characterized by inheritance and innovation as well. From the preceding Nanxi and Zaju forms, they inherited plays which could be adapted in whole or in part to Kunqu, or could be useful in terms of providing themes,

³⁰ Shen Chongsui [沈宠绥]. “Duqu xuzhi: xu yun long shuai” [度曲须知: 曲运隆衰, Guidance to singing: Prosperity and decline in Xiqu forms], in *Zhongguo gudian Xiqu lunzhu jicheng (di wu ji)* [中国古典戏曲论著集成 (第五集), Collection of Chinese classical Xiqu treatises, vol.5], ed. *Zhongguo Xiqu Yanjiuyuan* [中国戏曲研究院, Chinese Academy of Xiqu Research] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1959), 198.

³¹ Liao Ben [廖奔] and Liu Yanjun [刘彦君], *Zhongguo Xiqu fazhan shi (di san juan)* [中国戏曲发展史 (第三卷), The development of Chinese traditional opera, vol. 3] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2013), 89.

³² There is no record for the exact number of *qupai* available to playwrights in the Ming (1368-1644), but reference can be found in the complete collection of existing by *qupai* by 1746, the 11th year in Emperor Qianlong’s reign. The most comprehensive collection of *qupai*, *Jiugong dacheng nanbei ci gongpu* [九宫大成南北词宫谱, Complete collection of *qupai* in Northern and Southern styles], was completed in 1746 directly under Qianlong’s decree. Included in this *Collection* were 2,094 fixed-melodies, 2,372 variants, adding up to a total of 4,466. See Zhou Xiangyu [周祥钰] et al. *Jiugong dacheng nanbei ci gongpu* [九宫大成南北词宫谱, Complete collection of *qupai* in Northern and Southern styles] (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1987).

subject matter, or plot elements for new plays, thereby enriching the Kunqu repertory. Examples of such integration include the Nanxi play *Gold Seal* (金印记, *Jinyin ji*), which will be specifically examined in chapter 4, and some of Guan Hanqing's (关汉卿) Zaju plays including *Dan dao hui* (单刀会, "Single broadsword meeting") and *Dou E yuan* (窦娥冤, Injustice unto Dou E) from the Yuan dynasty. Such work was also a process of transformation. The inherited Nanxi and Zaju plays were adapted to fit into the framework of the *chuanqi* performative system, and the rules and conventions of the Kunqu music style. Therefore, a special term was invented to describe the performance of adapted Zaju plays performed as Kunqu: *yuanqu kun chang* (元曲昆唱, "Yuan tunes sung in Kunqu style").

But a greater emphasis was definitely placed on the creation of new Kunqu plays. The Kunqu masterpieces to be discussed in this chapter were all created during the "heyday" period mentioned above: *Peony Pavilion*, created at the end of the 16th century, and *Peach Blossom Fan* and *Palace of Eternal Youth*, created in the final years of the 17th century. Since publication of the book *Zhongguo si da gudian mingju* (中国古典四大名剧, China's four great classical plays) in 1958, the term "four great (classical) plays" (四大[古典]名剧, *si da (gudian) ming ju*) has been widely used in (quasi-)academic discourses on Chinese theatre, literature and culture in general, officially crowning *Peony Pavilion*, *Peach Blossom Fan*, and *Palace of Eternal Youth* with the appellation "masterpieces."³³ These works represent the beauty of Kunqu in literature, music, and performance, and embody the heart of the Kunqu tradition in playwriting, musical

³³ The fourth "masterpiece" was the Yuan Zaju play *The Romance of the Western Chamber* [西厢记, *Xixiang ji*] by Wang Shifu [王实甫]. See Xu Shuofang [徐朔方], *Zhongguo si da gudian mingju* [中国古典四大名剧, China's four great classical plays] (Beijing: Renmin wenzue chubanshe, 1958).

composition, and presentation. Since the initial productions during the Ming and Qing dynasties, these plays have been read, listened to, and watched by generations of audiences. Their dramatic literature is preserved and circulated in print, and their musical features crystalized in performance and transmitted to future generations of actors and musicians in the form of *zhezixi*. They have stood the test of time and still retain their appeal today. The analysis of 21st century productions of these Kunqu masterpieces should therefore shed light on the definition and practice of traditional Kunqu in the contemporary context. The description and analysis to follow is not focused on how Kunqu is being redefined. Rather, it concerns the Kunqu artists' understanding of this artistic tradition, and their vision of how Kunqu should be interpreted and presented.

In addition to the three Kunqu masterpieces *Peony Pavilion*, *Peach Blossom Fan*, *Palace of Eternal Youth*, this chapter also examines the Sukun (苏昆) production of *Jade Hairpin* (玉簪记, *Yuzanji*), another classic *chuanqi* play. There are two reasons for this. First, the two productions by Sukun, *Jade Hairpin* and *Peony Pavilion*, were closely related as being part of the trilogy production series proposed by Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇). Second, although *Jade Hairpin* was not acclaimed as one of the Kunqu masterpieces, it was one of the most popular Kunqu plays on stage by the end of the Ming Dynasty, and has been staged frequently since then.³⁴

2.2 Production Analysis

2.2.1 The Youth Version of *The Peony Pavilion* (YVPP)

Productions in this part of analysis attach great importance to keeping the presentation of those plays “authentic,” and, most importantly (at least important for

³⁴ Jiang Xingyu [蒋星煜], *Zhongguo Xiqu shi gouchen* [中国戏曲史钩沉, An investigation of the Chinese Xiqu history] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2010), 608.

publicity purposes), are performed by young actors (trained by master Kunqu artists).³⁵

The most notable example for this category is the Youth Version of *The Peony Pavilion* (hereafter YVPP), the first production that advocates a “Youthful Restaging.”

2.2.1.1 The play: *The Peony Pavilion*

The Peony Pavilion has remained one of, if not the single most popular *chuanqi* plays since its original writing by Tang Xianzu in around 1598. There are many reasons behind its instant sensation and enduring popularity, from the great literary beauty in the lyric to the romantic and bold visions it alludes to. As its alternate title *The Return of the Soul* indicates, it tells the story of a young girl who dies for love and is resurrected with love; the pursuit of passion and love against the bonds of social convention, and the advocacy of a form of spiritual freedom from the Confucian restrictions on desire and individuality. The rich content in this 55-scene play ranges from the love romance between the hero and the heroine to the military and political struggles over the destiny of the Song dynasty between the Song empire, the Jurchen invaders and their collaborators. And it has been staged very often—albeit during these two centuries mostly in the form of *zhezixi*, or highlight scenes—except during the interruption of the Cultural Revolution. According to Lu Eting, there might have been full-play productions by the court troupe during the Qianlong era, but such productions by private troupes and commercial troupes would have been very unlikely due to the strains on money, cast members, materials and time.³⁶ In the last few years of the 20th century alone, *Peony Pavilion* was performed on the main stage multiple times, among which staging was the first truly full-scale

³⁵ By Pai, on numerous occasions, and members of other teams of productions discussed in this chapter. For example, Pai Hsien-yung [白先勇], telephone interview, Santa Barbara, CA, May 12, 2012.

³⁶ Lu Eting [陆萼庭], *Kunju yanchu shigao* [昆剧演出史稿, A draft history of Kunju performance] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1980): 59.

production in that century, at the Lincoln Center in 1999, under the direction of Chen Shizheng (陈士争), which ran 6–7 hours per night for a total of 20 hours on three nights.³⁷ There was also the production directed by Peter Sellars in 1998, and the 1999–2000 production by Shangkun, which was performed in 3 sections for a total of 34 scenes. These have added to the legacy of earlier productions in the 1980s and the recurring contemporary productions by other Kunqu companies.

2.2.1.2 The production: The Youth Version

YVPP refers to the specific production of *The Peony Pavilion* jointly staged by Pai Hsien-yung and the Suzhou Kunqu Company (Sukun) that debuted in 2004. It is the single production that has attracted the greatest interest from audience, scholars, and governmental cultural and arts bodies. It remains the production given the most public performances—the 200th three-night performance was given at China’s National Center for the Performing Arts on December 8–10, 2011, and it has exerted great influence on the development of Kunqu ever since its premiere. Pai Hsien-yung was the individual who came up with the concept of the “youth version” at the early stage of planning. As Pai explicitly stated on various occasions throughout the years from 2003 to now, this is a play about a couple of young lovers; therefore, it should be performed by a pair of young actors in their mid-20s who are relatively close to the age of the leading characters—only in this way can a new, young audience be reached, and the old tradition of Kunqu be rejuvenated.

Even though it was not the earliest of the Kunqu productions after 2001, the

³⁷ There have been heated debates on whether Chen’s production of *PP* was authentic Kunqu, but according to Chen himself, what mattered more to him was the play as a vehicle to demonstrate Chinese culture, not the form of Kunqu. See Chen’s interview in “Chen Shizheng” [陈士争], *Yi wen Zhongguo* [艺文中国, Arts China]. Haikou: *Liyou weishi* [旅游卫视, Tourism Television], 10 April, 2010.

landmark year for the UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage designation, the YVPP production stands as a milestone in setting up a model that impacted later Kunqu productions and will no doubt continue to do so for those yet to come. In play-(re)writing, the YVPP has been described as an "orthodox, authentic and honest restaging" of the original by Pai Hsien-yung. Following his self-imposed rule of "cutting but not changing," the original 55 scenes were reduced to 27 scenes, with some re-arrangement in the order of their appearance. There were also words in the 27 scenes that were taken out, but among the lyrics that were kept, every single word remains the same as in the original script.³⁸

In performance, the production also followed tradition; the young male and female lead were trained under the master actors for one year, after which they were taken as official pupils by going through the conventional ceremony of kneeling down and kowtowing to their masters. The acting conventions, including singing, speaking, dancing, were preserved and carried on by the young generation of actors in the performance.

In terms of the musical aspects, Western instruments were incorporated into the orchestra, which also uses traditional Chinese instruments like the multi-holed wind instrument (埙 *xun*) and the tuned chimes (编钟 *bianzhong*), which had not been a regular part of the Kunqu ensemble. Western composition methods were employed in the production, too, such as creating two motif pieces for the hero and heroine respectively—which lent the two characters unique musical images and made each more easily

³⁸ That is, of course, quoting Pai and other people repeating him, because, strictly speaking, there hasn't been such a thing as the "one and only" original script. Throughout the years, there have been numerous versions of the scripts published and used in actual performance. Pai and his staff certainly stuck with one such version, but it is arguable whether that version should be considered an "authentic" original.

identifiable. Despite the methodological Western-ness in composing these motifs, they were originally extracted from the defining melodies in the two characters' signature arias and developed into larger pieces. There is only one piece of music that was completely original—that one was written by Zhou Youliang, the music supervisor, composer and conductor of the production. He chose to put the *Prologue* of the play to music, using it as a most striking refrain at the end of each section, thereby connecting the three-night performance into a united entity. Incidentally, this piece has been consistently mistaken for being a set tune *qupai* of Kunqu rather than a newly-written tune. Those instances of “Kunqu-ness” in the music exist thanks to the original work having been crafted within the scope of the rules and regulations of Kunqu (Zhou Youliang, 2006). In addition to the Western methodology, there were also new treatments of the vocal accompaniment, including “the chorus form “chiming-in” through *bangqiang* (literally “helping with the tune”) borrowed from other *xiqu* forms like Chuanju (川剧, from Sichuan) and offstage singing, as in the *Prologue*³⁹.

Arguably more conspicuous than the musical aspect were the eye-catching costume designs. Take, for example, the silk dresses for the 12 actresses playing the flower spirits, which were all hand embroidered in Suzhou, feature 12 patterns of flowers to represent the different flowers in each of the 12 months of a year. Chen Shizheng's 1998 production was the immediate predecessor that started to use embroidered costumes

³⁹ It should be noted that, (1) Zhou Youliang composed the music with a visual image in mind – at least that was what he said at the interview, so that was a desired effect for the beginning of the play; (2) It was also a contingent device, as Zhou failed to find a *cangyin* (苍音, lit., “old voice”) for the Prologue, and Wang Shiyu had to step in, but Wang refused to appear on stage. This is going to be Youth Version! Besides, he was the master teacher. It was inappropriate for him to perform either, though in some cases, Wang was persuaded by Bai to perform anyway. So it is likely that the offstage singing in YVPP was not meant to be how it was adopted in the following productions, and used to the extreme as in *The Dream*, which might be a misunderstanding-led distortion. But over time, it was finally settled as part of the standard practice in this production. This evidences the dynamics between change and continuity in the creative process of Kunqu plays. Zhou Youliang (周友良), interview, Suzhou, 12 November, 2013.

especially for characters in a specific production, but YVPP was the one that raised the significance of costumes to a higher level, to be part of the spectacle of the performance.

Figure 1 Twelve Flower Spirits in Embroidered Silk Dresses, YVPP⁴⁰



Images of traditional Chinese brush paintings and calligraphy were used as part of the stage setting and props. It also served to indicate the time and venue, to depict certain moods, or to establish certain connections—such as the huge pieces of calligraphy works of poems written by Du Fu and Liu Zongyuan, two great poets of the Tang dynasty. In this play, they are the ancestors of the heroine and the hero respectively. Unlike many productions prior to the YVPP, which would fill the space on stage with various props and devices, its stage was almost “pristinely empty and bare”; sometimes there were only

⁴⁰ Figure 1 is from the production of *Qingchunban Mudan ting* [青春版《牡丹亭》], The Youth Version of *The Peony Pavilion*, DVD, (Hangzhou: Zhejiang yinxiang chubanshe, 2007). The photo was taken by photographer Xu Peihong [许培鸿].

one table and two chairs as in the plainest traditional form of setting. *Er dao mu* (the second curtain) was employed after the Western style of theatres were introduced into China in the late 1800s and early 1900s, and commonly used to cover changes of scene and prevent audience distractions through the appearance of the stage crew onstage. With the help of lighting and the onstage actors helping with the scenery changes and props placements during blockings, the same effects were achieved in YVPP even without use of a second curtain.

2.2.2 The Jade Hairpin (JHP)

In 2008, *The Jade Hairpin* was produced by Pai and Sukun, with basically the same cast of Sukun and the guest team with Pai from the YVPP. There were of course differences; when compared to *The Peony Pavilion*—a rich and powerful masterwork, *The Jade Hairpin* is more like “a sketch: brisk, engaging, and amusing”⁴¹. Here there is no passionate love sufficient to transcend the barriers between life and death, no battle of wits and valor fought for the safeguarding of the dynasty. Instead, *The Jade Hairpin* tells the story of romance between a young couple betrothed to each other at birth by their parents but separated since childhood due to the tumult of wars. Years later, they meet at a nunnery. The young man—Pan Bizheng (潘必正)—is studying for the next round of imperial examinations, and the girl—Chen Miaochang (陈妙常)—is living as a nun. After the two mutually form favorable impressions of each other, Pan takes the initiative, checking out the mutuality of his affections by teasing Chen through his zither playing. This takes place without much success. But, after sneaking into Chen’s bedroom, where

⁴¹ Yue Meiti [岳美缙], *Lin feng du qu Yue Meiti* [临风度曲 岳美缙, Singing against the wind—Yue Meiti] (Taipei: Shitou chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 2006), 42-9; *Jin sheng jinshi* [中生今世, This life as a *jin sheng* actor] (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2008), 117.

he finds a love poem written by her, revealing her true affection for him, the two youngsters vow to each other to be united as husband and wife. Yet Pan's aunt, the abbess of the nunnery, uncovers the romance and tries to prevent a scandal by forcing Pan to cross the Long River to take the imperial examinations. Chen rushes to the river and catches up with Pan in a small boat. And, though they finally part with each other, it is a parting filled with not only tears but also hope: Pan and Chen exchange tokens of their love—a jade hairpin and the fan pendant—and thereby symbolizing their hopes for a reunion in future. The full play of this joint production consists of six scenes that altogether take three hours—as against the nine-plus hours for the YVPP. Among the prominent scenes are “Teasing with the Zither,” “Stealing the Poem” and “The Autumn River” scenes, which are also regularly performed as *zhezixi* (highlight scenes), as they hold artistic merit on their own terms.

Despite those differences, JHP is a continuation of the same experiments concerning the form's aesthetic system that were proposed, tested, revised, and re-tested in the YVPP. The 2009 anthology on the production, engineered by Pai and receiving contributions by the cast and guest artists, is titled *The Story of Jade Hairpin: Zither, Tunes, Calligraphy and Paintings—New Aesthetics of Kunqu*, which points out the key aspects that were further emphasized in this play, i.e., the zither, the traditional calligraphy, and the Chinese brush painting. As the scene title suggests, the zither is certainly the crucial element in the scene “Teasing with the Zither.” As a matter of fact, a rare Tang-dynasty zither said to be over 1200 years old was played for the focal moment of the zither-playing correspondence between the hero and the heroine, as well as for other scenes of the play as part of the orchestra. Yet, comparatively speaking, images of

Chinese calligraphy and brush paintings are given more “visible” appearances in the performance. The simple line drawings of Bodhisattva and a lotus held in the Buddha’s hand are projected onto the backdrop as the setting for events taking place at the Buddhist nunnery. And the calligraphy works are likewise employed throughout the play in new ways. From the first scene of “Seeking Shelter at the Nunnery” to the last “Autumn River” scene, they vary from the easily legible regular script to the barely legible running script, to script in such a bold cursive style that the Chinese characters take on the graphic effects of paintings, as are seen in the “Zither” scene and the “River” scene, in which the characters for “lotus” and “autumn river” function—through their visual expressivity—as background paintings. The greatly enhanced application of Chinese calligraphy and painting works, together with the usage of the ancient zither, are intended to fulfill the goal Pai and his colleagues set for the production of JHP—to restore Kunqu as a theatrical form of true elegance.

Figure 2. Backdrop with Chinese Written-characters of “Autumn River,” JHP⁴²



⁴² Figure 2 is a captured image from the production of *Xinban Yuzanji* [新版《玉簪记》, the New Edition Jade Haipin (original title)], DVD, (Hangzhou: Zhejiang yinxiang chubanshe, year unknown).

2.2.3 Peach Blossom Fan: 1699 (PBF 1699)

One of the two most successful Kunqu plays in the early Qing dynasty, *The Peach Blossom Fan* was written by Kong Shangren in the late 1600s. The play consists of 44 scenes, and tells the story between Hou Fangyu (侯方域)—a 19-year-old scholar—and Li Xiangjun (李香君)—a 16-year-old courtesan—during the upheaval of the final years of the Ming dynasty. Hou and Li fall in love with each other at first sight, and soon get married, receiving the praises and blessings of their friends. However, a deposed official—Ruan Dacheng (阮大铖)—humiliated by Hou and Li’s rejection of his wedding gifts as an attempt to buy their favor, frames Hou for treason. Consequently, Hou has to flee during his honeymoon. Now that Li is left alone, Ruan tries to force her to be remarried to the Prime Minister. In order to preserve her chastity, Li makes up her mind to kill herself; however, she survives her self-inflicted wound. Her blood is splashed onto the fan, which becomes their love token. Out of admiration for her courage and determination, a friend of theirs saves the fan for art by painting some peach blossoms on top of the blood stains, thus turning it into the “peach blossom fan” that gives the play its title. However, when Hou and Li are finally reunited with each other, their personal turmoil settled by the transition from the Ming to the Qing, they feel that any individual happiness they could possibly gain is meaningless now that their nation is lost, so they tear up the fan and give up all worldly pursuits, becoming a Buddhist monk and nun respectively.

The *PBF 1699*—a tribute to the year when it was first performed—was produced by the Jiangsu Kunqu Company (Shengkun) three years after the YVPP made its debut. Although the director Tian Qinxin publicly denied the influence from YVPP in an

interview in 2006, there were some common features identifiable in *PBF 1699*, such as the youthfulness of the cast, the goal for an authentic performance—as close as possible to how it was nearly 300 years ago—and the emphases on resuscitating certain dying practices in Kunqu as an elegant form of theatre. While the YVPP took pride in the fact that the age of the main actors in its cast were “close to the age” of the characters they would portray at the premiere, the *PBF 1699* claimed that its actors were exactly as young as the leading characters. The average age of the cast was a mere 18 years. Take for example the two actors playing the character of Li Xiangjun in the two halves of the play: Shan Wen (单雯) was 16 and Luo Chenxue (罗晨雪) was 18, exactly the same age as Li was at the time of the story’s setting. The playwrights and director took great pains to retrieve the scripts and the music scores from the Qing dynasty to ensure that the production would be presented in the same way it was several centuries ago. As against the three scenes that are most often performed as *zhezixi*, the play’s 44 scenes were in essence preserved in *PBF 1699* by re-organizing them into six acts, hence maintaining the structural balance between the civil scenes—emphasizing singing and acting—and the martial scenes—stressing fighting and combat—originally in the play. As in the handling of *The Peony Pavilion*, there was “only cutting but no changing” in the script of *PBF 1699*. The young actors went through highly exhaustive training over a six-month period to learn from the teachers for singing, speaking, dancing and fighting in the same ways that the teachers learned from their masters, so that the performance carried on the tradition passed down from the predecessors. The 291 sets of costumes for nearly 60 cast members were, as with YVPP, all hand-made by over 300 female embroidery workers in Suzhou.

The *PBF 1699* production had its own unique attributes as well, the most striking

one being its treatment of the performance space on stage through the set and lighting design. As the story takes place in the city of Nanjing, the temporary capital of the Late Ming, dark glass was used for the whole floor instead of the carpets usually covering the Kunqu stage, to create the visual effect of the Qinhuai (秦淮) River that runs through the entertainment as well as political quarters of the city, by emulating the shadows and reflections of the water and helping render the impression of boat-rowing on the imaginary river more convincing. Another innovative device was the three “walls” onstage that were made of white translucent screens on which was painted the masterpiece *The Prosperous Market in the South Capital* (南都繁会景物图, *Nan du fan hui jingwu tu*) from the Ming dynasty. The commonly used backdrop was replaced by the center screen downstage, which partially veiled the orchestra. In front of the other two screens on stage left and stage right, 18 chairs were lined up on the narrow runways. When those chairs were taken by actors and *jianchang* (检场)—the stage crew—it was at once as if they were waiting for their respective turns for entrance in an onstage resting zone, and, at the same time, they themselves were among the audience for the events taking place in the core performance space on the moveable platform, a “stage within a stage.” Major events in the focal scenes took place on that platform. Equipped within a parallel frame structure, it created a visual effect similar to that of a camera lens or a mounted painting, hence a double-layer, or an “illusion within an illusion.”

Figure 3. Stage Design Effect, PBF 1699⁴³



2.2.4 The “Panda Version” of *Palace of Eternal Youth* (PEY)⁴⁴

2.2.4.1 The play

The Palace of Eternal Youth was written by Hong Sheng (洪升) in 1688 after over ten years of efforts. It tells of the love between Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty, Li Longji (李隆基), and his Imperial Concubine, Yang Yuhuan (杨玉环). The romance unfolds in the crucial years of the mid-Tang Dynasty when the empire is transiting from flourishing Kaiyuan era known as *Kaiyuan shengshi* (开元盛世) (basically the first half of Xuanzong’s reign), to the latter half of the Tianbao era, during which the An-Shi Rebellion (*An Shi zhi luan* 安史之乱) takes place. The play consists of fifty scenes that are divided into two halves. The first half begins with Li Longji, having proudly led the Tang to the zenith of power and prosperity, announcing his intention to pursue pleasure in

⁴³ Xiao Lihe [萧丽河], “Kunju 1699·Taohuashan de yanchu kongjian ji wutai sheji shuoming” [昆剧《1699·桃花扇》的演出空间及舞台设计说明, Exposition on the performance space and stage design in Kunju *The Peach Blossom Fan* (1699)], in *1699 Taohuashan: zhongguo chuanqi dianfeng* [1699 桃花扇: 中国传奇巅峰, *The Peach Blossom Fan* (1699): the Pinnacle of Classical Chinese Theatre (original title)], ed. Jiangsusheng yanyi jituan [江苏省演艺集团昆剧院, Jiangsu Performing Arts Group Co., LTD] (Nanjing: Jiangsu meishu chubanshe, 2007), 88-9.

⁴⁴ Unless specified otherwise, all English translation of the play is taken from Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang’s work, *Palace of Eternal Youth*, (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press), 2004.

women: he finds a palace maid named Yang Yuhuan who is gentle and soft and makes her Imperial Concubine. In fact, Li is so passionately in love with Yang that he soon extends his favor to all members of Yang's family, making her older brother Yang Guozhong the prime minister and her three sisters noblewomen. However, much as he adores Yang, the Emperor is not used to confining his love to just one woman. He not only keeps Yang's sister for the night but, out of a rekindled spark of love and sympathy, calls his earlier favorite Concubine Mei (梅妃 *Mei fei*) for a secret reunion. Such lack of commitment on his part brings huge disturbances to their relationship and causes Yang to be exiled from court and sent back to her maiden home; however, both parties repent and are reconciled later. Having realized that the bond of love is so deep that neither is able to live without the other, Li and Yang make a vow on the seventh evening of the seventh Moon, that

“In the sky we will be two love birds flying together;

On the earth will be two branches on one tree.

Though heaven and earth may end,

May this vow last for ever and ever.”

Unfortunately, at the same time when the Emperor and his Concubine's love is being settled within the imperial palace, fundamental changes are taking place in the outside world. An Lushan (安祿山), the general entrusted with safeguarding the northern border, rebels and his army quickly sweeps across all the way to the capital city, sending Li and Yang as well as everyone else in the court to flee. The imperial guards mutiny on the way. They behead Yang Guozhong, whom they attribute to be the cause of all those disasters, and demand the death of his sister, Yang Yuhuan. Seeing that the situation is getting out of control and that she cannot be spared and that even the Emperor will be in danger of

his life, without further hesitation Yang hangs herself from a pear tree. Thus ends the first half.

The second half of the play is carried out in a similar pattern, with one focusing on the various people's—rebels, Tang's loyal generals, and former court musicians—experiences in the tumultuous years, and the other focusing on Li and Yang—only separately this time: Li is lamenting the loss of Yang, blaming himself for failing to stand up to save her, and immerses himself in endless pining and mourning; Yang discovers that she as well as Li are deities in heaven that have been sent down to live awhile in the secular world as punishment for their faults, and repents day and night over her misconducts and errors. In the end, the rebellion is quashed and peace is restored to the human world; thanks to their commitment to their vow, Li and Yang are reunited in heaven as lovers forever.

2.2.4.2 The Production

To the playwright, Hong Sheng, production of the play is truly a drama of life. In August 1689, a Kunqu troupe named *Juheban* (聚和班) held a full-play production at Hong's residence in appreciation of his great work that made them profit. The event turned out to be a sensation in the capital city. However, someone turned them in to the authorities on the grounds that the production has taken place during the national mourning for the empress dowager, when any form of entertainment in public would be considered an outrageous offence to the royal household. Hong as well as other over fifty people present at the performance were sent to jail, and he was deprived of his status as a student at the National University (太学 *taixue*), putting an end to his by-then

unsuccessful official career once and for all.⁴⁵ Nonetheless, Wu Mei (吴梅) sees Hong (and the other fifty people)'s career-ending incident with a different eye: the fact that those implicated knowingly took the high risk speaks to the play's fatal attraction and thus their tragedy in reality serves as a publicity that promoted the play's transmission.⁴⁶ Wu's opinion has the whiff of the truth, at least to some degree. In 1704, during the last year of Hong's life alone, Hong attended two full-play productions commissioned by high-ranking officials, one of whom was Cao Yin, the grandfather of Cao Xueqin, author of *Dream of the Red Chamber*. Hong was seated all by himself at the table as the most distinguished guest through the performance for three days and nights (三昼夜, *san zhouye*) and received nonstop toasts by the actors during the performance, a moment of climax indeed. Unfortunately, on his boat ride back home after the performance, the tipsy playwright tripped, fell in water, and drowned. Since then, there has been no record that a full-scale production of *The Palace of Eternal Youth* was ever presented again, although it was preserved in a diminished form through the staging of highlight scenes, such as *dingqing*, *yi chen*, *jiulou*, *jing bian*, *mai yu*, *ku xiang*, and *tanci*⁴⁷. Therefore, when the four-night 44-scene production by Shangkun debuted on May 29, 2007, it was branded as

⁴⁵ As to questions such as exactly which troupe put on the performance and where it was held, who turned them in and why, there are still no agreement. Some say it was out of vengeance of those people who were uninvited; some argue it was collateral damage of the Manchurian-Han struggles at court; and others believe it was an excuse to punish Hong by Emperor Kangxi (康熙) who had seen the show and felt offended. See Zhu Jinhua [朱锦华], "Changshengdian yanchu jianshi" [《长生殿》演出简史, A brief history of the performance of *Palace of Eternal Youth*], in *Changshengdian: yanchu yu yanjiu* [长生殿: 演出与研究, A classic of traditional Chinese operas: the Palace of eternal youth (original English title)], eds. Zhou Huabin [周华斌] and Ye Changhai [叶长海] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2009), 326-45.

⁴⁶ Wu Mei [吴梅], *Gu qu zhu tan* [顾曲麈谈, Lit., To glance at the music and chat informally] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000), 118-9.

⁴⁷ Joseph Lam writes specifically on the scene of *Tanci* "not only as a masterpiece of Hong Sheng's, but also as a web of individualized and evolving master performances." See Joseph S. C. Lam, *A Kunqu Masterpiece and Its Interpretations: Tanci* (The Ballad) from Hong Sheng's *Changsheng dian* (Palace of

a “premiere of the first full-scale production of *The Palace of Eternal Youth* in three hundred years.”⁴⁸

Strictly speaking, prior to the Shangkun production, a full-play production of *The Palace of Eternal Youth* was in fact attempted by different Kunqu companies since 1949,⁴⁹ the most recent and closest to full scale being the three-night production by Sukun that debuted in 2004, which consists of 27 scenes (28 in rehearsals and previews but one scene removed from the performance due to time constraints⁵⁰—in either case, more than half of Hong’s 50 scenes); as the producer and director Gu Duhuang (顾笃璜) has explicitly stated, the Sukun production concentrates on the romance between Li and Yang, thus including only three *wu* (武, martial) scenes, namely: *zhen bao* (侦察, The Scout Reports), *xian guan* (陷关, The Pass under Siege), and *jiao kou* (剿寇, Quashing the Rebellion) that are related to the rebellion. Figure 4 on the following page will demonstrate the different arrangements of scenes between the Sukun and Shangkun productions⁵¹ against the structure of Hong Sheng’s original play.

Following a two-topic structure—the major one focusing on the love between Li

Lasting Life), CHINOPERL 33:2 (2014): 97-120.

⁴⁸ Tang Sifu [唐斯复], “Quanben *Changshengdian* zhengli yanchu juben chutan” [全本《长生殿》整理演出剧本初探, Tentative thoughts on rearrangement of playscript for performance of the full play *Palace of Eternal Youth*], eds. Zhou Huabin [周华斌] and Ye Changhai [叶长海] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2009), 8-11.

⁴⁹ See Zhu Jinhua [朱锦华], *Changshengdian yanchu shi yanjiu* (《长生殿》演出史研究, A study on the production history of *The Palace of Eternal Youth*). Diss. (Shanghai Theatre Academy, 2007). The list of productions will be provided in the next section of analysis.

⁵⁰ Wang Yongjian [王永健], “Ping Changshengdian jiexuan ben” [评《长生殿》节选本, A critique on the abridged version of *The Palace of Eternal Youth*], in *Qianqu qingyuan Changshengdian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* [千古情缘《长生殿》国际学术研讨会论文集, Lasting love—anthology of *Palace of Eternal Youth* international symposium], eds. Xie Boliang [谢柏梁] and Gao Fumin [高福民] (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006), 535.

⁵¹ The Shangkun section is based on the rearrangement in the actual performance, which is different from what was presented by Tang Sifu in *Zhongguo Kunju quanben changshengdian* [中国昆剧全本长生殿, Chinese Kunju complete version *Changshengdian*] she produced at the news press in Shanghai on Dec. 18, 2005.

and Yang and the minor one on the social, political and military changes brought about by the rebellion, Shangkun's production includes both the *wen* (文, civil) and *wu* scenes, 43 in total out of Hong's original 50, that remain the same in scene titles, arias within scenes and words within the arias. It seems that Tang rearranged the play by consciously following three principles: (1) she made use of a "building block" structure. Tang's original plan was to reproduce the complete play of fifty scenes as in 1704, divided into five nights, but she was concerned about the constraints on funding and personnel, and doubtful that an audience today would sit through the stretch of five nights.

Figure 4. Scenes in *The Palace of Eternal Youth*—Hong Sheng, Sukun and Shangkun’s Productions

Hong S.	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
Scene	Prologue 传概 <i>chuangai</i>	Pledging love 定情 <i>dingqing</i>	Bribery 贿权 <i>huiquan</i>	Spring siesta 春睡 <i>chunshui</i>	Spring excursion 襖游 <i>xiyou</i>	Jealousy 傍讶 <i>bangya</i>	Lucky favor 幸恩 <i>xingen</i>	Presenting hair 献发 <i>xianfa</i>	Summoned again 复召 <i>fuzhao</i>	Dubious prophecy 疑讖 <i>yichen</i>
Sukun	2	3	11	12	5	15	16	13	18	19
Shangkun	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Hong S.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.	20.
Scene	Hearing music 闻乐 <i>wenyue</i>	Writing music 制谱 <i>zhipu</i>	Power pursuing 权哄 <i>quanhong</i>	Stealing music 偷曲 <i>touqu</i>	Lychee tribute 进果 <i>jinuo</i>	Dancing 舞盘 <i>wupan</i>	Hunting 合围 <i>hewei</i>	Complaint at night 夜怨 <i>yeyuan</i>	Fight for favor 絮阁 <i>xuge</i>	Scout report 侦报 <i>zhenbao</i>
Sukun	20	22	23	24	25	26	27	29		
Shangkun	1	11, 12	10	15	16	13	18	19	17	

Hong S.	21.	22.	23.	24.	25.	26.	27.	28.	29.	30.
Scene	Peeping at bath 窥浴 <i>kuiyu</i>	Secret vows 密誓 <i>mishi</i>	Pass sacked 陷关 <i>xianguan</i>	Abrupt change 惊变 <i>jingbian</i>	Burying jade 埋玉 <i>maiyu</i>	Offer meal 献饭 <i>xianfan</i>	Memorial 冥追 <i>mingzhui</i>	Cursing enemy 骂贼 <i>mazei</i>	Hearing bell 闻铃 <i>wenling</i>	Remorse 情悔 <i>qinghui</i>
Sukun	31	30	32	33	37	41	45	48	49	50
Shangkun	1	20	21	22	23	24	25	27, 30, 33	29	
Hong S.	31.	32.	33.	34.	35.	36.	37.	38.	39.	40.
Scene	Quashing rebellion 剿寇 <i>jaokou</i>	Crying over statue 哭像 <i>kuxiang</i>	Immortal's message 神诉 <i>shensu</i>	Assassinate traitor 刺逆 <i>cini</i>	Recovering capital 收京 <i>shoujing</i>	Sock exhibit 看袜 <i>kanwa</i>	Resurrection 尸解 <i>shijie</i>	Ballad 弹词 <i>tanci</i>	Unofficial memorial 私祭 <i>siji</i>	Immortal's recalling 仙忆 <i>Xianyi</i>
Shangkun	1	33,37	28, 34	31, 35	32	38	40, 41	46, 48, 47	49, 50	
Hong S.	41.	42.	43.	44.	45.	46.	47.	48.	49.	50.
Scene	Seeing moon 见月 <i>jianyue</i>	Post station 驿备 <i>yibei</i>	Relocating grave 改葬 <i>gaizang</i>	Suggesting reunion 怱合 <i>songhe</i>	Dream in rain 雨梦 <i>yumeng</i>	Search for soul 觅魂 <i>mihun</i>	Remedy for regret 补恨 <i>buhun</i>	Sending love 寄情 <i>jiqing</i>	Receiving message 得信 <i>dexin</i>	Reunion 重圆 <i>chongyuan</i>

Drawing inspiration from the conventions of classical Chinese “chapter fiction” (章回小说, *zhanghui xiaoshuo*)—in which, at the beginning of each chapter, there is a recapitulation of what happened previously, and, at its end, an introduction to something or someone new to retain the reader’s interest in reading the following chapter—she eventually came up with the building block structure: the play would be divided into four sections to be performed over four nights (reduced from five), each section of which consisting of nine scenes centering around a certain subject, i.e., the first night, “The pledge with gold pin and jewel box” (钗盒情定, *chai he qing ding*), the second, “The rainbow and feathery garment dance” (霓裳羽衣, *nichangyuyi*), the third, “Coups at Mawei station” (马嵬惊变, *Mawei jing bian*), and the fourth, “Reunion at the palace in the moon” (月宫重圆, *yuegong chongyuan*). The four sections could either be appreciated over the course of the four nights as a whole as they are all connected, each being part of the larger picture, or they could be enjoyed separately as a self-contained episode on its own. In form, Tang reinforced the idea of building blocks by applying the opening scene of the “Prologue” (传概, *chuan gai*) to the beginning of all four sections respectively, which features an invented character, “the storyteller,” who, from the second night on, would recapitulate the happenings in the previous section(s). Predictably, as was the common practice for the concluding part of such *liantai benxi* (连台本戏, “plays in episodic installments”), the “storyteller” would come on stage again at the end of the first three sections to give an introduction to the following section. In content, first, Tang made sure that the 12 *zhezixi* highlight scenes⁵² which had been inherited and then passed

⁵² The 12 scenes include: *dingqing* [定情, pledging love], *ci he* [赐盒, granting container], *jiulou* [酒楼, at wine house], *xu ge* [絮阁, fight for favor], *queqiao* [鹊桥, magpie bridge], *mi shi* [密誓, secret vows], *jing*

on by the “Transmission generation” (传字辈, *chuanzibei*, lit., the “*chuan* written-character generation”) Kunqu actors,⁵³ were distributed among the four sections, thus guaranteeing that in each night, there would be scenes that would allow for a full display of the performers’ skills and techniques for the audience’s appreciation. Second, she combined “sporadic, unconnected short scenes”, and “scenes connected in content, and in characters’ actions and intentions”, e.g., Hong’s original scenes 11 and 12 “dreaming music” and “writing the music” are combined in one scene as “dreaming music; writing the music,” since they consecutively depict Yang’s first hearing the music of “Rainbow Feathery Garment Dance” in her dream and then writing it down in a music score when she wakes up.⁵⁴ Third, she readjusted the order of the scenes, both to allow a more logical development of the plot as well as for the audience’s comprehension. Also, take the combined scene of “Dreaming music; writing the music” for example. In Hong’s play, it (formerly the two scenes) comes after “Writing on the wall” (疑讖, *yi chen*), basically a solo scene for a *laosheng* actor playing Guo Ziyi (郭子仪), the focal character of the scene, to shine, specifically in singing and acting. Without readjusting the order, “Writing on the wall,” originally scene 10, would come immediately after the repeated opening scene “Prologue” in the performance of section 2, and that would thrust a strange

bian [惊变, abrupt change], *mai yu* [埋玉, burying jade], *wen ling* [闻铃, hearing bell], *ying xiang* [迎像, welcoming statue], *ku xiang* [哭像, crying over statue], *tanci* [弹词, ballad]. Sang Yuxi (桑毓喜), *Kunju chuan zi bei* (昆剧传字辈, the Chuan generation of Kunju), (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenshi ziliao bianjibu, 2000), 16.

⁵³ Graduates of the Suzhou Kunju chuan xi suo’s (苏州昆剧传习所, Suzhou School for transmission of Kunqu, 1921-1928) first and only class (1921-1927). As each student was given a stage name beginning with *Chuan* (传, transmit/pass on) at school, they later came to be known collectively as the “Transmission (*Chuan*) generation” actors.

⁵⁴ Tang Sifu [唐斯复], “Quanben *Changshengdian zhengli yanchu juben chutan*” [全本《长生殿》整理演出剧本初探, Tentative thoughts on rearrangement of playscript for performance of the full play *Palace of Eternal Youth*], *Changshengdian: yanchu yu yanjiu* [长生殿: 演出与研究, A classic of traditional Chinese operas: *The Palace of Eternal Youth* (original English title)], eds. Zhou Huabin [周华斌] and Ye Changhai [叶长海], (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2009), 8-11.

character in front of the audience who sings for about 20 minutes, which breaks the narration of Li and Yang's romance that is the focus thus far and will be for the rest of the night. By moving the "music" scene, now combined, to before "Writing on the wall," the narrative fluidity is maintained, and hence the audience's attention.

Once the performance begins, however, it is the performers that must keep the audience's attention. That is indeed what Shangkun is known for, and has given rise to the unofficial branding of this performer formation as the "panda cast." Why? It was popularly so referred among Kunqu amateurs and fans as it starred a number of Shangkun's established master performers, including Cai Zhengren (蔡正仁), Zhang Jingxian (张静娴) and Ji Zhenhua (计镇华), who were by then in their sixties and regarded as national treasures—they were National Level Kunqu Intangible Cultural Heritage Bearers. The Panda has become widely known as a symbol of China, and for its rarity and cuteness. Cai and Ji were graduates of the first Kunqu Training program at the Shanghai School of Chinese Theatre, commonly known as the *Kun da ban* (昆大班) (1954–1961), and Zhang graduated from the second *Kun er ban* (昆二班) (1959–1966)—all three are National Level Intangible Cultural Heritage Bearers of Kunqu. The very first role Cai learned to play at school was Tang Minghuang (唐明皇), the alternative title of Xuanzong Li Longji. That was over half a century ago. Since then, Cai has been playing the role for so long and performs it so well that he has been given the nickname Cai Minghuang (蔡明皇) for bringing that character to life. Zhang has been the leading female actor at Shangkun since the late 1980s and played the female leads of *The Peony Pavilion* and *The Palace of Eternal Youth*. Ji Zhenhua is well known for portraying *laosheng* roles, including that of the court musician Li Guinian (李龟年) in the scene of

Tanci, a masterpiece for his vocal interpretation, for the play, and for Kunqu.⁵⁵

On the other hand, that “panda version” branding is perhaps a misnomer. The national-level Kunqu bearers are not the only ones performing. Cai plays Li on nights three and four, Zhang Jingxian portrays Yang in the third installment, while Ji sings just in the *Tanci* scene on night four. The role of Li Longji is also taken by Zhang Jun (张军) on night one, and Li An (黎安) on night two. Wei Chunrong (魏春荣) from Beikun (北昆), Shen Yili (沈昳丽) and Yu Bin (余彬) play Yang Yuhuan in installments one, two and four, respectively. Such an arrangement was not—at least not primarily—a distribution of labor out of concern for the physical demands of performing five rounds of four installments each in consecutive performances between May 29 and June 20, 2007. Rather, it was choice deliberately made by Cai, who was also the former Director of Shangkun. Cai decided to take this production as an opportunity to pass on the artistry to a younger generation—Zhang Jun, Li An, Shen and Yu are all graduates of the so-called *Kun san ban* (昆三班) (1986–1994) through *chuan bang dai* (传帮带, lit., “teach, help and lead”), and “push them to the center of the stage.”⁵⁶ Nonetheless, innovation is indispensable in that process of inheritance, as there were only twelve extant highlight scenes passed on. For example, in scene 4 of night 1, “Spring siesta” (春睡, *chun shui*), Yang wakes up and arises from her bed, yet she still feels drowsy; as there is no sign that the emperor will visit, she goes back to bed again for a nap. When Li comes to visit and

⁵⁵ Again, see Joseph Lam, *A Kunqu Masterpiece and Its Interpretations: Tanci (The Ballad)* from Hong Sheng’s *Changsheng dian* (Palace of Lasting Life), *CHINOPERL* 33:2 (2014): 97-120.

⁵⁶ Wu Xinlei (吴新雷), “Dangjin Kunqu yishu de chuancheng yu fazhan—cong Su kun qingchun ban *Mudan ting* dao Shang Kun quanjing shi *Changshengdian*” [当今昆曲艺术的传承与发展——从“苏昆”青春版《牡丹亭》到“上昆”全景式《长生殿》], *The inheritance and development of Kunqu today -- from the SuKun youth version of The peony pavilion to the Shangkun panoramic Palace of eternal youth*, *Wenyi yanjiu* [文艺研究, Literature & Art Studies] June (2009): 71-77.

wakes her up, Yang gets out of bed and comes forward to greet Li only with the support of her two maids. As the scene was seldom staged, innovation was necessary. In Yang's twice arising from bed and one-time walking back towards it, her two maids assisted her from both sides. In the three sequences, Yang raises both her arms about chest level and lets them gently fall while spreading them sideways; the two maids pick up her hands, the maid on Yang's right side taking Yang's right hand with her own right, and the left-side maid holding Yang's left hand in her left, both maids' spare hands on Yang's lower back for support; the three pause and pose; then the three of them walk diagonally to their right, initiated by Yang by leaning forward to the right first, stepping with her left foot, followed with her right, pauses, pivots on the balls, shifts the center of her weight to the left, and starts walking diagonally to the left. The maids' hand positions on Yang's back may vary, so does the number of steps they take, depending on the distance to cover before a flight of stairs to the bed upstage.

Despite all the differences, it is still possible to identify the sequence as a variation of the traditional blocking for three (or more) people walking in group, like the one at the end of the scene "Broken bridge" (断桥, *duanqiao*) of Kunqu *The White Snake*, when Bai Suzhen is walking off stage, supported by her sister Qing'er on her left, and her husband Xu Xian on her right, or like the same character of Yang Yuhuan when she exits with the assistance of multiple maids on her sides at the end of Mei Lanfang's *The Drunken Beauty* in Jingju.

Meanwhile, the by then fixed ways of presentation in the existing highlight scenes could be more than inheritance too. For example, in scene 7 of night 3, "Burial of the jade" (埋玉, *mai yu*), Yang is about to hang herself. Eunuch Gao holds a white silk sash,

following Yang, while Yang circles clockwise from downstage to upstage but then stops at center left, out of sight of Chen Yuanli (陈元礼) entering menacingly from upstage center. Yang steps back while Gao circles to where she starts walking back, holding the white silk sash high up. Yang looks up to upstage left, exclaiming, “Why, then, this pear tree shall be where my life ends!” She walks to Gao, picks up one end of the silk sash with her right hand, and turns around. Gao follows her to stage right by taking a larger circle, giving out more of the silk sash that he is still holding with both hands. Yang runs up to the imaginary pear tree, left hand pointing, trembling. She turns around, shaking; she takes from her right hand the silk sash—by now it has stretched across the stage—with her left hand, and on the spur of a moment, dashes off stage left. Gao follows her to centerstage, stops, turns around, kneels down, and holds the rest of white silk sash high. Li comes onstage from stage right, looking in the direction that Yang has exited, stamping his feet. Meanwhile, the offstage end of the silk sash is lifted high up in the air; just as Li struggles to free himself from another eunuch and rushes to catch hold of the silk sash in Gao’s hands, the silk sash is suddenly pulled straight, flings out of Gao’s hands, and flies off, leaving Li weeping, lamenting and stamping his feet, heart-broken. Emotional as it appears, that sequence is no more than three decades old, as it was first presented in an earlier Shangkun production of *The Palace of Eternal Youth* in 1987,⁵⁷ which has since gone through a number of revisions—in 1988, 1989 and 1995—and is still being performed in eight scenes.

Behind the performers’ work to reproduce the inherited methods to portray

⁵⁷ See Li Ziguai [李紫贵], “Kunju *Changshengdian* dao houji” [昆剧《长生殿》导后记, Director’s post-production review of Kunju *Changshengdian*], *Zhongguo xiju* [中国戏剧, Chinese theatre] 12 (1988):26-7; Shen Bin [沈斌], “kunju *Changshengdian* daoyan zhaji—jian lun Xiqu daoyan de jiben guilü (xia)” [昆剧《长生殿》导演札记—兼论戏曲导演的基本规律(下), Director’s note Kunju *Changshengdian*—a talk on the basic rules of Xiqu director], *Xiqu yishu* [戏曲艺术, Xiqu arts] 02 (1988): 65-72.

characters and create new ways of characterization by employing conventionalized performing skills and techniques, there is a team of directors: Cao Qijing (曹其敬), from the Central Academy of Drama (中央戏剧学院, *Zhongyang xiju xueyuan*), who specializes in drama, and his two assistant directors, Shen Bin (沈斌) and Zhang Mingrong (张铭荣), both who are from Shangkun and were a part of the 1987 production crew. The directors set up a number of principles for the production, the guideline being “Not new, not old” (不新不旧, *bu xin bu jiu*). What that really meant was, “not to be new for the sake of being different, nor to be old by clinging to the outmoded.” Cao believed that the primary task was to present the classic masterpiece to present-day audiences. What mattered most was that they grasped its essence and found the right ways to deliver. As theatres, performing conditions and criteria of beauty have varied over times, it is neither possible nor necessary to aim at the restoration of the performance to what it was like three hundred years ago, he said.⁵⁸

Visually, designs were made to enhance the visual presentation on stage, as could be seen with the white silk sash in scene 7 of night 3 mentioned above. Aurally, the music—specifically the arias to be sung—mostly followed the music scores handed down to the present, and very seldom were new pieces composed, only for background and intermezzo.⁵⁹ There is a specific occasion when the visual and audial aspects converge, upon the director’s deliberate requirement: at each Prologue scene, a certain section of

⁵⁸ Cao Qijing [曹其敬], “*Changshengdian daoyan chanshu*” [《长生殿》导演阐述, *The Palace of Eternal Youth* director’s exposition], in *Changshengdian: yanchu yu yanjiu* [长生殿: 演出与研究, A classic of traditional Chinese operas: the Palace of eternal youth (original English title)], eds. Zhou Huabin [周华斌] and Ye Changhai [叶长海] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2009), 16-7.

⁵⁹ Gu Zhaolin [顾兆琳], “Kunqu changqiang de yinyue tezheng—tan quanben *Changshengdian* de qu” [昆曲唱腔的音乐特征—谈全本《长生殿》的曲, The musical characteristics of Kunqu sung music—on the music in the complete version of *The Palace of Eternal Youth*], *Xiju yishu* 150 [戏剧艺术, Theatre Arts], April (2009): 4-12.

the ensemble is set onstage—a *guqin* (古琴, a seven-string plucked instrument) at downstage right, with a set of *bianzhong* (编钟, a set of chimes) behind it, a *guzheng* (古筝, a 21-string plucked instrument) across the stage at downstage left with a set of *yunluo* (云锣, a set of gongs) in the back.⁶⁰ This visualization of the audial section is designed for multiple purposes: to create the image of *jiaofang* (教坊, the [Tang] court institution of music and dance), not only to emphasize the setting of the play but also to remind audience of Li and Yang, who themselves are talented musicians and dancers both in history and in the play; to reinforce the sense of history of this production and of its form of performance, Kunqu; and, lastly, with the two instruments functioning “as characters,” to “enact Li—*guqin* for the male—and Yang—by *guzheng* for female,” as the Chinese idiom *qinseheming* (琴瑟和鸣, *guqin* and *guzheng* play in harmony) stands for the felicity of husband and wife.⁶¹

2.3 Conclusion

In the previous sections, the productions of four representative works of Kunqu classics—the Youth Version of *The Peony Pavilion*, the New Edition of *Jade Hairpin*, *The Peach Blossom Fan* (1699), and *The Palace of Eternal Youth* by Shangkun—have been reviewed. The following Figure 5 summarizes the basic statistics for the productions.

⁶⁰ According to Cao’s explicit requirement, it was supposed to be a *se* (瑟, a 25-string plucked instrument) in place of the modern *guzheng*, but the *se* disappeared long ago, ever since the Song Dynasties, possibly due to the high similarities with *guzheng* in many ways and which it was eventually replaced by. Even though some Chinese musicians (e.g., 丁承运, Ding Chengyun) have re-produced the *se* based on archaeological discoveries in 1998, making it possible for the *se* to be included in Shangkun’s production in 2007, it is still the *guzheng* that is being played opposite to the *guqin*, and that is confirmed by the ensemble section of the *PYE* production programs.

⁶¹ Cao Qijing [曹其敬], “*Changshengdian daoyan chanshu*” [《长生殿》导演阐述, *The Palace of Eternal Youth* director’s exposition], in *Changshengdian: yanchu yu yanjiu* [长生殿: 演出与研究, A classic of traditional Chinese operas: the Palace of eternal youth (original English title)], eds. Zhou Huabin [周华斌] and Ye Changhai [叶长海] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2009), 17.

Figure 5. Productions Reviewed in Chapter 2

Title	Company	Debut	Number of Scenes	Original	Installments	Length (hours)	Total (hours)
YVPP	Sukun	2004	27	55	3	3	9
JHP	Sukun	2008	6	33		2.5	2.5
PBF	Shengkun	2006	6	44		3	3
PEY	Shangkun	2007	43	50	4	2.5	10 (+)**

Note:

*According to Tang Sifu (唐斯复), it lasts longer than a total of 10 hours in actual performances.⁶²

⁶² Tang Sifu [唐斯复], “Quanben *Changshengdian zhengli yanchu juben chutan*” [全本《长生殿》整理演出剧本初探, Tentative thoughts on rearrangement of playscript for performance of the full play *Palace of Eternal Youth*], *Yishu pinglun* [艺术评论, Arts Criticism] 06 (2008): 35.

These productions share some common features. They all claim to respect the tradition of Kunqu, to stress inheritance of that tradition throughout the production, and yet to revise and readjust according to the capacities of stage presentation and audience reception.⁶³ To be more specific, in the aspect of literature, these productions are the *benxi* (本戏, full-scale) versions of the masterpieces of Kunqu, created on the basis of reworking the original play scripts without additions, only subtractions and order rearrangement, thus keeping the beauty of language and thought. From the perspective of music, the extant music scores (曲谱, *qupu*) for the regularly performed plays offer a great database from which to maximize “authenticity.” And from the perspective of actors, both the younger actors in YVPP, JP and PBF, and the older ones in PEY, all are carrying on the artistic lineage of the Chuan generation of actors, the class which inherited the performing tradition of the late Qing and early Republic Era and transmitted it to the *Kun da ban* and *Kun er ban* actors at Shangkun, who passed it down on to *Kun san ban* actors who jointly perform in PEY, and who in turn transmitted it to the *shi zi bei* (世字辈, the “Shi” generation actors based in Zhejiang province) and the *ji zi bei* (继字辈, the “Ji” generation actors based in Jiangsu Province, who trained the current generation of actors, then in their teens or 20s, who performed in YVPP, JHP, and PBF.

At the same time, there are various emphases between those productions—on different ages of performers and audiences—that may have resulted from distinctive outlooks on beauties to create and consequently resulted in different beauty created. I

⁶³ Fu Jin [傅谨], “Qingchunban *Mudan ting* de chenggong zhi dao—zai “Bai Xianyong de wenxue chuanguo yu wenhua shijian” xueshu yantaohui shang de fayan” [青春版《牡丹亭》的成功之道—在白先勇的文学创作与文化实践”学术研讨会上的发言, On the success of The Youth Version of *Peony Pavilion*—talk at the symposium on Pai Hsien-yung’s literary creation and cultural activities], *Wenyi zhengming* [文艺争鸣, Literature and arts contention] 07 (2013): 110-13.

will briefly look again at the four productions in two categories—one with the productions using younger actors (YVPP, JHP and PBF), and the other with older actors (just PEY)—and compare productions within one category with the one in the other.

The classic plays with youthful casts seem to be elusive, though. All three productions that I have reviewed were among “the favorite artistic works of the Chinese people” (中国民众长期以来所喜闻乐见的艺术形式, *Zhongguo minzhong changqi yilai suo xiwenlejian de yishu xingshi*), examples of “excellent works of the Xiqu classics” (优秀传统剧目, *youxiu chuantong jumu*) that enjoy “a ready market among the audience” (并拥有很大的观众市场, *bing yongyou hen da de guanzhong shichang*), as Zhang Geng puts it.⁶⁴ I see an apparent polarity in those productions. On the one hand, they tried to connect with present-day audiences, especially the younger generation, by enacting plays about the love between young characters as performed by young actors, hence the term “youth version.” On the other hand, these productions chose to subscribe to a “subtraction but no addition” approach to working with the original scripts, and to “preserving the authenticity of the performing tradition as it was centuries ago” in both training and onstage performance. Nonetheless, the goal for authenticity is a noble effort that is impossible to fulfill. For instance, the performance of *Palace of Eternal Youth* that playwright Hong Sheng watched before his death lasted “three days and nights,” yet even the “most authentic” productions of those classic Kunqu plays today are actually of selected scenes, and no new plays, however much tradition they inherit, even approach that great length. In addition, “new old things” were introduced into these Kunqu

⁶⁴ Zhang Geng [张庚], “Guweijinyong—lishiju de linghun” [古为今用—历史剧的灵魂, Let the past serve the present—the soul of historical plays], in *Zhang Geng wenlu* [张庚文录(第五卷), Catalog of Zhang Geng’s works, vol. 5] (Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 2003), 384.

productions—including the (technically anachronistic) addition of the over-one-thousand-year-old zither from the Tang dynasty into the musical ensemble; the employment of cursive calligraphy works as stage props; and the Ming dynasty painting masterpiece projected onto the curtains, to name but a few. The productions were permeated with contradictions and anachronisms, and received diverse evaluations including praise for updating the best of traditions, denunciation as marketing tricks, and accusations of being super-conservative, over-commercialized, or simply regressive.

What are those productions? Shall they be viewed as recreations of the past, regarded as contemporary variations, or recognized as modernized productions?

Based on the reviews so far, the answer seems to be: yes, they are to be considered as truly modernized productions. In other words, they exemplify the fruit of Xiqu modernization in the classic plays. Again, I shall look at Zhang Geng for reference. Despite the fact that he advocated the creation of contemporary plays, Zhang firmly believed in the significance of the classic plays in the modernization of Xiqu: “the life in the past is not isolated from the present, as one can always learn from history,”⁶⁵ which makes it possible for the classic historical plays to be rendered through a new lens, examining and expressing the life, thoughts, and actions of the past while reflecting the spirit of modern times. The key lies in the re-interpretation of the historical characters. In this specific case, however, since the preserved performing practices may have prevented the “re-interpretation” of the “characters,” we will turn away from the people within the plays to look at another aspect in these productions—the “re-interpretation” of the “art form,” Kunqu. Instead of setting out to change the preoccupation that Kunqu is an ancient

⁶⁵ Zhang Geng [张庚], “Guweijinyong—lishiju de linghun” [古为今用—历史剧的灵魂, Let the past serve the present—the soul of historical plays], in *Zhang Geng wenlu* [张庚文录(第五卷), Catalog of Zhang Geng’s works, vol. 5] (Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 2003), 382.

art tradition, Pai and other producers were dedicated to reinforcing that notion. However, once the plays were enacted, the artistic tradition, including the eternal theme of love and the well-tempered performance skills, were all brought to life through incarnation by the young actors. These performances reached out freshly to their audiences, provoking a process of “re-interpretation” from within. This is the realization of true modernization in production.

The challenges involved in fitting the “youth version” productions of Kunqu classic plays into the box of modernization may point to the possibility that the re-interpretation of Kunqu as an ancient tradition—not merely the restoration of its early stages—might be an alternative to those manifestations of modernization that attempt to propel the form along a linear temporal axis.

In the process of connecting (or trying to connect) with the young audience they targeted, through “youthfulness,” the young-cast productions rendered the young actors’ bodies no longer merely canvases, or performing vehicles; rather, the young body became a new dimension in performance. Yet the single “young dimension” alone has not been sufficient. By incorporating the enactment of inheritance—the rituals of kowtowing to the masters (YVPP and JHP), the authenticity of the training process (in all three productions), and the pairing-up of masters and apprentices at curtain calls (followed in all)⁶⁶, the dots between the young actors and the old masters were connected, acquiring the look of a temporal progression within the development of Kunqu. And this exploration/expansion of Kunqu’s performative dimensions didn’t stop there. By claiming the aesthetic principles of Kunqu as “abstract, writing meaning, expressing

⁶⁶ With a little variation between Pai/Sukun productions and Shengkun’s PBF; Pai would finally appear at the curtain calls himself, after the master teachers.

emotion, and poeticized” (抽象, 写意, 抒情, 诗化, *chouxiang, xieyi, shuqing, shi hua*),⁶⁷ Chinese brush painting, calligraphy and *guqin* all found their way into the productions of YVPP, JHP, and PBF. Thus, Kunqu is no more simply an artistic tradition but a performative vehicle for all the traditions of Chinese history, culture and arts. Is this a new way of representing the Kunqu tradition, or is it presenting a newly invented tradition?

Similarly, the production of PEY also played with age. Although age was not a stressed factor, it was not difficult to identify the “panda” actors’ as having enacted the living history of Kunqu for over 50 years, as it was embodied in their stage presence. And the cast of an undiluted echelon of performers certainly symbolized the transmission of the Kunqu tradition, hopefully to the audiences across a spectrum of ages.

The four productions analyzed in this chapter are all traditional plays. Among them, *The Peony Pavilion* has been the universally acknowledged masterpiece of Kunqu since its publication in the Ming dynasty. This play was analyzed together with the production of *Jade Hairpin*, as they were continuous efforts initiated and further developed by Pai Hsien-yung and the artists on his creative teams. A producer system was institutionalized in the production of *The Peony Pavilion* and retained in producing *Jade Hairpin*. As the producer, Pai almost single-handedly raised funds, cast the actors, invited master teachers from other companies to provide their training, collected artists from different parts of the world to set up the production team, and first and foremost, decided

⁶⁷ Pai’s propositions are summarized in his publications including *Pai Hsien-yung shuo Kunqu* [白先勇说昆曲, Pai Hsien-yung talks about Kunqu] (2004), *Se dan baotian yuzanji: Qin qu shu hua kunqu xin meixue* [色胆包天玉簪记: 琴曲书画昆曲新美学, The story of Jade Hairpin] (2009), and “Kunqu xin meixue: cong qingchun ban *Mudan ting* dao xinban *Yuzan ji*” [昆曲新美学: 从青春版《牡丹亭》到新版《玉簪记》], “The new aesthetics of Kunqu: from the youth version of *The Peony Pavilion* to the new edition *Jade Hairpin*”] (2010).

on the play to be performed. Tang Sifu (唐斯复) played a similar part as the producer of *The Palace of Eternal Youth*. Although Tian Qinxin (田沁鑫) was originally invited as the director, she and her team began to take up the producer's responsibilities beginning with the preparation stage of *The Peach Blossom Fan*. All of these masterpiece works were selected because they stand for what Kunqu was and still is. Great emphasis was laid on preserving the "authenticity" of the literary and performative tradition of Kunqu in the process of creating these productions. But in fact, in the process of representing the authentic Kunqu tradition, it was being redefined: as beautiful, as time-honored, and as living. With such new dimensions in the redefinition, the old age of the master actors as "national living treasures," the youth of the teenage performers, and the rituals of "taking students and acknowledging teachers" were endowed with a performativity that was also found in the ancient instruments as well as works of calligraphy and paintings incorporated in the productions.

For example, the group of scholars with classical Chinese literature background that Pai organized followed the principle of "only deletion, no change" during the stage of literary preparation for *The Peony Pavilion*. In performance, the invited master teachers passed on to the young actors the tradition they had inherited from their "Transmission generation" teachers. Nonetheless, these modern scholars traditional literature had to be projecting their own thoughts and sensibilities into the choice to select twenty-seven scenes out of the original total of fifty-five, and then to divide them into three sections in performance. Some of the selected scenes only existed in the form of literary text and musical scores—they had actually been performed sparingly since their original productions, if ever. The master teachers had to "pinch" (捏, *nie*) these scenes

together by following the rules for Kunqu creation. These were occasions on which contemporary elements and practices of literary and performative creation found expression in the desired “authentic” representation.

The full-play productions of classic Kunqu plays offer a representation of Kunqu’s beauty, include the literary beauty in language, theme, structure, and thought, and the performative beauty of skills and techniques that have been perfected over generations, designs that have been adapted to the evolving theatre/stage systems, the performativity of actors’ bodies, at young and old stages, and the musical beauty; all of which are primarily preserved in *zhezixi* derived from these classic plays. Nevertheless, this representation initially begins with the re-understanding of Kunqu’s tradition—which can be re-interpreted, re-invented, or romanticized.

The young age of the performers and the long history of Kunqu seem to offer multiple possibilities for interpretation. Meanwhile, it is probably true that everyone wishes that the vitality of either a person or an art tradition could be just like the Palace in Hong Sheng’s play—one of “eternal youth.” But if this could be true, then what would happen to the mature, veteran actor who was approaching the full mastery of performing skills and techniques, and therefore longed for further development and creation? That is a question for which the next chapter seeks an answer.

CHAPTER 3: EXPLORING ARTISTIC EXPRESSIVITY

The literary and performative traditions have been the two most significant aspects of Kunqu. The relative emphasis on literature or performance shifts in different periods and exerts great influence on the creation and appreciation of Kunqu plays. Translated into the vocabulary established by Elizabeth Wichmann, in the creation of new performance pieces, this relative emphasis speaks to the issue of “creative authority” in “a process of interpretation, synthesis, and transmutation.”⁶⁸ By focusing on Kunqu artists, this chapter looks into the efforts initiated, refined, and consummated by playwrights and actors, as well as directors, musicians, and designers. The purposes of this chapter are: 1. to provide a detailed analysis of Kunqu artists’ exploration of expressivity in three productions of newly written historical plays (新编历史剧, *xinbian lishuju*); 2. to identify the elements of inheritance and innovation within the Kunqu literary and performative traditions in those exploratory efforts; and 3. to discuss the interactions between possible creative authorities and their impact on post-2001 Kunqu productions. The three productions selected are *Ban Zhao* (班昭), *Gongsun Zidu* (公孙子都) and *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* (张协状元, *Zhang Xie zhuangyuan*).

3.1 Introduction

Throughout the period from the mid-Ming (1368–1644) to early Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, Chuanqi playwrights were the center of Kunqu, as discussed and exemplified with the classic plays in Chapter 2. After the creation of classic works represented by *Peach Blossom Fan* and *Palace of Long Life* in the early Qing, Kunqu experienced a

⁶⁸ Elizabeth Wichmann, “Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Beijing Opera Performance,” *The Drama Review* 34, no. 1 (spring, 1990): 147.

major decline.

That decline was due to the combination of a number of factors in the literary aspect of Kunqu—“the lack of new talents as playwrights,” “the rigid style in playwriting,” and “the dampened enthusiasm for writing new plays due to fear of the Qing court’s literary inquisition.”⁶⁹ Also, as the representative of *yabu* (雅部, “elegant section,” the refined elite theatre), Kunqu was confronted with heavy competitive pressures from the thriving miscellaneous regional Xiqu forms of the “flower section” (花部, *huabu*).

The depletion in literary creation of new scripts and the competition with *huabu* forms turned out to be the impetus for Kunqu artists to perfect their performing skills and techniques through *zhezixi* (折子戏, highlight scenes).⁷⁰ This is generally believed to have taken place during the period between 1736 and 1820, spanning the reigns of Emperors Qianlong (乾隆) and Jiaqing (嘉庆), referred to as the Qian-Jia Period (乾嘉时期, *Qian-Jia shiqi*). Kunqu performative practice, perfected and standardized in that period, became what Li Xiao (李晓) refers to as the “Qian-Jia tradition” (乾嘉传统, *Qian-Jia chuantong*), and the paradigm to be followed in transmission and inheritance.⁷¹

That shift in emphasis from script to performance should not be mistaken as consequence of conflicts between the two aspects, though. They are not the contradictory components of a duality. On the contrary, the successive shifts in focus between playwrights and actors showcase the moments when the dynamics between inheritance

⁶⁹ Zheng Lei [郑雷], *Kunqu* [昆曲] (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2012), 38-9.

⁷⁰ Lu Eting [陆萼庭], *Kunju yanchu shigao* [昆剧演出史稿, A draft history of Kunju performance] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1980), 170-4.

⁷¹ Li Xiao [李晓], *Zhongguo Kunqu* [中国昆曲, China Kunqu] (Shanghai: Baijia chubanshe, 2004), 180-90.

and innovation within Kunqu come into play to maintain the continuation of this art form. That is exactly “the soul of Kunqu” which this research proposes.

As carefully as this research tries to steer away from a comparative discussion between Kunqu and Jingju (京剧, Peking/Beijing “opera”), sometimes it is inevitable to touch upon a certain aspect of the otherwise too extensive and intricate topic. The case here is the difference in the superficially similar emphasis on performers in these two Xiqu forms. Jingju is definitely “performer-centered” in terms of “creative authority.”⁷² The star actors, who during the first half of the 20th century were often the founders of performance schools (流派, *liupai*), had private playwrights and musicians for “music and script... composed to convey the role interpretations of [actors such as] Mei [Lanfang] and his company members, and to conform to their particular technical strengths and weaknesses as performers.”⁷³ And the music and script so created would become part of their “personal repertoires” (私房戏, *sifang xi*).⁷⁴

But the “performer-centered” nature of Jingju and other Xiqu forms did not have a real equivalence in Kunqu. Renowned Kunqu actors were Mei’s counterparts during the same period. In the north, there were Han Shichang (韩世昌), Bai Yunsheng (白云生), and Hou Yongkui (侯永奎) based in Beijing; in South China, there were Yu Zhenfei (俞振飞), the master teachers at the Suzhou Kunju Transmission Institute (苏州昆剧传习所,

⁷² Elizabeth Wichmann, “Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Beijing Opera Performance,” *The Drama Review* 34, no. 1 (spring, 1990): 147.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid. See also Wang An-Ch’i [王安祈], “‘Yanyuan juchang’ xiang ‘bianju zhongxin’ de guodu—dalu ‘xiqu gaige’ xiaoying yu dangdai xiqu zhi xing zhuanbian zhi guan’cha” [「演员剧场」向「编剧中心」的过渡—大陆「戏曲改革」效应与当代戏曲质性转变之观察, The transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama: an investigation of mainland drama reform and the transformation of the nature of contemporary theater], *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* [中国文哲研究集刊, Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy] vol.19 (2001): 253, 297.

Suzhou Kunju chuanxi suo), and their students, later known as the “Transmission generation” (传字辈, *chuanzibei*). But they were not founders of any Kunqu performance schools, nor did they have private playwrights to create plays for their personal repertory. In newspaper and online publications since 2001, there is a tendency to refer to the young actors who have become the students of master Kunqu actors as the inheritors to specific “performance schools.” This looks like an indirect effort to acknowledge the master teachers as the founders of such schools, but the status of *liupai* founder has not yet been officially conferred by either the government or Kunqu circles.

As in Jingju and other Xiqu forms, Kunqu performers’ repertoires were developed according to their specific strengths in performing skills and techniques, and their specialties in certain role categories. Similarly, the acting skills and techniques are commonly referred to as *si gong wu fa* (四功五法, “four skills and five canons”). And the concept of role categories is essentially the same as in other forms of Xiqu, though it is expressed with interchangeable variations in Kunqu terminology: *Jiamen* (家门, “family [background]”), *hangdang* (行当, “line of business”), *jiaosezhi* (脚色制, lit. “role system”), or *buse* (部色, lit. “department role”).⁷⁵ Yet Kunqu performers’ repertoires, even those of master artists, were largely built of playwrights’ works from the Ming and Qing dynasties. Wang An-Ch’i (王安祈) sometimes writes of the shifting emphasis between the literary and performative aspects of Kunqu by referring to its “script” (文本, *wenben*) and its “performance” (表演, *biaoyan*), rather than to the playwrights and

⁷⁵ See Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 565-566.

performers themselves, probably to address this subtle but important difference.⁷⁶

Therefore, performance became the emphasis in both Kunqu production and appreciation after the shift from literary emphasis, but Kunqu actors never attained an authority in creation comparable to, for example, the Jingju actors. The major cause is that, despite the fact that performance was being perfected, Kunqu was in decline throughout the Qian-Jia Period and beyond. The training program at Suzhou Kunju Transmission Institute in the early 20th century was certainly a revival effort, but it was not a full revival. In her investigation of Xiqu Reform starting in mid-20th century, Wang An-Ch'i studied literature and performance as two separate centers of Xiqu production, and concluded with a discussion of "the transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama." Specifically:

in the creation of characters, the playwrights want to deeply depict the subtlety and secrecy of the complicated and multifaceted human nature, instead of the distinctions between loyalty and treachery or kindness and cruelty, and the techniques for characters' presentation change from the traditional "self-externalization of one's mood through aria singing" to "embodiment of one's personality through the choice and reaction in the event"; for the actors, the conventions and specifications for role categories are reduced to the procedures and means of learning. Rather than the stagnant [performing] art of different *liupai*, the playwrights'

⁷⁶ Wang An-Ch'i [王安祈], "Kunju biaoyan chuancheng zhong Jingju yinzi de shenru" [昆剧表演传承中京剧因子的渗入, The influence of Peking Opera on Kunqu in the twentieth century], *Xiju yanjiu* [戏剧研究, Journal of Theater Studies], 10 (2012), 136.

personal styles are starting to become the center of theatre.⁷⁷

Wang based her research on a review of the creative efforts by Xiqu playwrights and performers in different historical periods through the end of the 20th century. Although admittedly, the Xiqu forms she examined are “in majority *banqiangti* (板腔体, “beat-tune style”), a musical system represented by Jingju,” Wang did cite examples from Kunqu productions including the 1956 production of *The Fifteen Strings of Cash* (十五贯, *Shi wu guan*) and *Qingwen* (晴雯), which debuted in 1963. Her discussion of playwriting also included Luo Huaizhen (罗怀臻), the playwright of *Ban Zhao*, one of the case studies in this chapter. Wang’s scholarship will shed light on the following analysis in the aspects of playwriting techniques, performative focuses, and changes brought about with the director system.

However, beginning in the early 1990s, there has been a counterbalancing tendency for accomplished and decorated Kunqu actors to take the initiative and reach out to playwrights, usually from outside their own companies, and ask the playwrights to create specifically tailored new plays and characters for them. The performers’ based their requests on their knowledge of the playwrights’ talent, and while the playwrights were writing, they needed to take into consideration the performers’ specialties in terms of role categories and strengths in the acting skills. *Sima Xiangru* (司马相如) and *Song of the Lute* (琵琶行, *Pipa xing*) are examples of such productions starring two performers at

⁷⁷ Wang An-Ch’i [王安祈], “‘Yanyuan juchang’ xiang ‘bianju zhongxin’ de guodu—dalu ‘xiqu gaige’ xiaoying yu dangdai xiqu zhi xing zhuanbian zhi guan cha” [「演员剧场」向「编剧中心」的过渡—大陆「戏曲改革」效应与当代戏曲质性转变之观察, The transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama: an investigation of mainland drama reform and the transformation of the nature of contemporary theater], *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* [中国文哲研究集刊, Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy] vol.19 (2001): 301.

Shangkun. Focusing on the Han dynasty literary figure, *Sima Xiangru* was debuted in 1996, with the *sheng* actor Yue Meiti (岳美缙) playing the title character. The *dan* actor Liang Guyin (梁谷音) played the female lute player in *Song of the Lute* which debuted in 2000, and was based on the long poem by Bai Juyi (白居易).

I have selected three productions for the discussion of inheritance and innovation in exploring Kunqu's artistic expressivity since 2001. Each creation process was also initiated by a specific performer or group of performers, who invited a specific playwright to collaborate with them. Shangkun's (上昆) production of *Ban Zhao* is the primary case study in this chapter. *Gongsun Zidu* by Zhekun (浙昆) and Yongkun's (永昆) *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* are mainly approached in comparison to *Ban Zhao* as the secondary analysis of the chapter.

3.2 Production Analysis

3.2.1 *Ban Zhao*

Ban Zhao (班昭) is an original Kunqu play created by Shangkun that was debuted in 2001. It was based on the life of a historical figure in the Han dynasty (202 BCE-220 CE). The title character Ban Zhao is the little sister of a court historian who passed away in his prime, leaving a voluminous work—the history of the Han dynasty—only half-finished. Ban Zhao takes over the daunting task, devoting the rest of her life to completing the project. Along the way, she is faced with various challenges while her mind is fixed on the project; her marriage fails, and her husband subsequently drowns himself; her best friend and soul mate departs, and her own health declines. In the end, Ban Zhao endures the hardships all by herself, finally completing the compilation of the

Han history. The next day, with a smile on her face, she sinks into sleep while bathing in the sun—a sleep from which she never emerges.

In the speech given on behalf of the Chinese Xiqu Academy at the award ceremony, Xiqu historian, theorist, and critic Liu Housheng (刘厚生) stated:

With a solid literary background and distinctive spirit of the times, *Ban Zhao* vividly creates the figure of a female scholar in ancient times that is rarely seen in the history of Chinese Xiqu. Through difficult sacrifices made by the lead character for the academic cause, and the major ups and downs of her romantic relationships, [*Ban Zhao*] highly praises the ancient intellectuals' sense of cultural mission; the thinking is profound. From the first-degree creation (一度创作, *yi du chuangzuo*; this refers to conception and playwriting) through the second-degree creation (二度创作, *er du chuangzuo*; this refers to the work of director, designers, actors, and musicians), although absolute perfection was certainly not attained, the play explores the aesthetic significance of Xiqu in the dialectics between inheritance and innovation and between elegance and popularity. It has been received positively by both new and old Kunqu audiences; especially the warm welcome on campus shows that it achieved ground-breaking results.⁷⁸

This passage offers the opportunity to look at the production from some of the same

⁷⁸ Liu Housheng [刘厚生], "Zai *Ban Zhao* huo 'zhongguo xiqu xuehui jiang' banjiang yishi shang de zhici" [在《班昭》获“中国戏曲学会奖”颁奖仪式上的致辞, Speech on the awarding ceremony for *Ban Zhao* winning Chinese Xiqu Academy Awards], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 4.

perspectives as the award committee members did. The analysis focuses on playwriting and performance, and includes other relevant aspects.

3.2.1.1 Playwriting⁷⁹

In this section I will examine why the playwright and the lead actor decided to create the play *Ban Zhao*, how the plot evolves and the main character develops, and the ways in which inheritance and innovation are incorporated in playwriting. Following the major aspects of playwriting, I address these issues in terms of theme, plot and structure, and character and characterization.

Theme

Traditionally, Kunqu plays are known for their focus on romantic love as embodied in the widely circulated phrase “nine out of every ten *chuanqi* plays are (about) lovesickness” (十部传奇九相思, *shi bu chuanqi jiu xiangsi*).

Not so for *Ban Zhao*, though.

According to the playwright Luo Huaizhen (罗怀臻), he began writing *Ban Zhao* in March 1997 and went through ten revised drafts before the play became what it is today⁸⁰. Historically, Chinese playwrights are viewed as writing either because they need to write for a living, or because they want to. Luo wrote for a different reason: “...upon

⁷⁹ Luo's script of *Ban Zhao* was first published in 1998, revised when it was included in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003) in 2003 and updated after *Ban Zhao* was initially elected (初选, *chuxuan*) as a candidate for the National Project of Excellent Stage Art in 2004-2005. Revisions in performance and stage designs were also made. The analyses of the playwriting, performance and designs in this research are based on observations of the production record, as in *Ban Zhao* [班昭]. DVD. Beijing: *Zhong ying yinxiang chubanshe* [中影音像出版社], 2008.

⁸⁰ Luo Huaizhen [罗怀臻], “Kunju *Ban Zhao* wenxue chuangyi shu” [昆剧《班昭》文学创意书, Introduction to the literary originality of Kunju *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 54-61.

the invitation of Shangkun and Shangkun's famous *dan* role actor Ms. Zhang Jingxian (张静娴)...” he set out to write a play that would be a “custom-made piece of work based on Zhang's elegance and talent, Shangkun's cast, and the characteristics of Kunqu.”⁸¹

Why then did Luo and Zhang choose to create a play in which Ban Zhao is the lead character? As Qu Runhai (曲润海) observes, in writing new historical plays, it is a common practice to turn to classical literary works and historical figures for inspiration.⁸² And that was also how Luo and Zhang “found” Ban Zhao. As Zhang recalls:

...so, counting with our fingers, we started the search among the talented women in ancient times for ‘the one’ that belongs to me—from Zhuo Wenjun (卓文君) who I just played, and Cai Wenji (蔡文姬) about whom Shangkun recently produced a play, to Li Qingzhao (李清照) who has been portrayed multiple times on the Xiqu stage... Until one afternoon in the fall of 1996, Huaizhen happened to mention the Ban's of the Eastern Han Dynasty, *Hanshu*, and Ban Zhao—all of sudden we both saw a flash of enlightenment.⁸³

To both Luo and Zhang, Ban Zhao seemed to be the most satisfactory candidate as the lead character for the commissioned work. When Zhang extended the invitation to Luo, she had only one condition: a role with a wide span of age for her “strong plasticity”

⁸¹ Ibid, 55.

⁸² Qu Runhai [曲润海], “Kunju shi yi men wenya yishu” [昆剧是一门文雅艺术, Kunju is an elegant art], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 205. Shangkun's previous productions of *Sima Xiangru* and *Pipa xing* fall into this category; so does Beikun's 2007 production of *Guan Hanqing* [关汉卿].

⁸³ Zhang Jingxian [张静娴], “Huifang *Ban Zhao*” [回访《班昭》, Revisit *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 70.

(可塑性较强, *kesuxing jiao qiang*).⁸⁴ Ban Zhao is an accomplished female scholar, lives a long life, and goes through hardships as well as glorious moments. That fit well the profile that Luo had in mind after observing her performances: Zhang has the style of a (female) intellectual, is capable of portraying characters over a wide range of age, and “does better in ‘tragic plays’ (悲剧, *beiju*) than comic ones (喜剧, *xiju*)” (悲、喜剧相比较倾向于前者, *bei xiju xiang bijiao qingxiang yu qianzhe*).⁸⁵

Ban Zhao (c.45-116 CE), courtesy name Huiban (惠班), is a historical figure of the Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220). Born to a noble family prominent in literature, scholarship and royal favours, Ban Zhao is renowned for intelligence and integrity on her own account. She is given the honorific title of Cao Dagu (曹大家): Dagu approximates the honorific “Venerable Madam” for married women, and Cao is from her husband’s family name. Ban Zhao is invited by Emperor He (79-105 CE, reigning 88-105 CE) and later the regent Dowager Empress Deng (81-121 CE, regent 105-121 CE) to teach the harem. Two of Ban Zhao’s major accomplishments have been passed on until today. One is the unfinished *ba biao* (八表, eight chronological tables) of the *Hanshu*, which she completed, and the other is *Nijie* (女诫, Admonitions for women), a book on the conduct of (married) women that is centered on the husband’s superiority and priority. *Nijie* was regarded as the moral standard for women in the Confucian feudal dynasties for nearly 2000 years. In her personal life, Ban Zhao was married to Cao Shou from the same precinct at 14. After her husband died, Ban Zhao never married again and raised their son

⁸⁴ Zhang Jingxian [张静娴], “Huifang *Ban Zhao*” [回访《班昭》, Revisit *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 70.

⁸⁵ Ibid. *Beiju* [悲剧] and *xiju* [喜剧] are literal quotation from Zhang’s own writing.

by herself.

The play focuses on the project which Ban Zhao devoted over half her life to completing, the *Hanshu* (汉书, Book of [the former] Han), succeeding to the work of her father Ban Biao (班彪) and oldest brother Ban Gu (班固). The Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) was interrupted for 16 years by the usurper Wang Mang's brief Xin dynasty (9-23 CE), and thus divided into two periods: the Western Han (206 BC–9 CE), also known as the Former Han; and the Eastern Han (25–220 CE), the Later Han. Modelled on the *Shiji* (史记, Records of the grand historian), a universal history (通史, *tongshi*) by Sima Qian (司马迁), the *Hanshu* was China's first official dynastic history; together, the two histories became the paradigm for all historiographic writings of later dynasties. The *Hanshu* was initiated by Ban Biao as an addition to *Shiji*. When Ban Gu (32-92 CE) took it over, he revised his father's compiling system and gave *Hanshu* an independent shape in terms of mindset, categorization and diction. Ban Gu died in 92 CE while in his early 60s; at the time *ba biao* (the 8 chronological tables) and *Tianwen zhi* (天文志, Treatise on astronomy) had not yet been finished. Emperor He ordered Ban Zhao to finish the Eight Tables and Ma Xu to finish the Treatise, thus completing the entire writing of *Hanshu*.

The missions of the production, as mentioned earlier, were to create a signature character for Zhang, a play for Shangkun, and a new piece of work exemplifying the characteristics of Kunqu. Moreover, the emotions and thoughts of the playwright were to be projected into the play as well. The multi-facets of the missions correspond to the multiple layers of symbolic meanings of the production: the title character Ban Zhao largely resembles the actor Zhang Jingxian in reality; Ban Gu, Ma Xu and Shajie represent Zhang's Shangkun colleagues; and of course, the awe-inspiring, life-consuming

yet indispensable project of completing the *Hanshu* symbolizes the art of Kunqu. Behind such apparent equations of symbolism are the playwright's personal experiences and reflections projected into the play. For Luo, this play is his "participation" in the "discussion of human nature in Chinese cultural circles" and "answer" to the "questions regarding Chinese intellectuals' professional ethics and moral beliefs in the face of the new microenvironment of market economy":

With the increasing perfection of performing skills and techniques, the precious literary tradition declined rapidly in the first half of last (the 19th) century. Theatrical writers, especially Xiqu playwrights, have gradually given up pursuing the literary spirit of Xiqu; instead, they became craftsman who 'make a script' for famous actors or a vehicle for the transmission of certain dogmatism... I was shaken as to whether I should persevere in the creation of Xiqu literature. The result of this long-time struggle was *Ban Zhao*... holding on to one's own post is holding on to the responsibility to society and to faith in (one's) culture, yet often it is not so easy to do.⁸⁶

In approach, the play is largely a continuation of the way of thinking found in *Sima Xiangru* in the 1990s, and *Song of the Lute*, which debuted in 2000; the characters are in essence present-day intellectuals. Though the plays are set in the past, these characters embody modern values and the spirit of contemporary times, and face contemporary temptations directly reflecting the way people are tempted today. These characters, however, resolutely hold onto their principles. As for an explicit expression,

⁸⁶ Luo Huaizhen [罗怀臻]. "Xinbian Kunju *Ban Zhao* chuanguo tan" [新编昆剧《班昭》创作谈, Talks on creation of the newly written Kunju *Ban Zhao*]. *Jiefang ribao* [解放日报, Jiefang Daily], 19 May 2002.

many analyses quote directly from the aria sung offstage at the end of Scene Five in *Ban Zhao*:⁸⁷

最难耐的是寂寞，

zui nan nai de shi jimo , The hardest to endure is being lonely,

最难抛的是荣华。

zui nan pao de shi ronghua. The hardest to toss away is glory.

从来学问欺富贵，

conglai xuewen qi fugui, At all times, scholarship outshines wealth and rank,

真文章在孤灯下。

zhen wenzhang zai gu deng xia. The real literature is under the solitary lamp.

In one sentence, the theme of *Ban Zhao* is the need for Chinese intellectuals to persevere in their pursuit of academic growth and moral integrity. Such perseverance surely has its price, including the loneliness and solitude mentioned in the aria, and meets with the temptations of wealth, rank and vanity, as well as the interruptions they can cause.

Characterization and Plotting

The theme of *Ban Zhao* is “cultivated” and unfolded through both

⁸⁷ See An Zhiqiang [安志强], “Yichu ‘jimo’ de xi” [一出“寂寞”的戏, A “lonely” play], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 187-9; and also in the same book, Mao Shi’an [毛时安], “Jinye de jimo shi ruci dongren—kan Kunju *Ban Zhao*” [今夜的寂寞是如此动人—看昆剧《班昭》, Tonight’s loneliness is so moving—on Kunju *Ban Zhao*], 190-4; Dai Ping (戴平), “Jimo sh meili de” [寂寞是美丽的, Loneliness is beautiful], 240-1; and Zhao Lihong [赵丽宏], “Xindeng” [心灯, Heart lamp], 242.

characterization, and plot content and structure. Characterization and plot are specifically inseparable in this play. Liu Housheng sees the writing of the *Ban Zhao* script as following the traditional playwriting principle of “one person, one event” (一人一事, *yi ren yi shi*).⁸⁸ The “one person, one event” principle was put forward by Li Yu (李渔), the versatile literary talent who lived from the late Ming to the early Qing dynasty.⁸⁹ “One person” is generally agreed upon as the leading character, but there are disputes on the understanding of “one event.” In Chen Duo’s (陈多) interpretation, “one event” refers to the event that “embodies the playwright’s original intention and determines the development and meanings of the plot in a play.”⁹⁰ As a newly written historical play to be performed within 2-3 hours at one night, *Ban Zhao* is consolidated in the creation of characters and the development of plot. It focuses on “one person”—Ban Zhao—and “one event”—that Ban Zhao completes the unfinished *Hanshu*.

Luo labels his historical plays as “non-historical historical plays” (非历史的历史剧, *fei lishi de lishi ju*): when writing, he “takes things from the authentic history” (取于信史, *qu yu xinshi*), data from the real historical accounts, yet he places more emphasis on “winning the trust of present day people (取信今人, *quxin jinren*).⁹¹ In other words, Luo takes information from the past that will resonate with contemporary people;

⁸⁸ Liu Housheng [刘厚生], “*Si kan Ban Zhao*” (四看班昭, Watching Ban Zhao four times), in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 163-4.

⁸⁹ Li Yu [李渔], *Xianqing ou ji* [闲情偶寄, Random thoughts on leisurely life], ed. Min Hui (民辉), (Changsha: Yuelu Press, 2000): 29-30.

⁹⁰ Chen Duo [陈多], “Li Yu ‘Li zhunao’ yi shi” [李渔《立主脑》译释, translation and interpretation of Li Yu’s “setting the center”], *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai Theatre], (02) 1980: 57.

⁹¹ Luo Huaizhen. “*Xinbian Kunju Ban Zhao chuanguo tan*” [新编昆剧《班昭》创作谈, Talks on creation of the newly written Kunju *Ban Zhao*]. *Jiefang ribao* [解放日报, Jiefang Daily], May 19, 2002.

therefore people and incidents in his plays are not necessarily faithful to historical records, but rather are handled artfully according to the playwright's judgment.

Ban Zhao is just such a “non-historical historical play.” However, Luo did incorporate historical figures and data in his creation of characters and plot in the play. Of a total of six characters, four are historical figures: Ban Zhao, her eldest brother Ban Gu, her husband Cao Shou (曹寿), and Ma Xu (马续), who wrote the *Treatise on Astronomy*, adding the last unfinished piece to make *Hanshu* complete. Hallmarks in Ban Zhao's actual life were adopted as the time frames for the scenes of the play: Ban Zhao was married at 14, widowed at 30, invited by Emperor He to teach the harem in her middle age, and died in her early 70s. But certainly, those historical facts were treated, even twisted, artistically.

The creation of characters and arrangement of plot all serve the main theme, and mutually push forward one another's development. There are six characters in *Ban Zhao*. In addition to the four historically based characters, two more are added: her maid Shajie (傻姐, lit., “Silly Sister”), and the eunuch Fan Lun (范伦). As a “one person” play, the focus is on the title character as the principal heroine; there is no principal hero as her counterpart to form a regular “loving pair,” as in romantically-focused Kunqu plays. The other five characters support Ban Zhao, though each plays a different part theatrically and symbolically. As the eldest brother, Ban Gu plays the role of courier for Ban Zhao's destiny. He speaks for her talent and training in scholarship, introduces her to the *Hanshu*, makes her choose whom to marry and serve the *Hanshu*, and forces her to commit to its completion before his death in Scene 3. Ban Gu's two students, Ma Xu and Cao Shou, are two contrasting parts of a would-be unity: Ma is simple, humble and reliable, while Cao

is smart, charming, and proud. As Ban Zhao says, “it would be wonderful if only they could have each other’s merits” (Scene 2). Unfortunately, the ideal unity is never achieved, and that forebodes her fate: being forced to choose only one of the two, she is always going to miss the other, between sense and sensibility, brother and husband, or career partner and romantic lover. In naming Shajie (“Silly Sister”), the playwright may have been intentionally ironic—Shajie is by no means silly. She always tells the truth, distinguishes right from wrong, and keeps her commitment to be Ban Zhao’s companion for life. She is more like the externalization of Ban Zhao’s soul, and she stands by Ban Zhao’s side until the very end. The eunuch Fan Lun is the only “negative” character in the play. He stands for the distraction and destruction of the intellectuals’ pursuit of scholarship and morality. As the agent of the regal favor behind him, Fan offers power, rank, wealth and fame. Cao Shou goes totally astray over such offers, and even Ban Zhao loses all but her drive to carry on.

The development of plot in this “one event” play helps the creation of characters, and more importantly, the characterization of Ban Zhao. As Wang An-Ch’i observes, a character’s personality, emotions and thoughts are expressed in arias and speeches, not only through interactions with other characters, but through the self-externalization of their inner selves, and traditionally, such self-externalizations in Kunqu come at the “emotional climax”.⁹² In the script of *Ban Zhao*, the characters’ portrayal is intertwined with the development of the plot and sharply highlighted at the dramatic climax.

⁹² Wang An-Ch’i [王安祈], “‘Yanyuan juchang’ xiang ‘bianju zhongxin’ de guodu—dalu ‘xiqu gaige’ xiaoying yu dangdai xiqu zhi xing zhuanbian zhi guan cha” [「演员剧场」向「编剧中心」的过渡—大陆「戏曲改革」效应与当代戏曲质性转变之观察, The transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama: an investigation of mainland drama reform and the transformation of the nature of contemporary theater], *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* [中国文哲研究集刊, Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy], vol.19 (2001): 275.

Figure 6 outlines of the plot structure of the play, and summarizes the characters, the major and subsidiary events, and the major functions of each of the scenes in the play, which consists of a prelude, six scenes and an epilogue, joined as a progression to the “one event,” completing the *Hanshu*. Scene One finishes the introduction of the characters that was initiated in the prelude, and establishes the connection between Ban Zhao and the *Hanshu*. More importantly, through the lift of the ban on the compilation of a Han dynasty history, it puts work on the *Hanshu* back in action. In Scenes Two and Three, Ban Zhao’s fate is inseparably bound with the completion of the *Hanshu*, step by step, beginning with Ban Zhao as the wife of its successor, and ending up with Ban Zhao as the successor herself. Scenes Four and Five respectively portray the sufferings caused by loneliness, and the temptations of wealth and fame. In Scene Four, Ban Zhao’s best friend leaves, her husband drowns, and half of the manuscript burns in a fire. Scene Five is the climax, when her returning best friend and life-accompanying maid are both leaving due to her indulgence in pleasure and relaxation. This jolts Ban Zhao into realizing her true mission and re-committing herself to it. Scene Six concludes the “one event” with Ban Zhao’s completion of that mission, and the epilogue concludes the whole play.

The playwright employs various playwriting techniques in constructing the play and arranging the plot. To begin with, the overall structure of the play is designed with a symbolic outlook. The Prelude and Epilogue, both set on the last day of Ban Zhao’s life, are immediately connected. In fact, they are originally one whole piece divided into two parts. However, between them they hold the six scenes depicting Ban Zhao’s life from 14 to 70, the same way the pages in a book are held together by the front and back covers. Indeed, the play is very much like a book about the female historian Ban Zhao, and the

thread running through it to bind everything together is the completion of the *Hanshu*.

The six scenes in between are arranged chronologically, but they are introduced through flashback, a writing technique very rarely if ever seen in either classic or new Kunqu plays.

Figure 6. Plot Outline of *Ban Zhao*

Scene	Time (with Ban Zhao as reference)	Place	Characters	Major Event(s)	Subsidiary Event(s)	Major Function(s) of the Scene in the Plot
Prelude	Ban Zhao at 71	In front of Royal palace	Ban Zhao, Shajie	“casual chats” on date, age, working status	Shajie says that Ban Zhao is thinking of the two men	Introduction of elements of the play; ushering in the “one event”— completing <i>Hanshu</i>
One	Ban Zhao at 14	Ban’s cottage	Ban Gu, Ma Xu, Cao Shou, Fan Lun, Shajie	Fan delivers imperial order from regent Empress Dowager: upon Ban Zhao’s appeal, ban on <i>Hanshu</i> lifted.	Fan relays ED’s wish for an ode on 40 th birthday; Ban Gu responds coldly, but Cao Shou seems very interested.	Fuller introduction of of elements; Ban Zhao’s connection with <i>Hanshu</i> —the appeal.
Two	Immediately after	Ban’s cottage	Ban Zhao, Ban Gu, Ma Xu, Cao Shou, Shajie	Gravely ill, Ban Gu makes her choose a husband as the one to complete <i>Hanshu</i> . She draws blind lots.	Before asking Ban Zhao, Ban Gu asks Ma and Cao first. Ma says he is unworthy; Cao says he is afraid.	Step one of life-long bond with <i>Hanshu</i> : be married to its completion successor.

Three	Soon after (Ban Zhao is married)	Ban's cottage	Ban Zhao, Ban Gu, Ma Xu, Cao Shou, Shajie	At Ban Gu's deathbed, Ban Zhao takes oath to commit the rest of her life to completing <i>Hanshu</i> .	Ban Gu calls for Cao Shou, but Cao Shou has left to hand in the ode for the Empress Dowager.	Step two of life-long bond with <i>Hanshu</i> : become the completion successor in absence of her husband.
Four	Ban Zhao at 30	Ban's cottage	Ban Zhao, Shajie, Ma Xu, Cao Shou, Fan Lun	1. After Cao's long absence, Ma leaves to avert suspicion. 2. Cao comes to divorce Ban Zhao, Ban Zhao refuses. Cao drowns himself.	While away, Cao was serving as the Empress Dowager's toy-boy. Though she died, she ordered Cao to guard the mausoleum and go on writing odes for her.	Stage one of sacrifice and sufferings in perseverance: utmost loneliness—after 17 years, friend leaves and nominal husband dies.
Five	Ban Zhao at 50	Royal Library	Ban Zhao, Shajie, Ma Xu, Fan Lun	1. Ma Xu returns with finished Treatise on Astronomy. 2. Seeing Ban Zhao obsessed with luxury and socializing, Ma wants to take over the manuscripts of <i>Hanshu</i> to finish. Ban Zhao erupts, agrees, and regrets. 3. Ma and Ban Zhao are reconciled and decide to work together for <i>Hanshu</i> 's completion.	As the emperor turns down Ma's plea to write back at Ban's cottage, Ma takes the initiative to undergo castration in order to accompany Ban Zhao at the Royal Library.	Climax. Stage two of sacrifice and sufferings: temptation of luxury and vanity and final breaking free from it, with help and support from friends.

Six	Ban Zhao at 70	Royal Library	Ban Zhao, Shajie, Ma Xu, Fan Lun	<i>Hanshu</i> is finished, yet at the Emperor's decree, Ma leaves while Ban Zhao stays for annotation. The two part again.	None.	Completion of <i>Hanshu</i> and the "one event."
Epilogue	(back to prelude) Ban Zhao at 71	In front of Royal palace	Ban Zhao, Shajie	Ban Zhao dies in sleep.	None.	Ending of the "one person."

Symbolism is also applied in the naming of the characters. As mentioned earlier, four are real historical figures—Ban Zhao, Ban Gu, Ma Xu, and Cao Shou. Yet put in the context of the completion of the *Hanshu*, their names are given symbolic connotations. Ban Gu's courtesy name (字, *zi*) is Mengjian (孟坚). While *meng* (孟) indicates the first and oldest of sons, both *gu* (固) and *jian* (坚) mean “solid and strong,” as seen in the “solid foundation.” That speaks well to Ban Gu's overwhelming contribution to *Hanshu*. The *Zhao* (昭) of the title character's name means “bright,” prophetic of her final success in completing *Hanshu*; *Zhao* can also mean “obvious,” betokening in a way her later mission for *Hanshu*'s annotation and transmission. *Xu* (续) in Ma Xu means “continue, carry on and extend,” fitting his profile in the play perfectly. However, the other three characters including seem to have a twist of meaning in their names. Cao's given name Shou (寿) means “long life,” in direct contrast to his actually dying at a young age. Shajie is not silly, probably seeing and knowing more and better than others. As for Fan Lun the eunuch, the ironical taste is even stronger and more bitter. *Fan* (范) means “model” and *lun* (伦) “ethics, moral principles,” whereas the eunuch is in fact the agent of temptation and destruction from desire for power, wealth and rank.

Comparison and contrast is another technique the playwright often uses. Even the characters form contrasting pairs—Ban Gu and Ban Zhao as founder vs. successor of the *Hanshu*; Ma Xu and Cao Shou as life-long supporter vs. fleeting lover; and Shajie and Fan Lun, as personified conscience vs. the embodiment of temptations. For example, the characterizations of Ma Xu and Cao Shou are brought about with the help of the contrast between the two. In Scene One, both characters are reading aloud, Ma Xu reciting Sima

Qian the historian, while Cao Shou recites Sima Xiangru, a Western Han literary prodigy. Ban Gu, a historian and man of letters himself, then asks which enjoys longer esteem among the later generations and for what reasons. Ma says Sima Qian, as his “work lasts a thousand years for keeping the record of history for heaven and earth”; Cao’s answer is Sima Xiangru, whose rhapsodies are admired by his contemporaries. These lines are from the 2005 DVD production. In Luo’s first published version of the script, Cao speaks differently after acknowledging Ma’s point: “However, (doing) real scholarship is always lonely, whereas it is easier to win favor with the romantic articles. It makes one shudder to think of castration being inflicted on Sima Qian as punishment for writing the *Shiji*.” There are two more lines following. “Ma: So it seems that *shidi* [师弟, junior fellow student] wants to model himself on Sima Xiangru?” Cao: “So it seems that *shixiong* [师兄, senior fellow student] wants to be the Sima Qian of our times?”⁹³ Here, the different career paths that Ma and Cao will pursue are clearly foreshadowed through comparison.

In the following Scene Two, the differences in their attitudes towards both the *Hanshu* and Ban Zhao are manifested through the contrast of their inner thoughts. When the festivity celebrating the lifting of the ban on continuing to compile the *Hanshu* is hardly over, Ban Gu is enormously concerned that the *Hanshu*, which now can be finished, may in fact never be completed due to his poor health. He expresses his worries and his desire to find a successor who can also be husband to Ban Zhao, in an aria set to the fixed-melody (曲牌, *qupai*, lit., “tune title,” a pre-existing tune, or as Joseph S. C. Lam translates it, “tune skeleton”⁹⁴) called “*Hong xiuxie*” (红绣鞋, red embroidered

⁹³ Luo Huaizhen [罗怀臻], *Ban Zhao* [班昭], *Juben* [剧本, Play], 10 (1998): 35.

⁹⁴ Joseph S. C. Lam, “A Kunqu Masterpiece and Its Interpretations: Tanci (The Ballad) from Hong Sheng’s

shoe). In heightened speech (韵白, *yunbai*), he then asks Ma and Cao, “Which of you is willing?” Hearing that, Ma and Cao voice their surprise and indecision in an aria set to “*kuaihuo san*” (快活三, lit., “merry three”), each singing in alternation:

Ma: So hasty, how do I decide?

Cao: How do I decide, so hasty?

Ma: Being pressed in a flash, I have no idea.

Cao: In a flash, I have no idea.

Ma and Cao go on to sing an aria set to “*Chao tian zi*” (朝天子, song of pilgrimage to the heavenly kingdom). Ma sings first:

Huiban is elegant in appearance,

Huiban is strong in mind,

Huiban has the look of the crab apple flower.

Although we are close from morning to night,

How dare I dream to make her my wife!

Cao sings next, the first three lines being identical:

Huiban is elegant in appearance,

Huiban is strong in mind,

Huiban has the look of the crab apple flower.

Although I long for her from morning to night,

How dare I take over the *Hanshu* so lightly!⁹⁵

Then Ma sings:

Contemplate...

And Cao sings:

Contemplate...

After that, Ma and Cao alternate speaking:

Ma: Come to think of myself, what talent and look can I claim
 to warrant matching myself with Ban Zhao
 and taking over the manuscript?

Cao: Come to think of myself, I am talented.
 It would be nice if I could marry Ban Zhao.

Ma: Even though I can't marry her, I will follow the master
 and take care of her for the rest of my life!

Cao: Glorious as it is to take a talented woman as wife,
 (the writing of) *Hanshu* is truly onerous.

They sing alternately again:

⁹⁵ In the original 1998 version of script, Cao's lines in this section are:

这汉书百卷尺牍, The *Hanshu* runs a hundred volumes,
这汉书万斤分量, The *Hanshu* weighs 10,000 *jin*,
又怎敢轻口来承当! How do I dare to take it so light(ly)?

See Luo Huaizhen [罗怀臻], *Ban Zhao* [班昭], *Juben* [剧本, Play], 10 (1998): 38.

Ma: I must find an excuse to turn it down
yet I feel disconsolate...

Cao: I intend to consent to the proposal
yet I am at a loss...

Finally, neither Ma nor Cao takes up Ban Gu's proposal, though their dictions vary:

Ma: Master, I am unworthy!

Cao: Master, I am afraid!

The inner thoughts of those two characters are revealed through *beigong* (背供, lit., “back/behind confession”), a conventional method for articulating to the what is going on in a character's mind without sharing it with other character(s) on stage. Ma is determined to support Ban Zhao and the cause of the *Hanshu* for the rest of his life, yet he does not take either, due to his lack of confidence in his own talent and appearance, or as Dai Yun puts it bluntly, “cowardice in his early life.”⁹⁶ On the contrary, Cao also recognizes Ban Zhao's talent and beauty, yet he cares more for himself; having Ban Zhao as wife would be a nice trophy, but the project of completing the *Hanshu* is too daunting for him. The lines in Luo's 1998 script reveal Cao's calculation even more explicitly.

Nevertheless, since Cao dies in Scene Three, the comparison between him and Ma stops there, though Ma's continued presence certainly can also be viewed as a contrast to Cao's absence. The focus of characterization is, of course, on Ban Zhao. Her characterization is also achieved most effectively through plotting, using the writing

⁹⁶ Dai Yun [戴云]. *Kan kunju “Ban Zhao” suixiang—jian tan ju zhong de jige renwu xingxiang. xiqu yishu* [看昆剧《班昭》随想——兼谈剧中的几个人物形象, Thoughts on watching *Ban Zhao*—and on the image of several characters in the play] *Xiqu yishu* [戏曲艺术, Journal of Chinese Traditional Opera], 01 (2003): 81-83.

technique of reversal. The first reversal comes in Scene One: when Ban Gu decides to find a successor to continue writing the *Hanshu* through marrying Ban Zhao; therefore lifting the ban on a Han history turns out to be an ill beginning for Ban Zhao's future personal life, in disguise. The second reversal comes in Scene Three: when Ban Gu is dying, Cao Shou is away. Ban Zhao has to solemnly promise to take over the *Hanshu*, and thus the chosen successor's wife is turned into the successor. The third is in Scene Four: Cao returns after a long absence, yet this is not really a homecoming, but rather a farewell. Reversal No. 4 is another return: that of Ma at the beginning of Scene Five. But the happy reunion quickly becomes chaotic. Ma criticizes her for indulging in pleasure and losing her drive, and threatens to take over *Hanshu* away from her; Ban Zhao then explodes with long suppressed grief and indignation; after their reconciliation, she reaches the epiphany that it is her destiny to complete the *Hanshu*.

Reversals are significant, specifically for *Ban Zhao*, in both plotting and characterization. A reversal propels, even jolts the plot to move, changes its direction, and causes suspense. Reversals also create critical situations in which characters are tested by temptations, troubled with decisions at crucial moments, and confronted with conflicts.

The second reversal serves as a good example for analysis. In the middle of Scene Three, the stage directions say, "Ban's study. Ban Zhao, Ma Xu and Shajie surround the dying Ban Gu." Earlier in the same scene, Ban Zhao's newly married husband Cao Shou has dashed off to present a rhapsody (a type of poetry) at the celebration of the Empress Dowager's 40th birthday, so at her older brother's deathbed, Ban Zhao has to take over the responsibility of completing the *Hanshu*, with a solemn oath, "to create a grand universal history for China!"

Gu: (weakly) Cao Shou...

Ma: Where is *shidi*?

Zhao: He... he is fetching the doctor.

Gu: I am entrusting the manuscript to Cao Shou...

Huiban, where on earth is Cao Shou?

Tell me, speak quickly, speak!

Ban Zhao sings an aria set to “Zhegui ling” (折桂令, lit., “plucking laurel song”), primarily depicting her troubled state of mind over Cao’s absence at such a moment. After pacing up and down several times amid Ban Gu’s calls for Cao Shou, Ban Zhao makes her decision with an exclamation,

罢！

Ba!

All right!

sings,

我只得情急之中把书稿，

wo zhide qing ji zhi zhong ba shugao, In this urgent situation, the responsibility

for the manuscript

权且担下！

quanqie dan xia!

I have to take it over for the time being!

She then speaks,

小妹班昭愿接《汉书》！

xiaomei Ban Zhao yuan jie Hanshu! Little sister Ban Zhao is willing to take over the
Hanshu!

A quick exchange between Ban Gu and Ban Zhao follows.

Gu: Huiban, you...

Zhao: I am Ban Biao's daughter, Ban Gu's sister;
completing *Hanshu*, it is my bounden duty!

Gu: But you are a woman.

Zhao: For writing books and setting up theories,
what does it matter being a woman?

Gu: Speaking of talent, you are no less than Cao Shou.
But how can you withstand the hardship
of doing scholarly research?

Zhao: Since father and brother could, why can't I?
Besides, with eldest *shixiong*'s help,
I will absolutely never fail the *Hanshu!*

Gu: Why did you leave out Cao Shou just now?

Zhao: As husband and wife,
there is no distinction between him and me.

Ban Zhao is still trying to cover up for Cao Shou, but Ban Gu sees through it and

sighs, “if I had known this, I would not have had to choose the husband for you!” Then, in his last spurt of energy, Ban Gu sings an aria summing up the consecutive devotion of the Ban family to writing the *Hanshu* and its significance, and tells Ban Zhao to kneel down and take an oath to the manuscript.

Zhao: (solemnly kneels down)

I, Ban Zhao, studied *The Book of Songs* at five,

read *The Analects of Confucius* at seven,

recited *Shiji* at nine,

and wrote the seal calligraphy at ten.

I have witnessed my family’s ups and downs since childhood,

and experienced the joys and sorrows of historians.

Today, I take up the manuscript (of the *Hanshu*)

under the force of circumstances.

As long as I have one breath left,

I will work without stop

to complete the writing of the *Hanshu*

in my life time.

May heaven and earth serve as my witness!

The fast-paced exchange begins with Ban Gu’s demand, “Tell me, speak quickly, speak!” Ban Zhao has been put in a difficult, intense situation. In the absence of her husband, the chosen successor, with her eldest brother calling on his deathbed, she has no choice but to step forward to take over the unfinished project of the *Hanshu*; then,

through the questions and replies between brother and sister, Ban Zhao's expedient solution keeps being reinforced with resolution; when eventually she kneels down and takes the oath, the proposal has already been turned into a firm promise, and Ban Zhao has undergone the transformation from the successor's wife to the successor herself. The process of Ban Zhao's change of identity is achieved through the "soliloquy aria" expressing her inner thoughts, as well as her movements and interaction with her brother. It gives a full display of the character's personality, temperament, and moral principles. Her initial proposition may be made out of a sibling's love, and filial piety to Ban Gu as in the Chinese proverb, "An elder brother is like a father." Nevertheless, it takes great courage to make, and that, as a matter of course, foreshadows the perseverance in keeping the promise. The oath-taking section in which she stats of her training, her family bond, and her determination, is Ban Zhao's most shining moment in the play, and always meets with audience applause.

As mentioned earlier, characterization and plotting contribute to the construction of the themes of *Ban Zhao*, not only the much-discussed main theme of Chinese intellectuals persevering in pursuit of scholarship and morality, but also the less explored feministic dimension. Ban Zhao's confidence and pride in taking over the mission to complete the *Hanshu* in Scene Three are consistent with what she demonstrates earlier in Scene Two. When Ban Gu asks what made her write the letter appealing for the ban to be lifted, Ban Zhao answers, "Am I not Ban Biao's daughter, and Ban Gu's sister?" Although still with the naivety of a 14-year-old girl, there is already self-assertiveness in her following responses, such as "What does it matter that I am a woman (when it comes to writing books and setting up theories)?" and "Since father and brother could, why can't

I (withstand the hardship of scholarship)?” Her faith that women are equal to men in intelligence and willpower is feministic. And she is more than equal to men. Ban Zhao outshines Ma Xu in intelligence and overwhelms Cao Shou in integrity. To a certain degree, Ban Zhao surpasses her big brother too, for “Great is the art of beginning, but greater the art is of ending.”⁹⁷ After all, it is a play about a famed woman historian custom-made for a female actor.

However, Ban Zhao does not seem to stand tall and straight as a feministic hero all the way through the play. In Scene Four, infuriated and disgusted at the news that Cao has been the Empress Dowager’s toy-boy, she still asks if Cao will come back home and be with her like many years ago. Scene Five offers additional opportunities for looking more closely. When Ma Xu threatens to take the manuscript away after seeing her lack of drive, Ban Zhao breaks down. She first laughs at the accusing comparison of her and her late husband Cao in terms of pursuing wealth and fame, and not long after, bursts out in a long tearful monologue:

Zhao: (speaks)

No, I am not laughing; I am crying, crying...

(really, she is crying loudly, all in tears)

In my life, I married, and the man died;

I wrote the book, and the book burned;

A lonely woman left to a book of countless volumes,

yet who ever came to my aid?

⁹⁷ “Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Quotes.” Quotes.net. STANDS4 LLC, 2018. Web. 12 Aug. 2018. <<https://www.quotes.net/quote/3187>> .

That night, stormy, heartbroken,
how much I wanted you to stay!
Yet you left without notice.
Just because I am the daughter of the Ban house,
I had no excuse but to stay in the study, sit in front of the desk,
face the solitary lamp, hold the writing brush,
day after day, month after month,
year after year, decade after decade,
write, write, write...
To be honest, I have given my heart,
I have exhausted my energy,
I have grown old and my hair has turned white.
Why can't I enjoy a normal life like others for a few days?
Just to have a few pots of tea,
drink some cups of wine,
attend several rounds of banquets,
snatch a few moments of leisure,
nothing more!
Is it too much?
You came exactly at the right time.
You take the manuscript, take it all!

I do not want to see it any more.

I hate the manuscript, I hate it so much!

But Ma Xu then says he will take the manuscript, and Shajie says that she is also leaving to be with the manuscript. Zhao responds as follows:

Zhao: (rushes to snatch back the manuscript, speaks)

No, no, you can't leave.

You can't take the manuscript.

This is my manuscript!

(cries loudly)

Ma Xu turns around and conciliates, saying "I knew it. You will not give up the *Hanshu*!"

He goes on, "You can complain, you can hate, but you cannot regret, for you are Ban Zhao, and only you can fulfill master's last wish!" Shajie also stays on to help them with the completion of the *Hanshu*. It is then that Ban Zhao sings the thematic aria, both a revelation of her mission and a re-statement of determination:

"The hardest to endure is being lonely,

The hardest to toss away is glory.

At all times, scholarship outshines wealth and rank,

The real literature is under the solitary lamp."

In those moments, Ban Zhao laments for being all alone by herself in the last twenty years and having no husband or friends. The *Hanshu* has virtually become her mental child. The easy recognition of her talents as seen in the writing of *Nijie* (Admonitions for women) offers her comfort and reward, long deserved yet unrealized

through the *Hanshu*. But to Ma and Shajie, such comforts and facilities are distractions and contribute to her indolence and delay. For that, Ma and Shajie are leaving her and taking along the manuscript. Practically, that is to deprive her of every one of her few remaining values: friendship, companionship, and the *Hanshu*, her only sustenance in life. No wonder Ban Zhao gets so excited when Ma Xu suggests taking the unfinished manuscript away, and is so much at loss when it is completed and transported somewhere else for (mass) reproduction. The completion of the *Hanshu* does not make her life complete, and Ban Zhao suffers greatly from the incompleteness.

Or, perhaps, the incomplete feministic theme, either by design or out of the playwright's inadvertent inconsistency, can be taken as part of a greater undertaking, the exploration in human nature. While the two fictitious characters— Shajie and Fan Lun— function as narrators for explaining advancements in the plot, the four historically-based characters develop along their own paths. They are all flawed in their characters and in consequence they suffer. Ban Gu prioritizes the *Hanshu*, as noble s cause as it is, over everyone and everything else. When he realizes that he will not be able to complete it himself, he imposes the succession of this Ban family endeavor on his students—Ma Xu and Cao Shou—and his little sister Ban Zhao, by exploiting his authority as the master, and his half-father status as the eldest brother. Although he finally sees the problems in his hasty and arbitrary decision, it is too late to mend them, and the other three are all living with impacts from it. As the foil to the other three, Cao Shou prides himself on his talent yet hates labor, and he succumbs to his own pursuit of a shortcut to wealth and rank by trading not only talent but dignity. On the contrary, Ma Xu is modest, humble, even self-abased; as Dai points out, he lacks the courage to speak out about what he wants at

the moment of choice, or strive for it throughout the following years.⁹⁸ Ban Zhao, too, seems not to be clear of blame, for she gives up her right to decision-making, leaving it to her eldest brother. But rather than a cowardly move to shun away from taking responsibility, it is more like an earnest acknowledgement of the limitations of her young age: she is only fourteen years old then. She writes the appeal to lift the ban, but gets confused in the dilemma of choosing between the two men for a husband; leans towards Cao Shou for being “talented” and “lovely,” and steps forward to take up the unfinished *Hanshu* out of an almost childish naivety, a sense of righteousness and fearlessness uncontaminated by age and experience of life. They all suffer from their faults.

That being said, they still stick to their promises. Ma Xu keeps his promise to care about Ban Zhao and support her for the rest of his life, and offers to sacrifice his manhood just to be in her company, as a final measure of dedication. Ban Zhao fulfills hers to complete the *Hanshu*, and works for its transmission until the end of her life. In a broader sense, their dedication to the person and to the project serves to exemplify dedication in love and in career; the sacrifices and sufferings along the way as well as the moments of loss and indulgence stand as evidence of tests and tribulations on their journey of pilgrimage. Hence, the unhappy personal experiences are sublimed to the collective sacred pursuit of truth in life and character.

3.2.1.2 Performance

The playwright’s creation, the “first-degree creation,” is then realized through the performers’ artistic exploration in the embodiment of the characters, the “second

⁹⁸ Dai Yun [戴云]. *Kan kunju “Ban Zhao” suixiang—jian tan ju zhong de jige renwu xingxiang. xiqu yishu* [看昆剧《班昭》随想——兼谈剧中的几个人物形象, Thoughts on watching *Ban Zhao*—and on the image of several characters in the play], *Xiqu yishu* [戏曲艺术, Journal of Chinese Traditional Opera], 01 (2003): 81-83.

creation.” The focus is therefor on the female lead actor Zhang Jingxian, the actor playing the title character. As the audience and critics summarize, the play is both “a huge challenge,” and an “opportunity of demonstrating Zhang’s abilities and strengths.”⁹⁹ In the traditional Kunqu and other Xiqu forms as well, characters are clearly distinguished from each other by their role-types, yet in this play, “Zhang had to create the character of Ban Zhao with *huadan* (花旦, “flower” *dan*), *guimendan* (闺门旦, “boudoir” *dan*), *zhengdan* (正旦, “upright” *dan*), and *laodan* (老旦, older *dan*)” performance skills.¹⁰⁰ In other words, Zhang’s portrayal of Ban Zhao is most appreciated for her breaking through the boundaries between subcategories of *dan* (旦), the general role type for female in Kunqu.

Zhang’s boundary-crossing exploration of character portrayal involved three stages. First, Zhang was involved in the creation of the playscript and basic character from the very beginning. Then, Zhang created the nuanced character of Ban Zhao in rehearsals and performances. And finally, with the help of a “marketing team” made up of voluntary Kunqu fans, Zhang reached out specifically to university audiences, both professors and students.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ Wang Xiaoying [王小鹰], “Zhang Jingxian jiqing su Ban Zhao—kan Kunju *Ban Zhao* yougan” [张静娴激情塑班昭——看昆剧《班昭》有感, Zhang Jingxian passionately creates Ban Zhao—observations on Kunju *Ban Zhao*], *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai Drama], 06 (2001): 19.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ See Zhang Jingxian, “Huifang *Ban Zhao*” [回访《班昭》, Revisit *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 87-88; Zhang Jingxian, “Dao qingnian ren zhong qu zhao pengyou” [到青年人中去找朋友, Go looking for friends among the young people], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 288-291; and Lü Jun [吕俊], “Wo shi yi zhi ‘kunchong’” [我是一只“昆虫”, I am a “Kunqu worm”], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao

While the focus of discussion is the actual creative process for *Ban Zhao*, Zhang's involvements in the first and third stages of creation need to be recognized for their significance, on their own merits. She was the one who initiated the production. That is really not a common practice in the Kunqu tradition, as discussed above. And Zhang's decision to directly connect with the audience ensured the completion of the circle of *sandu chuanguo* (三度创作, "third-degree creation") through reaching out for the "audience's appreciation and understanding."¹⁰² Additionally and perhaps more importantly, consciously targeting special groups¹⁰³—in this case the faculty and students at Shanghai universities—potentially increased the number and size of audiences for the play. This conscious targeting of a specific audience demographic and consciously reaching out to them aims at both a readier response and resonance from the intellectual audiences for this play about intellectuals, and at bringing the time-honored Kunqu to young college students, and communicating with them directly.¹⁰⁴

The second and most important stage of Zhang's involvement was her creation of the character, which is the highlight of the production in performance. To begin with, Zhang Jingxian explains why she wanted to create her own signature character.

I can never suppress the wish surging from the depth of my heart: to play a

Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 296-300.

¹⁰² Zhang Geng [张庚], "Xiqu meixue san ti" [戏曲美学三题, Three Topics of Xiqu aesthetics], *Wenyi yanjiu* [文艺研究, Literature & Art Studies], 01 (1990):12-15.

¹⁰³ As Elizabeth Wichmann noted in her two *TDR* articles on creation and innovation in Shanghai Jingju (1990 and 2000), this is what the Shanghai Jingju Yuan has been doing since at least the 1990s, so it was likely that Zhang Jingxian was influenced by that long-term, successful practice in Jingju. See Elizabeth Wichmann, "Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Beijing Opera Performance," *The Drama Review* 34, no. 1 (spring, 1990): 146-178; and Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak, "'Reform' at the Shanghai Jingju Company and Its Impact on Creative Authority and Repertory," *TDR: The Drama Review*, 44, no. 4 (winter, 2000): 96-119.

¹⁰⁴ Zhang Mingrong [张铭荣], "*Ban Zhao* jin xiaoyuan, hao xi yao chang yan" [《班昭》进校园, 好戏要常演], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 292-295.

character that really belongs to me. “She” should be able to give full play to my strengths and tap my potentials, a brand new image that is completely different from the ones I have known and interpreted before.¹⁰⁵

In her collaboration with Luo Huaizhen to find “the one” character, Zhang offered the playwright just one reference: she wanted “a character with a (wide) age span” on the basis of her “strong plasticity.”¹⁰⁶ That plasticity can be attributed to three sources. The first is her training with the Shanghai Xiqu School’s second Kunqu training program, popularly known as *Kun er ban* (昆二班) (1959-1966), where she specialized in the *guimendan* (“boudoir” *dan*) and *zhengdan* (“upright” *dan*) roles. The second is her early onstage experience of playing young supportive *huadan* (“flower” *dan*) roles by the side of her senior *Kun da ban* (昆大班) (1954-1961) colleagues. And the third is her later experience acting in old *dan* roles in Jingju, to which she was assigned during the 1966-1976 Cultural Revolution, when all Kunqu companies were disbanded. The process of Zhang and Luo together “finding the one” character of Ban Zhao was explained above in the section on playwriting. After Luo started writing the script, Zhang in essence functioned as the reviewer. After rounds of revisions, Zhang approved the script and submitted it to Shangkun for production.

Interestingly, the playwright Luo Huaizhen approached characterization by removing the characters’ role types categories in the process of playwriting. This goes against traditional Kunqu playwriting, in which all characters are specified with their role

¹⁰⁵ Zhang Jingxian [张静娴], “Huifang *Ban Zhao*” [回访《班昭》, Revisit *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 67-68.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 68.

categories. For example, in *The Peony Pavilion*, Tang Xianzu explicitly designates *dan* playing Du Liniang and *sheng* playing Liu Mengmei. None of the six characters in *Ban Zhao* is given such an indicator. And in performance, Zhang is acclaimed for transcending the boundaries of subcategories of *dan* in Kunqu.

To play a role encompassing almost the entire life of Ban Zhao—from a young, worry-free 14-year-old girl and then newly-wed maid, to a wife in her early 30s, to a middle-aged widow, and at last the 71 year-old lady appearing in the first and final scenes—Zhang broke down boundaries between the different role subcategories expected of female characters; she designed the specific vocal expressions, hand gestures, postures, costumes and makeup for the character at different ages and in different identities, combining the attributes of a number of *dan* role subcategories. In her production diary dated July 20th, 2000, Zhang records:

Ban Zhao's changes are not only in age but in mentality and temperament. [I] need to find the most representative body language and pivot point for each age group in order to design the voice, mien, gait, movement and eye expression for the character in her teenage years, youth, middle age and old age, so as to reveal the changes in her age and fate. This character cannot be stereotyped; nor can she be categorized by role type. I must absorb and benefit from the performing elements of *huadan* ("flower" *dan*), *guimendan* ("boudoir" *dan*), *zhengdan* ("upright" *dan*) and *laodan* (older *dan*) to complete creating the image of Ban Zhao throughout her life. It is not an easy job for me, the biggest challenges being the teenager

and the old woman at the beginning and the end.¹⁰⁷

More than eight months after the script was completed, *Ban Zhao* had its premiere on March 25, 2001. Zhang must have found what she was looking for. In her diary of April 5th, 2001, she records the specifics for creating Ban Zhao in each age.

Fourteen-year-old Ban Zhao is a talented girl roaming in the sea of books. Not only is she clever and unaffected like a normal maiden but she is also unique in being adorably gifted at a young age. Her eyes are sparkly, and her voice crispy, her tones and flow of speech brisk, and her reactions quick, with an uninhibited smiling face. Her stage-step (台步, *taibu*) uses mostly the ball of the foot, so she appears light and nimble. In acting, the sense of agility is absorbed from the subcategory of “flower” *dan*, and the particular movements of young girls in real life are mimicked, such as tilting the head, bracing one’s body on a table, occasionally bouncing and peering about... Little Ban Zhao speaks with the tone of a “young grown-up” and takes a small pride in her “feat,” offering the first sight of her remarkable talent, independent spirit and extraordinary courage.

After she gets married, though still in her blooming years, she has become a man’s wife, so there is already a young woman’s restraint and composure in her every movement. ... When she resolutely takes over the *Hanshu* project, her eyes are full of unswerving determination, and her tones reveal her courage and resolution. Now, she really has the sense of

¹⁰⁷ Zhang Jingxian [张静娴], “Huifang *Ban Zhao*” [回访《班昭》, Revisit *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 82.

heroism as expressed by the phrase “women are not inferior to men,” and the spirit of youth.

At the age of thirty, Ban Zhao is perseverant, lonely, sensitive and indignant. She has been enduring the double loneliness of writing and [a failing] marriage, restraining in her heart a burning passion. Her steps start to be slower and steadier, and compared to the normal gait of *guimendan* [“boudoir” *dan*], they are relatively “bigger and heavier”; the range and force of her movement are enlarged proportionately, bearing to a certain degree the calmness and hidden bitterness of *zhengdan* [“upright” *dan*]; her eyes show desolation and melancholy. ...

The image of the fifty-year-old Ban Zhao is a great change, right from her first entrance. Her stage-step draws from the *fangbu* (方步, “square step”) of *guansheng* (官生, “official” *sheng*), appearing vigorous and impressive; her posture emphasizes elegance and gracefulness (yet the *yao* [腰, “waist”] movements of a younger *dan* are gone). From now on, [I] start to use the *bensang* (本嗓, “original” voice), but the range is not very low; *dasang* (大嗓, “large voice,” another name for the *bensang*) and *xiaosang* (小嗓, “small voice,” the falsetto) are used in combination. She is tired yet refined, and there is some self-admiration apparent in her countenance. Nonetheless, she has experienced all kinds of blows by fate, so despite the luxuries about her, the dejection caused by her self-exile and a vague disquietude flow in the depth of her eyes. ...

At 70 Ban Zhao is white-haired, but she has grown more firm with age. Her *yao*, shoulders and neck are upright, carried with the steadiness and confidence of the *laosheng* (老生, older male) role. The most important thing is to bring out the character's extraordinary self-assurance, deriving from her success and inherent scholarly qualities. ...

Zhang's detailed record provides a rich source for investigating the inheritance and innovation involved in carrying on the performing tradition of Kunqu. Zhang stresses the visual and aural features of acting including eyes, voice, tones, (stage-)steps, posture, movement, waist, shoulders and neck, and how they are applied differently in the various role categories and their subcategories of *huadan* ("flower" *dan*), *guimendan* ("boudoir" *dan*), *zhengdan* ("upright" *dan*), *guansheng* ("official" *sheng*), *laosheng* (older *sheng*), and *laodan* (older *dan*). The creation of Ban Zhao relates to two key components of the Kunqu (and virtually all Xiqu) performing tradition—*si gong wu fa* ("four skills and five methods") and *jiamen*, the specific Kunqu term for "role categories." The "four skills" include *chang* (唱, song), *nian* (念, speech), *zuo* (做, dance-acting), and *da* (打, combat and acrobatics), while the "five methods" or specific aspects of physical performance consist of *shou* (手, hand), *yan* (眼, eye), *shen* (身, body), *fa* (法, method), and *bu* (步, step).¹⁰⁸

Zhang's notes above are far from a complete description of her creative work, yet they offer a glimpse of her creative process, which clearly involved the consideration of how to specifically employ traditional acting skills and techniques in portraying this new,

¹⁰⁸ See Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 565-566. The dictionary also lists *bu se* (部色, lit., "department type") as an older synonym for *jiamen*. Ibid, 566.

multi-faceted character. For example, the “eye, waist, shoulders, neck, and steps” that she writes about directly correspond to the “five methods”—*yan* (“eye”), *shen* (“body”) and *bu* (“step”). Similarly, the “voice, tones, posture and movement” speak to the “four skills” of *chang* (“song”), *nian* (“speech”), and *zuo* (“dance-acting”); as *Ban Zhao* is without question a civil play, Zhang did not employ the acrobatic and martial skills and techniques that comprise the fourth skill, *da* (“fighting”). Moreover, from her description, Zhang created the new individual character Ban Zhao by employing these “four skills” and “five methods” within the role category system known as *jiamen* in Kunqu. In this system there are five *da* (大, “big”) *jiamen* categories, which are further divided into 19 subcategories known as *xi* (细, “fine”) *jiamen*. See Appendix B for more information on the role category system of Kunqu.

Figure 7 below lists the subcategories of the *dan* role category in Kunqu,¹⁰⁹ along with pertinent information to help distinguish each. The figure is provided to help the reader follow Zhang Jingxian’s references to this Kunqu performance tradition in her description of creating the new character Ban Zhao. It is taken from the full chart of Kunqu’s *jiamen* provided as an appendix to this dissertation.

Zhou Chuanying (周传瑛), the most accomplished and best respected of the “Transmission generation” performers, makes the statement that is quoted frequently in discussions of the function of *jiamen* in characterization, “Big postures keep *jiamen* while

¹⁰⁹ Information in Figure 7 is summarized from Zhou Chuanying [周传瑛], *Kunju shengya liu shi nian* [昆剧生涯六十年, Sixty years of Kunju career] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1988), 118-129; Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 565-569; and Tian Shaodong [田韶东], “Kunqu danjue yanchang de yong sang tedian” [昆曲旦角演唱的用嗓特点, Singing Characteristics of Female Roles in Kunqu (Kunqu) Opera], *Nanchang gao zhuan xuebao* [南昌高专学报, Journal of Nanchang College] 5 (2008): 68-71.

small movements create the character.”

To be more specific, they [*jiamen*] categorize the performance, that is, classify the characters so that during performance the postures and conventions used in their portrayal will show the audience what kind of person each character is; meanwhile, small movements express each character’s personality and thereby indicate which individual person the character is.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ Zhou Chuanying [周传瑛], *Kunju shengya liu shi nian* [昆剧生涯六十年, Sixty years of Kunju career] (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1988), 140-141.

Figure 7. Subcategories of *Dan* Role Type in Kunqu

	Subcategories	“Nicknames ”	Specific Features of the Subcategories
1	<i>laodan</i> (老旦, older <i>dan</i>)	<i>yidan</i> (一旦, first <i>dan</i>)	old; usually intrinsically dignified; features song and speech, the only one using “original” “large” voice
2	<i>zhengdan</i> (正旦, “upright” <i>dan</i>)	<i>erdan</i> (二旦, second <i>dan</i>), <i>ci damian</i> (雌大面, female “painted face”) ¹¹¹	married ¹¹² ; young to middle age; most with moral integrity and tough character in hardship ¹¹³ ; features song
3	<i>zuodan</i> (作旦, “acting” <i>dan</i>)	<i>sandan</i> (三旦, third <i>dan</i>); <i>wawa sheng/dan</i> (娃娃生/旦, “baby” <i>sheng/dan</i>)	young girls and teenage males before 15; lively and naive; features acting
4	<i>cishadan</i> (刺杀旦, “assassin-murder” <i>dan</i>)	<i>sidan</i> (四旦, fourth <i>dan</i>)	young, usually married, with strong will and determination; features acting and high combat skills
5	<i>guimendan</i> (闺门旦, “boudoir” <i>dan</i>)	<i>wudan</i> (五旦, fifth <i>dan</i>); <i>xiaodan</i> (小旦, “small” <i>dan</i>)	unmarried young elegant ladies; newly married noblewomen; features song and dance-acting
6	<i>tiedan</i> (贴旦, “extra” <i>dan</i>)	<i>liudan</i> (六旦, sixth <i>dan</i>)	vivacious and young; usually with low social status; features speech and dance-acting
7	<i>erduodan</i> (耳朵旦, “ear” <i>dan</i>)	<i>qidan</i> (七旦, seventh <i>dan</i>)	young; low status in harem

¹¹¹ *Damian* (painted face) is another name for *jing* (净), the male role category known for their vocal resonance. As the nickname “female *damian*” suggests, *zhengdan* are known for their timbre clarity, energy in enunciation and volume of singing.

¹¹² Age usually comes first before other specific features, but marital status is the most crucial for *zhengdan* and *guimendan*.

¹¹³ Under *zhengdan*, there is a minor subcategory known as *qiaoxiudan* (翘袖旦, “wound-up sleeve” *dan*) for unconventional, tough women characters. They are so named because their water sleeves are always wound up and never used. Those women do not necessarily have high standard of traditional morality. For example, Cuishi (崔氏) in *Lankeshan* (烂柯山, “Rotten ax-handle mountain”) forces her husband to divorce her to get away from the poverty-stricken life but ends up drowning herself in remorse when her ex-husband gains fame and power.

Figure 7. (Continued) Subcategories of *Dan* role type in Kunqu

	Subcategories	Typical Roles	Representative characters
1	<i>laodan</i> (older <i>dan</i>)	old mothers	Du Liniang's mother in <i>The Peony Pavilion</i>
2	<i>zhengdan</i> (“upright” <i>dan</i>)	loyal wives, usually of a poor household	Zhao Wuniang (赵五娘) in <i>Pipa ji</i> (琵琶记, The lute); Cuishi in <i>Lanke shan</i>
3	<i>zuodan</i> (“acting” <i>dan</i>)	little girls; young boys	Wu Zixu (伍子胥)'s son in <i>Huan sha ji</i> (浣纱记, “Washing the silken gauze”)
4	<i>cishadan</i> (“assassin murder” <i>dan</i>)	vengeful female assassins (<i>cidan</i> , “assassin” <i>dan</i>) and women killed for cruelty and obscenity (<i>shadan</i> , “murder” <i>dan</i>)	Fei Zhen'e (费贞娥) in the scene <i>Ci hu</i> (刺虎, “assassinating the general Tiger”) from <i>Tieguan tu</i> (铁冠图, Paintings by Taoist priest Tieguan) (“assassin” <i>dan</i>); Pan Jinlian (潘金莲) in the scene <i>Sha sao</i> (杀嫂, killing sister-in-law) from <i>Yixia ji</i> (义侠记, Chivalrous swordsman) (“murder” <i>dan</i>)
5	<i>guimendan</i> (“boudoir” <i>dan</i>)	Unmarried elegant young ladies; newly married imperial concubines and royal women	Du Liniang (杜丽娘) in <i>The Peony Pavilion</i> ; Yang Yuhuan (杨玉环) in <i>The Palace of Eternal Youth</i>
6	<i>tiedan</i> (“extra” <i>dan</i>)	maids	Chunxiang (春香) in <i>The Peony Pavilion</i> ; Hongniang (红娘) in <i>Xi xiang ji</i> (西厢记, Romance of west chamber)
7	<i>erduodan</i> (“ear” <i>dan</i>)	lady-in-waiting named or unnamed	Niannu (念奴) in <i>The Palace of Eternal Youth</i>

Note:

Erduodan (耳朵旦, “ear” *dan*) is sometimes regarded as a “finer” division under *liudan* (六旦, sixth *dan*) as in Appendix B. In this specific Figure of *dan* role category, it is listed as a distinctive subcategory of *qidan* (七旦, seventh *dan*) for a full display of the possible varieties.

What Zhang does for characterization Ban Zhao, on the basis of Luo's playwriting, is different. The audience does not need to be informed of which role category she plays. Zhang picks characteristic postures and conventions from various role categories and their subcategories to create the image of Ban Zhao at different ages and stages of her life, and pieces them together to portray one character throughout her whole life. The "small movements" for expressing personality are certainly helpful in this process. On the surface, Zhang's work involved little innovation but profuse inheritance of the "skills" and "methods" of Kunqu's performance tradition, especially the *jiamen* role category system. Yet her use of almost the entire range of *dan* role subcategories in the creation of one character is ground breaking, and the way in which she combines the inherited postures and conventions of these subcategories in her characterization of Ban Zhao is highly innovative, as well.

3.2.1.3 Directing, Music and Designs

Like the playwright, *Ban Zhao's* director, Yang Xiaoqing (杨小青), was also invited by Zhang Jingxian. As Zhang recalls, Yang came to her mind soon after she started the search for talented female directors.¹¹⁴ Although they had never met, Zhang had seen and been impressed by Yang's previous directing work, and felt that Yang had been "a close friend in spirit" for a long time.¹¹⁵ Based in Hangzhou (杭州), Zhejiang province, Yang was originally a director of Yueju (越剧), a Xiqu form that was created in the early 20th century with heavy influences from Kunqu. After Zhang sent Yang a copy

¹¹⁴ Zhang Jingxian [张静娴], "Huifang *Ban Zhao*" [回访《班昭》, Revisit *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 76.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

of the script, Yang quickly discovered a resonance with *Ban Zhao*. The morning after she read the play, Yang called playwright Luo Huaizhen, saying, “It was so moving!... Every line that I read made me feel like crying, and it seems that the tears are still running down.”¹¹⁶ When Zhang and Yang finally met, the collaboration was immediately agreed upon.

Judged by both her own remarks and the observations of critics and creative team members, the director may not have been the center of the creative process for *Ban Zhao*. Yang herself said, “I come from a Yueju background, and am not familiar with Kunqu.”¹¹⁷ Certainly, Yang might have said that just to appear modest. But others took notice of her modesty and humility, both seriously and approvingly. For instance, Liu Housheng noted the respect Yang held “for the playwright’s work,” and that this was different from the approach of many other directors.¹¹⁸ Co-composer of the music for *Ban Zhao*, Li Liang (李樑), observed the director’s “discretion in every employment of music” and her close collaboration with the musicians.¹¹⁹ Scholar and critic Guo Hancheng (郭汉城) pointed out that she “paid all possible attention to preserving the

¹¹⁶ Zhang Jingxian [张静娴], “Huifang *Ban Zhao*” [回访《班昭》, Revisit *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 76.

¹¹⁷ Yang Xiaoqing [杨小青], “Yi renwu dadong guanzhong—*Ban Zhao* daoyan chanshu” [以人物打动观众—《班昭》导演阐述, Move the audience with the characters—*Ban Zhao* director’s statement], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 64.

¹¹⁸ Liu Housheng [刘厚生], “Si kan Ban Zhao” [四看班昭, Watching *Ban Zhao* four times], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shi’an [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 165.

¹¹⁹ Li Liang [李樑], “Kunju *Ban Zhao* yinyue chuanguo suigan” [昆剧《班昭》音乐创作随感, Random thoughts on the musical creation of *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 112.

characteristics of Kunqu.”¹²⁰ Critic and scholar Wang Yunming (王蕴明) also recognized Yang’s “inheritance of the solemnity and elegance of Kunqu in overall grasp.”¹²¹ Yang was clearly very intent on transmitting the classic Kunqu tradition. Nevertheless, as director she also played a significant part in creating the production.

Yang Xiaoqing evidenced her directorial intentions in the title of her Director’s Statement, “Move the audience with the characters.”¹²² To achieve that goal, Yang set out to help the actors “create a number of characters that are new and original” (塑造几个新的人物, *suzao jige xin de renwu*), by means of “making the performance-centered traditional Kunqu move towards the synthesized art of modern theatre” (让以表演为核心的传统昆剧走向现代剧场的综合艺术, *rang yi biao yan wei hexin de chuantong Kunju zouxiang xiandai juchang de zonghe yishu*).¹²³ With the “respect for the playwright’s work” that Liu Housheng pointed out, Yang did not try to change the script by Luo Huaizhen. She worked with mainly three sectors of the *Ban Zhao* production: the performers, the musicians, and the various designers. Yang had two related principle for collaborating with the actors. First, she made it a “precondition to ‘derive performance from experience (体验, *tiyan*),’ that is, to design the techniques of song, speech and

¹²⁰ Guo Hancheng [郭汉城], “*Ban Zhao de de yu shi*” [《班昭》的得与失, Gains and losses of *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 186.

¹²¹ Wang Yunming [王蕴明], “Kunju *Ban Zhao* de shi yu xi yu wenren qinghuai” [昆剧《班昭》的史与戏与文人情怀, History, play, and literati feelings of Kunju *Ban Zhao*], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shi’an [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 227.

¹²² Yang Xiaoqing [杨小青], “Yi renwu dadong guanzhong—*Ban Zhao* daoyan chanshu” [以人物打动观众—《班昭》导演阐述, Move the audience with the characters—*Ban Zhao* director’s statement], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 62.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 64.

dance-acting so as to create a performance that is real, vivid, delicate and accurate (真实, 生动, 细腻, 准确, *zhenshi, shengdong, xini, zhunque*)." As a corollary, she and her actors were "to 'absolutely avoid' (切忌, *qiejì*) piling up [unnecessary] movements, performing techniques without emotional connections, and exhibiting skills [extraneous to plot and character]." ¹²⁴ The following passage clearly implies that Yang employed the "Stanislavski Method" in *Ban Zhao*: "I stress that performers must try to find the inner basis (内心依据, *neixin yiju*) for external movements, so movements can become vehicles for the externalization of feelings and psychology, and all blocking will contain meaning." ¹²⁵

The director's expectation that everything in the production would be "real, vivid, delicate and accurate" clearly applied not only to actors and "experience-based" acting, but also to the various areas of design. Yang wanted to emphasize a "sense of history" (历史感, *lishi gan*) in this newly written historical play. This was achieved through an "historical realness" (历史真实, *lishi zhenshi*) in, for instance, the costume design. ¹²⁶ The costumes were modeled on actual clothing in the Han dynasties, as preserved in murals, paintings and sculptures. However, this gave rise to contradictions between the realistic costumes and the stylistic performance in Kunqu and other Xiqu forms. In the Prelude, Scenes Five and Six, and the Epilogue, Ban Zhao is an esteemed scholar in her middle and old age, so she and the other characters present were dressed in fine attire. But that

¹²⁴ Yang Xiaoqing [杨小青], "Yi renwu dadong guanzhong—*Ban Zhao* daoyan chanshu" [以人物打动观众—《班昭》导演阐述, Move the audience with the characters—*Ban Zhao* director's statement], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 65.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid, 63.

attire, splendid-looking and true to history, did not have the white silk extensions at the cuff-edge of garment sleeves, known literally as “water sleeves” (水袖, *shuixiu*), which in Kunqu and other forms of Xiqu are the basis of much traditional movement for higher-status characters in civil dress. Their absence made it impossible for performers to employ the relevant expressive skills.

Historically based realism is not the only approach the director utilized to convey a sense of history. Yang worked with the stage design artist to come up with a stage design based on rocks, which included two parts. The upstage part consisted of flats which were painted in a pattern of rocks. Through various arrangements, these rock-painted flats could form a gate, walls, and other venues including the interior of the imperial palace. The upstage part was a projection screen (影壁, *yingbi*) with the appearance of a huge stone wall. Inscribed on the wall was the Chinese written-character *shi* (史, history), in a classical style of calligraphy. Composed of two prop rocks, the screen wall could open into one, close into one, and move to any spot of the stage. To Yang, “the stately quality of rocks symbolizes a kind of serious, heavy thinking, and that is the core of this play.”¹²⁷

In addition, the externalization of the sense of history was also achieved in human shape. Yang introduced eight female actors representing a set of terracotta figurines, sacrificial objects excavated from the Han dynasty tombs. These actors wore facial makeup that resembled dust, and were always dimly lit. In Yang’s interpretation:

¹²⁷ Yang Xiaoqing [杨小青], “Yi renwu dadong guanzhong—*Ban Zhao* daoyan chanshu” [以人物打动观众—《班昭》导演阐述, Move the audience with the characters—*Ban Zhao* director’s statement], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 63.

They do not speak or sing and for the most part remain motionless when they are onstage, yet when they cast their gaze at different characters in critical moments of their lives, they project their attitudes toward the characters through the way they position their bodies. These figurines, as silent commentators, are the symbol of history.¹²⁸

To stage designer Liu Fusheng (刘福升), Yang's incorporation of the terracotta figurines not only added a moveable dimension to the stage space, but opened his mind, "I suddenly realized that my thoughts were still stuck at the level of replicating a physical space. Therefore, I gave up my original way of thinking, which was to present a real environment and create illusions that followed the development of the plot."¹²⁹ He then took on a new perspective toward presenting the space on stage, which eventually led to his stylized design, described above.

Creating the sense of history also applied to the aural dimension of the production, and was achieved through the director's work with the musicians. As Yang Xiaoqing summarized, the musical aspect comprised the melodies of arias, the accompaniment, and the theme songs.¹³⁰ As a matter of fact, the actual creative process yielded even more

¹²⁸ Yang Xiaoqing [杨小青], "Yi renwu dadong guanzhong—*Ban Zhao* daoyan chanshu" [以人物打动观众—《班昭》导演阐述, Move the audience with the characters—*Ban Zhao* director's statement], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 64.

¹²⁹ Liu Fusheng [刘福升], "Chuangxin cai shi zhen" [创新才是真, Only innovation is real], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 126.

¹³⁰ Yang Xiaoqing [杨小青], "Yi renwu dadong guanzhong—*Ban Zhao* daoyan chanshu" [以人物打动观众—《班昭》导演阐述, Move the audience with the characters—*Ban Zhao* director's statement], in *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安] (Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003), 64.

examples that are worth noticing.

First, certain instruments were specially incorporated in *Ban Zhao* because of the history with which they were associated. For instance, the ancient *xun* (埙) was used as a solo instrument for the atmospheric music, and the pauses between scenes. The timbre of this blown wind instrument is perceived as sad, fragile, and most of all, ancient.

Historical records that mention the *xun* are found as early as the Spring and Autumn Period (770 BCE – 476 BCE), so its origin could date back thousands of years.

Secondly, specific fixed-melodies (曲牌, *qupai*) were chosen for their long histories, too. Take the theme song (“The hardest to endure is being lonely”), for example. It was composed to the music style of “zither song” (琴曲, *qinqu*) and the melodies of various “zither songs” were incorporated and became part of the fixed-melodies in *kunqu*. A “zither song” is sung specifically to the accompaniment of *guqin* (古琴, the ancient zither-like string instrument). As one of the symbols of Chinese classical culture, the history of the *guqin* dates back about 3,000 years. As expected, it was another instrument included in *Ban Zhao*.

Thirdly and finally, the director also added a visual dimension to the aural element. In Scene Six, when Ban Zhao proposes a toast to Ma Xu before his final departure, the closed screen wall behind them opened, revealing not only the eight terracotta figurines but also the musicians of the ensemble, wearing similar attire and makeup. They did not act, but they did play. Usually offstage, the musicians’ onstage presence explored the visual expressivity of the ensemble. Moreover, the increased number of human figures also helped to accent the parting between Ban Zhao and Ma Xu as the final highlight of the play.

3.2.2 Gongsun Zidu

As *Ban Zhao* was created for Zhang Jingxian, Zhekun's (浙昆) production of *Gongsun Zidu* (公孙子都) was initiated as a custom-made production to showcase the acting skills of Lin Weilin (林为林), Zhekun's star actor. Lin specializes in the *wusheng* (武生, martial male) role subcategory and is known for being “the South China Number One leg” (江南一条腿, *jiangnan yitiao tui*) for his martial leg skills. Born in 1964, Lin at age 21 became the youngest winner of the Plum Award (梅花奖, *meihua jiang*), the highest award for Xiqu artists, and at 38 became the youngest troupe leader (团长, *tuanzhang*) at any major professional Kunqu company. Soon after he won the Plum Award, Gu Tiangao (顾天高), then the director of the Section of Arts at the Department of Culture of Zhejiang Province, recommended that Lin consider the Jingju play *Crusade on Zidu* (伐子都, *Fa Zidu*) as a possibility for further exploring and developing his artistic potential. Lin first transplanted the play to Kunqu as a *zhezixi* program. In 1996, Lin and his Zhekun colleagues then started the creative process for what would become the full length production *Gongsun Zidu*.

Originally transplanted from the widely spread Bangzi (梆子, lit. “clapper,” a form of Xiqu from North China) to Jingju, *Crusade on Zidu* is also known by other titles, including *Punishment of Zidu* (罚子都, *Fa Zidu*), *Holding the Flag and Seizing the Chariot* (举旗夺车, *Ju qi duo che*), and *Gongsun Yan* (公孙阞, Gongsun Zidu's other name).¹³¹ It centers on the historical figure during the early Spring and Autumn Period

¹³¹ Shi Yukun [石玉昆], “Huhuan renxing huigui, chongzhen wuxi xiongfeng—Kunju *Gongsun Zidu* daoyan suixiang” [呼唤人性回归, 重振武戏雄风—昆剧《公孙子都》导演随想, Calling for the return of

(770 BCE – 476 BCE). Gongsun Zidu was born to a noble family and recognized for his beauty as the world’s most handsome man. He was also the deputy commander-in-chief in the Zheng (郑) state’s expedition against a smaller state, Xu (许). Out of jealousy, he shot an arrow at commander-in-chief Ying Kaoshu (颖考叔) from behind, killed him, took his credit and seized his would-be glory. In popular history, he was then haunted by Kaoshu’s ghost and lived with a dreadfully troubled mind; eventually, Kaoshu’s ghost avenged his murder by taking over Zidu’s body, confessing his crimes, and killing him.

Indeed, *Crusade on Zidu* seems a very promising source of opportunities to highlight Lin’s strengths in his specialty. It is a classic piece from the very limited repertory for *wusheng* actors. For instance, there are battle scenes for the actor playing Zidu to demonstrate his fighting (打, *da*) skills as a *changkao* (长靠, “long armor”) *wusheng*. A specific “finer” subcategory of *wusheng*, the *changkao* martial *sheng* usually portrays high-ranking generals who fight with a variety of weapons, in stage armor and a costume decorated with four “armor flags” (靠旗, *kaoqi*) indicating the status of a general, and wearing boots with platform soles known as *houdixue* (厚底, “thick sole”). When Zidu sees the ghost while riding a horse, his struggles with the horse are presented with a series of martial techniques known as “floor skills” (毯子功, *tanzi gong*), including: *houpahu* (后趴虎, lit., “backward lying tiger,” flipping backward and landing on the stomach, with hands and feet helping to support the body); *duoni* (垛泥, a single-footed landing after jumping); and *tiaocha* (跳叉, “jumping [into] splits”). His final death at the

human nature, reinvigorating the masculinity of martial plays—the director’s random thoughts on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], in *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010): 31.

end of the play is indicated with *ying jiangshi* (硬僵尸, lit., “hard stiff corpse”), a difficult and dangerous technique in which the actor leaps up and flips over before landing solidly on his back, with his whole body stiffened from head to toe. Before Zidu kills himself, however, the actor undertakes the biggest spectacle of the performance, the breathtaking acrobatic feat called the “down from the height” (下高, *xiagao*) technique: the actor ascends three and sometimes four tables stacked on top of each other, jumps off, somersaults in the air, and lands upright, standing on his high platform boots. Most of these skills and techniques were preserved in *Gongsun Zidu*, with modifications.

The Jingju play *Crusade on Zidu* presented challenges for the new production. As a representative *wusheng* play, it was criticized for imbalance, meaning overemphasis on the display of skills and techniques, with little or virtually no “dramatic quality” (戏剧性, *xijuxing*).¹³² As Qu Runhai (曲润海) puts it, “the play script cannot convince people, and an audience which comes solely for the final ‘one fall’ is numbered, after all; what is more, there are chances of accidents.”¹³³ The lead character, the “hero,” was a murderer; the theme was about karma whereby good and evil would be justly rewarded; and the plot of a ghost taking human life, together caused *Fa Zidu* to be banned after the founding of PRC in 1949, though it has been restaged in the overall relaxation following the Cultural

¹³² Gong Hede [龚和德], “Jingpin hai xu xi damo—*Gongsun Zidu* guan hou” [精品还需细打磨—《公孙子都》观后, Fine work needs fine polish—after watching *Gongsun Zidu*], in *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010): 239.

¹³³ Qu Runhai [曲润海], “Nairen xunsi de *Gongsun Zidu*” [耐人寻思的《公孙子都》], The thought-provoking *Gongsun Zidu*, in *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010): 140.

Revolution (1966-1976).¹³⁴

The creative process of playwriting for the new production took ten years. As its various working titles indicate, the script went through multiple revisions by different playwrights, from: *Fa Zidu* by Gu Tiangao, Huang Yue (黄越) and Xu Qinna (徐勤纳) in 1996; to *Anjian ji* (暗箭记, Arrow shot from behind) by Gu Zhaoshen (古兆申) in 2002; to *Gongsun Zidu* by Tang Baoxiang (唐葆祥) in 2004; to *Yingxiong zui* (英雄罪, Hero's crime) by Zhang Lie (张烈) in 2005; and finally to the culmination in *Gongsun Zidu* by Zhang Lie in 2006. From then on, the production of Zhang's play garnered three major theatre awards in the next three years, including the Chinese Xiqu Academy Awards in 2008. As Wang An-Ch'i points out, award winning does not always necessarily guarantee the quality of the productions.¹³⁵ However, the awards do offer references in approaching the production as being one that has "made valuable explorations and practice in the transformation from general traditional themes to historical themes in Xiqu."¹³⁶ To be more specific, *Gongsun Zidu*:

made breakthroughs in the long-standing pattern of Kunqu performance
[which had been] solely dominated by civil plays populated by the "three

¹³⁴ Zhonguo Xiqu zhi bianji weiyuanhui [《中国戏曲志》编辑委员会, Annals of Chinese Xiqu Editorial Committee], Zhonguo Xiqu zhi—Liaoning juan bianji weiyuanhui [《中国戏曲志·辽宁卷》编辑委员会, Annals of Chinese Xiqu—Liaoning volume Editorial Committee], Zhonguo Xiqu zhi—Liaoning juan [《中国戏曲志·辽宁卷》, Zhonguo Xiqu zhi—Liaoning volume], (Beijing: Zhongguo ISBN zhongxin, 1994): 12.

¹³⁵ Wang An-Ch'i [王安祈], "Chuangzuo yu pingjiang: yi "guojia wutai yishu jingpin gongcheng" san bu ruxuan juzuo wei li [创作与评奖: 以“国家舞台艺术精品工程”三部入选剧作为例, "Creative Writing and Awards-Granting: Case Studies of the Three Plays Elected in the "National Project of Excellent Stage Art"]." *Minsu quyi* [民俗曲艺, Journal of Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore] 164.6 (2009): 191-227.

¹³⁶ Chinese Xiqu Academy [中国戏曲学会], "Wei Kunju *Gongsun Zidu* banjiang han" [为昆剧《公孙子都》颁奖函, Letter on granting the award to Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], in *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010): 4-5.

xiao” [role categories] (i.e. *xiaosheng* [小生, young male], *xiaodan* [小旦, young female] and *xiaohualian* [小花脸, “little painted face”]). By filling in the blank on the Kunqu stage with a “large-scale martial play” as a major form of expression, [this play] greatly enriched the Kunqu performance form, increased its visual impact, and also made breakthroughs in the creation and characterization of persona [in Kunqu plays].¹³⁷

Such comments once more address the issues of inheritance and innovation in literary and performative creation. After multiple revisions, the script went through drastic changes to finally become what was widely acclaimed as a six-scene “psychological drama” (心理剧, *xinliju*). Although still centered on Zidu’s fall after shooting the arrow at Kaoshu from behind his back, the focus was changed from Kaoshu’s ghost taking revenge, to Zidu’s punishment by his own conscience, which leads to his death.

In the opening scene, when Gongsun Zidu is a step away from conquering the enemy’s capital city, Ying Kaoshu grabs the flag from him and is the first to ascend the city wall of the enemy capital. Previously, Kaoshu defeated Zidu in the competition for the rank of commander-in-chief of the expeditionary army; Kaoshu then assigned him to lead the rear guard, which prevented him from engaging in battle; and finally, when Zidu came to Kaoshu’s rescue and fought off his opponent, Kaoshu expressed no appreciation,

¹³⁷ Yang Jianxin [杨建新], “Shu fengliu renwu hai kan jinzhao” [数风流人物还看今朝, To count the talented, it is to look to this age], in *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010): 11.

but rather was angry with Zidu for not following his orders. Now, on top of all this, Kaoshu is going to blatantly seize the credit that is actually due to Zidu. His indignation goes beyond control, and Zidu shoots an arrow into Kaoshu's back and kills him. A scout is the only witness to this series of events.

In the following scene, Kaoshu's younger sister, Yingshu (颖姝), King Zhuangong (庄公) of the State of Zheng, and the Minister of Justice, Zhai Zu (祭足), are all waiting to welcome the triumphant return of the expedition army. They do not know about the loss of Kaoshu. The scout arrives first, bringing the news of Kaoshu's death. Then, he gives an account of what happened to the King and Minister Zhai Zu, in private. To Zhai Zu's surprise, King Zhuangong kills the scout after confirming that he is the only witness. Then he confesses to minister Zhai, "Having lost my right arm, I cannot afford to lose my left." Minister Zhai insists that, "He may get away from punishment by law, but he shall not be cleared of punishment by [his own] heart." King Zhuangong agrees to this, as a means of guaranteeing extra control over Zidu. After Zidu's arrival, King Zhuangong tests him by requesting that he look straight into the king's eyes. Zidu fails to do so with a poised mind. However, after Zidu kneels down and swears allegiance, the king not only lets him go at that, but also issues the decree that he will marry Yingshu to Zidu after a proper memorial ceremony for Kaoshu.

At the beginning of Scene Three, Zidu is taking a swift horse ride following the memorial ceremony. He is called back by minister Zhai to share his carriage for a conversation. Disguised as an old man's nagging and sighing, Zhai's conversation is full of indirect interrogations as to the possible murderer, the causes of Kaoshu's death, and the biggest beneficiary from it. Shaken and troubled, Zidu asks if there are ghosts after

death. Zhai confirms this: “otherwise, what we did at the memorial would just be putting up a show for human beings.” He goes on to exclaim, “A noble thought makes a man a hero, and a wrong thought makes a man a sinner; nonetheless, rather than a noble one, it is always easier to have a wrong thought.” Zhai then departs with a final parting remark, “A long journey waits ahead yet the road is bumpy, so beware of tripping!” Zidu then resumes his no-longer-smooth horse ride, and it seems he starts to hear Kaoshu’s last cry and see his ghost.

Scene Four is set on Zidu’s wedding night. Both he and Yingshu are overpowered by each other’s beauty. In addition, Zidu is sweetly touched as Yingshu confides to him that, despite the great grief over the loss of her brother, she is overjoyed to become his wife because she has been in love with him since long ago. But her further confiding is a great shock to Zidu: Kaoshu tried hard to fulfill his little sister’s wish to marry Zidu, but kept this secret from Zidu to prevent his preferment of Zidu being misunderstood as ingratiating behavior. Gnawed by guilt and regret, Zidu testily asks Yingshu what she will do about her brother’s death. Yingshu tells him happily that, as her husband, she is entrusting him with the duty of finding the murderer and avenging her brother’s death. Zidu wants to confess to her, yet he does not dare to. Completely torn, there is nothing he can do but force himself into total drunkenness.

In the transition to scene 5, Kaoshu’s ghost comes on stage and joins Zidu. The two have a long conversation in which Kaoshu expresses regret for not having had a good, open talk with Zidu earlier, to let him know the intentions behind his actions. Kaoshu had vied for the position of commander-in-chief of the expedition to make up for the discrepancy between Zidu’s aristocratic origin and his own commoner background; he

was also trying to keep his sister's sweetheart from danger and harm by preventing Zidu from engaging in battle and fighting himself, instead. Zidu, realizing the great mistake he made out of misunderstanding, takes up his sword and tries to finish his life as a measure of redemption, but Kaoshu stops him. Both shed tears at their parting, for one has become a ghost while the other is to live on in guilt. Then, Zidu wakes up to discover that this has all been a dream. Minister Zhai then arrives, bringing King Zhuanggong's decree for Zidu as the commander-in-chief to launch an expedition on another state. Zhai also leaves Zidu with a silk bag from the king, to be opened once he is alone. Inside is the arrow with which Zidu killed Kaoshu. Zidu realizes that the king and the minister already know the truth.

The opening of Scene Six is similar to that of Scene Two. King Zhuanggong and Minister Zhai are welcoming the victoriously returning Zidu. Minister Zhai congratulates Zidu on his victory, and on becoming the permanent commander-in-chief for all future expeditions. Zidu declines. Zhai refers him to the arrow in the silk bag as a reminder of his previous crime, which can only be atoned for through this future service. King Zhuanggong corrects Zhai, saying that the arrow is a spur toward Zidu's future military feats. Just then, Yingshu arrives. Welcoming her returning husband reminds her of similar occasions with her brother. Producing the arrow, Zidu tells her, "I promised you that I would kill his murderer for you. Now I have found him, and he is—the one you have newly married, given your true love, entrusted yourself to completely, and never doubted—Gongsun Zidu!" In desperation, she jumps off the high platform built for the welcoming ceremony. In spite of the king's attempt to stop him, Zidu follows her, and kills himself.

This elaborate scene-by-scene account of the plot serves two main purposes. First, it illustrates how the challenges posed by *Crusade on Zidu* were addressed in the new production, *Gongsun Zidu*. In the first, Zidu shoots Kaoshu in the back out of jealousy, falsely claims credit for Kaoshu's achievements, and begs Kaoshu's ghost to spare his life. He is a villain, liar, and coward. The title character in Zhekun's production fights courageously, feels justly outraged when he is apparently treated unfairly, and gives up his life for redemption after perceiving his mistake. This Zidu is certainly still flawed, but is nonetheless a fallen hero. His death is not simply the outcome of karma, but a final resolution in an exemplary case of what Wang An-Ch'i refers to as the in-depth exploration of "the subtlety and secrecy of the complicated and multifaceted human nature."¹³⁸ And the artful device of have the formal appearance of Kaoshu's ghost appear in Zidu's dream steers the production away from possible entanglement with superstition, for which the play was banned over 50 years ago.

Second, the plot summary offers ample instances of innovative literary creation made on the basis of inheritance. For example, shooting the arrow was the turning point in other plays, but it has been made the starting point for Zhekun's *Gongsun Zidu*. From there, plot of the play develops swiftly. Cheng Lihui (程利辉) attributes the swift plot development to the change from a linear structure in *Crusade on Zidu* to what is essentially a triple parallel structure in *Gongsun Zidu*—the different responses of Zidu, Yingshu and King Zhuangong to the same event, which "shortened the span of time but

¹³⁸ Wang An-Ch'i [王安祈], "'Yanyuan juchang' xiang 'bianju zhongxin' de guodu—dalu 'xiqu gaige' xiaoying yu dangdai xiqu zhi xing zhuanbian zhi guan" [「演员剧场」向「编剧中心」的过渡—大陆「戏曲改革」效应与当代戏曲质性转变之观察, The transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama: an investigation of mainland drama reform and the transformation of the nature of contemporary theater], *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* [中国文哲研究集刊, Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy] vol.19 (2001): 301.

widened the range of space.”¹³⁹ Suspense is created by the anticipation of how Zidu is going to live with the consequence of his action, fueled by the King’s knowledge of the truth and Yingshu’s ignorance. Tension is built up through the arrangement of a series of *duizi xi* (对子戏, lit., “pair actions”), until the dramatic climax is reached in Scene Five. These “pair actions” are the focus of Scenes Two to Five, including that between Zidu and King Zhuangong, Zidu and Minister Zhai, Zidu and Yingshu, and Zidu and Kaoshu. The climax is also furthered by Zidu’s dream-spurred realization of Kaoshu’s hidden, benevolent intentions and the reversal it produces, that Zidu’s justified indignation turned out to be wrongly based on misunderstanding. Like *Ban Zhao*, *Gongsun Zidu* stands as evidence of “theatrical quality” with “cracking pace, compact structure, and successive dramatic climaxes” presented through the utilization of such playwriting techniques as suspense, conflict, and reversal.¹⁴⁰

Similar to Zhang Jingxian’s creative process, Lin’s individual acting breakthroughs are based on the employment of elements and conventions in the performative skill set for *wusheng*, the martial male role category. In *Gongsun Zidu*, Lin incorporated the above-mentioned fighting skills and acrobatic techniques from *Crusade on Zidu*. In addition, to express Zidu’s suspicion, confusion and panic, first at the thought of and then at the sight of Kaoshu’s ghost, Lin also employed the “pheasant tail skills” (翎子功, *lingzi gong*) from the *zhiweisheng* (雉尾生, “pheasant tail *sheng*”), a “finer role

¹³⁹ Cheng Lihui [程利辉], “You xushu dao pipan: liang zhong shijiao xia de Zidu zhi si” [由叙述到批判: 两种视角下的子都之死, From narration to criticism: Zidu’s death in two perspectives], *Sichuan xiju* [四川戏剧, Sichuan Drama], 01 (2010): 50.

¹⁴⁰ Wang An-Ch’i [王安祈], “‘Yanyuan juchang’ xiang ‘bianju zhongxin’ de guodu—dalu ‘xiqu gaige’ xiaoying yu dangdai xiqu zhi xing zhuanbian zhi guan’cha” [「演员剧场」向「编剧中心」的过渡—大陆「戏曲改革」效应与当代戏曲质性转变之观察, The transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama: an investigation of mainland drama reform and the transformation of the nature of contemporary theater], *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* [中国文哲研究集刊, Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy] vol.19 (2001): 267.

subcategory” of the *xiaosheng* role category. Named after the two pheasant tail feathers attached to the sides of the headdress for such roles, the pheasant tail *sheng* usually portrays young generals who are handsome and valiant. A representative Kunqu character for the pheasant tail *sheng* is Lü Bu (吕布), a young warlord during the Three Kingdom Period (220CE-265CE) known for his combination of beauty and valor. That well justifies the use of skills from the traditional performance of Lü Bu for the portrayal of the historical character’s predecessor, Zidu. Through the shaking, separating, erecting, swinging, and pressing of *lingzi*, Lin “externalized Zidu’s emotional changes and made visual this fear in his heart.”¹⁴¹

Meanwhile, Lin’s breakthrough in role category performance differed from Zhang Jingxian’s. Zhang created Ban Zhao by crossing the boundaries between subcategories within the general *dan* role category; Lin’s breakthrough lies in elevating the *wusheng* subcategory to the leading role at the center of performance, a status equivalent to that of the *xiaosheng*. He did it through “adding civil presentation to the martial play” (武戏文唱, *wuxi wenchang*) with “an equal emphasis on civil and marital presentations” (文武并重, *wenwu bingzhong*). In other words, he increased the use of the other three of the *sigong*, “four skills,” namely, *chang* (唱, song), *nian* (念, speech), and *zuo* (做, dance-acting), to a level equal to that of the trademark *da* (打, combat and acrobatics) of typical *wusheng* acting. Most specifically, he attached more stress to singing. As did Zhang, he made this happen by working with the playwrights. In the final version of *Gongsun Zidu*,

¹⁴¹ Lin Weilin [林为林], “Yi wen yi wu yan Zidu” [亦文亦武演子都, To play Zidu in both civil and marital ways], in *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguozuo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010): 23.

Zidu is given plenty of opportunities for singing in those “pair actions.” For instance, in Scene Three, in the mental interrogation inflicted on Zidu by Zhai Zu, the minister in charge of law and justice, Zidu sings two arias, one before and one after their conversation. The first is set to the fixed-melody “Qi Yanhui” (泣颜回, “Crying over Yanhui”), sung during Zidu’s horse ride. Zidu feels great relief at having pulling through the memorial ceremony and is rushing home for some more peace of mind. The second is sung to the *qupai* (曲牌) “Zhuma ting” (驻马听, “Stopping the horse to listen”). Surprised and bewildered, Zidu is wondering if the minister had found out about his murder, so his ride is at a much slower pace. Another example is found in Scene Four. There was no *dan* character in *Crusade on Zidu*. As playwright Zhang Lie acknowledges, the female character Yingshu was created by the three playwrights in the first draft, and he kept the character and further developed it.¹⁴² This new character not only enriched the variety of role categories in *Gongsun Zidu* but added a romantic shade to Zidu, who had been solely martial in previous plays. On the wedding night, Zidu and Yingshu share passages of dialogue both in speech and in arias set to fixed-melodies. In this section, the two appear as a typical “loving pair” in traditional Kunqu; Zidu thus acquires an approximate *xiaosheng* status both through his role within a romantic relationship, and through the employment of the civil acting skills—song, speech, and dance-acting.

Before this analysis comes to an end, I want to call attention to the dynamics between inheritance and innovation not just within Kunqu, but also between Kunqu and

¹⁴² Zhang Lie [张烈], “Kunju *Gongsun Zidu* bianju gan tan” [昆剧《公孙子都》编剧感谈, Reflections on the playwriting of Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], in *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010): 28.

other Xiqu forms like Jingju, as showcased in *Gongsun Zidu*. Certainly, the mutual influence between Kunqu and Jingju is a subject too dangerously extensive to pursue in depth in this dissertation. But Wang An-Ch'i provides an example for approaching it with her case study of contemporary Kunqu actors "learning back from" Jingju performers in the martial performative skills for *wusheng*, *wudan* (武旦, "martial *dan*") and *wuchou* (武丑, "martial *chou*").¹⁴³ Wang notes an interesting phenomenon as the explanation for why Kunqu lost its martial performative tradition earlier than its civil tradition: when Kunqu was declining in the late Qing, because of their martial skills and techniques, the actors for *wu* roles could still find opportunities to work in other Xiqu forms, so they left Kunqu, and from that time Kunqu was carried on only by the actors of the civil performative tradition.¹⁴⁴ *Gongsun Zidu* started as a transplanted play from Jingju. Therefore, it is a case of innovation through the introduction of something new and different from other Xiqu forms, which is to say, a hybridization. However, whether it was "a lot"¹⁴⁵ or "the overwhelming majority,"¹⁴⁶ it is agreed that a large part of the martial play repertory in Jingju actually came from Kunqu originally. In addition, after rounds of two-way transmissions between Kunqu and Jingju, it is impossible to retrieve the original modes of presentation now. Thus, it is possible that *Gongsun Zidu* is a case of returning to Kunqu the martial performative tradition originally borrowed from it and incorporated

¹⁴³ Wang An-Ch'i [王安祈], "Kunju biao yan chuan cheng zhong Jingju yinzi de shen ru" [昆剧表演传承中京剧因子的渗入, The influence of Peking Opera on Kunqu in the twentieth century], *Xiju yanjiu* [戏剧研究, Journal of Theater Studies] 10 (2012): 109-138.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 115.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁴⁶ Shi Yukun [石玉昆], "Huhuan renxing huigui, chongzhen wuxi xiongfeng—Kunju *Gongsun Zidu* daoyan suixiang" [呼唤人性回归, 重振武戏雄风—昆剧《公孙子都》导演随想, Calling for the return of human nature, reinvigorating the masculinity of martial plays—the director's random thoughts on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], in *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010): 35.

into other Xiqu forms. What is more, within the contemporary Kunqu context, this re-inherited, older tradition, may take on the look of innovation. This observation about *Gongsun Zidu* may also be even more appropriate as the introduction to the following analysis of *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*.

3.2.3 Zhang Xie the Top Graduate

Following the vein of thought in which the 1956 production of *Fifteen Strings of Coins* was regarded as the “one play that saved a theatre form,” *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* has popularly been referred to as the “one play that saved a company.” The company it saved was Yongkun (永昆), (永嘉昆剧团, *Yongjia Kunju tuan*, Yongjia Kunju Troupe). Its predecessor, *Yongjia Kunju chuanxi suo* (永嘉昆剧传习所, Yongjia Kunju Transmission Institute), was “the half” among the so-called “six and half” professional Kunqu companies between late 1970s and early 1990s. As the only county-level company based in Yongjia County, Wenzhou City, Zhejiang province, Yongkun had relatively limited resources in term of facility and staff. The creation of *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* (张协状元, *Zhang Xie zhuangyuan*) was initiated in 1999 with the company’s invitation to playwright Zhang Lie (张烈). The production was previewed in 2000, and further revised in 2001 and again in 2003, after which it was granted the Chinese Xiqu Academy Award.

Zhang Lie’s work was based on the Nanxi (南戏, Southern Play) play of the same name, which dates back to the Southern Song dynasty. The title character Zhang Xie is one of the earliest prototypes of the ungrateful lover. On his way to the capital for the imperial examination, Zhang Xie is robbed and beaten by bandits. He wants to find shelter at a dilapidated temple, but it is the abode of the poverty-stricken female character

Pinn ü (贫女, “Poor Girl”). In order to legitimate his claim to shelter and food, and at the strong encouragement of the villagers, Zhang Xie marries Pinn ü. Soon, Zheng Xie becomes the top graduate in the imperial examination. During his parade of honor through streets, he is offered the silk whip by Prime Minister Wang Deyong (王德用), indicating that Wang wants him to marry his daughter, Shenghua (胜花, “Prettier than flower”). Three times Zheng Xie is offered the whip, but three times he returns it. Each rejection is for a different reason, but none of them could be publicly revealed. Zhang Xie first refuses almost out of instinct, because he is already married. He turns the offer down for the second time because he is suspicious of the intention behind such an avid offer. Finally, Zhang Xie decides that he will benefit most by being seen as a young scholar who upholds his integrity in the face of the Prime Minister’s favor or anger, so he refuses for the third time. Shenghua, having herself been rejected three times, then dies of humiliation. Meanwhile, Pinn ü comes to the capital looking for her husband. Zhang Xie shuts her outside the gate, refuses to recognize her as his wife, and sends her back to the dilapidated temple without giving her a meal or any money. She has to support herself on the journey by singing about her sad experience with this ungrateful husband. On the way to his assigned post, Zhang Xie goes to the temple to kill Pinn ü, who falls unconscious after he seriously wounds her. Having become Zhang Xie’s mortal enemy, Prime Minister Wang asks to be assigned to the office as his superior. He passes by the same temple, saves Pinn ü, and adopts her as his daughter. When Zhang Xie visits Wang to pay respects, Wang gives him a difficult time before leaving him to Pinn ü. Shaking in anger at Zhang Xie’s brazen defense of what he did, she still cannot wield the sword he wounded her with at him. Instead, she tries to kill herself, but is stopped by everyone else. As the final

solution, she is married to Zhang Xie again, this time as the Prime Minister’s daughter.

This plot summary offers little to represent the inheritance and innovation involved in the Kunqu production of *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* that began with the work of playwright Zhang Lie, and was realized by director Xie Ping’an (谢平安) and the performers. The analysis of the inheritance and innovation in the play once again begins with the role categories; they are the first thing a reader sees in the script, or an audience member discovers at a performance. In the play there are a total of fourteen characters, played by six performers, and involving five role categories—*sheng* (生, male characters), *dan* (旦, female characters), *jing* (净, lit., “clean,” also known as “painted face,” larger-than-life male characters), *mo* (末, lit., “minor,” older male characters), and *chou* (丑, lit., “ugly,” often comic, male characters). As the following Figure 8 illustrates, except for the *sheng* actor who played Zhang Xie, each of the other five performers played more than one character.

Figure 8. Role Categories and Characters in *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*

Role category	character
<i>sheng</i>	Zhang Xie
<i>dan</i>	Pinn ü; Shenghua
<i>chou</i> #1	Prime Minister Wang; Villager Xiao’er (the son); Bandit A
<i>mo</i>	Villager Old Uncle (the father); Servant; Eunuch; Bandit B
<i>jing</i>	Temple Judge; trumpet player
<i>chou</i> #2	Temple Imp; trumpet player

Multiple role-playing is often found in performing groups with a small number of actors, and as mentioned above, Yongkun had limited human resources. But there are additional layers in the playwright Zhang Lie's treatment of multiple role-playing in *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*. The actors took on more functions than they would normally within their own original role categories. For instance, at the very beginning of the opening scene, the stage direction says, "*Jing* dressed up as Temple Judge and *chou* as Temple Imp enter."

Jing: Usually, it is the *fumo* (副末, secondary *mo*) who opens the scene, but this time it is done by *jing* and *chou*. Do not take him as Temple Imp and me as Temple Judge. We are playing the role of starting the show.

Chou: Now he is not yet the Temple Judge, neither am I the Temple Imp, until the play starts—stop the talk, and let us start singing!

They then sing the arias that introduce the playwright's intention—to win the drama contest with this piece of work—and the theme of the play—Zhang Xie becoming the top graduate. Then the lights go out. When the lights come back on, they have already become the Temple Judge and the Temple Imp.

The actors also play more "parts" than just the characters in the production. For instance, to save Zhang Xie from being frozen to death in the dilapidated temple, the same *jing* actor, playing the Temple Judge, says, "You and I will be gate!" and "The Imp has to follow the Judge's order," and they then become the gate. Having done so once, they then do it again: the Temple Judge and the Temple Imp act as both the front gate and the back gate of Zhang Xie's residence in the capital city. And the actors can portray more

than just gates. When they find that there is no table in the temple to place the meat and the wine, Old Uncle says to his son Xiao'er, "You are the table." Immediately, there appears a "table" with Xiao'er kneeling on the floor with a flat back, supporting himself with his arms. And when Old Uncle is slicing the meat, this "table" stretches out a hand to steal the slices for the Temple Judge, the Temple Imp and himself. Soon after in the next scene, for which they change costumes on stage, their identities change too. Xiao'er is now the Prime Minister Wang Deyong, and Xiao'er's father, Old Uncle in the previous scene, becomes Prime Minister Wang's servant. It is the Prime Minister's turn to order his servant to change into a chair for him to sit on.

The concept *jianli* (间离, "alienation") comes up frequently in Xiqu scholar's critiques of *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* published in Chinese.¹⁴⁷ However, rather than delving into the connection between the Chinese term and the German dramatist Brecht's concept of *Verfremdungseffekt* ("alienation effect" or "estrangement effect"), these scholars focus on the Xiqu concept *xuni* (虚拟, lit., "invented" or "fictitious") as the key element in the realization of alienation, which they identify as hindering "the audience from simply identifying themselves with the characters in the play."¹⁴⁸ As Elizabeth Wichmann observes, the term *xuni* "defines certain Xiqu techniques primarily in terms of their distance from realism."¹⁴⁹ This is exemplified in the performers' taking up functions outside their role categories, changing character identities, and transforming into human stage props, consciously and freely.

¹⁴⁷ See for example, Cai Xinxin [蔡欣欣], "Lan yuan xin pa gu yun yang: guan yongjia Kunju *Zhang Xie zhuangyuan*" [兰苑新葩古韵扬: 观永嘉昆剧《张协状元》], *New flower in orchid garden with ancient charm: watching Yongjia Kunju Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*, *Xiwen* [戏文, Theatre literature] 3 (2001): 21.

¹⁴⁸ John Willett, ed. and trans., *Brecht on Theatre* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 91.

¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth Wichmann, "Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Beijing Opera Performance," *The Drama Review* 34, no. 1 (spring, 1990): 146.165.

Another example of such “invented” moments is found in the final scene, when Zhang Xie is visiting Prime Minister Wang to pay respect. After having made him stand long enough, Wang takes Zhang Xie in and offers him an “invented seat” (虚坐, *xu zuo*). In answer to Zhang Xie’s question, “What is *xu zuo*?” the stage direction says, “Wang Deyong takes off his artificial beard, walks out of character, and becomes the *chou* actor.” He pulls Zhang Xie to the edge of the stage, and addresses the audience directly: “Ladies and gentlemen, see, he doesn’t even know what an ‘invented seat’ is.” Turning back to Zhang Xie, he says, “*Xu zuo* means that you look like you are sitting in the eyes of the audience, but actually there is no chair under your buttocks. It is more or less crouching—fake sitting!” After that, the stage direction goes on, “[Wang]... resumes his former position, and goes back into character.” Here, not only the seat but also the characters are clearly invented. Through his stage direction for the actor to “walk out of and go back into” character when explaining the fake sitting, Zhang Lie is applying the *xuni* playwriting techniques from the literary tradition of Kunqu, the time-honored, meta-theatric-like tradition that goes back to the Tang dynasty or earlier.

Along with *xuni*, *xieyi* (写意, “writing the meaning”) is a significant concept in Kunqu and Xiqu in general. Opposite to *xieshi* (写实, “writing realistically”), *xieyi* also emphasizes an expressive “distance from realism.” In the production of *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*, the stage is not equipped with even the most basic furniture set of “one table and two chairs” traditionally found in most Xiqu productions—they are replaced with stage props either in human flesh or in fully imaginative invention. And the changes in time and space are often presented through the Temple Judge and the Temple Imp’s exits and entries, as well as the brief passages of dialogue between them.

Finally, the guiding principle of “Be true to the original work and return to the tradition” in playwriting and performance carries on the entertainment tradition of Chinese theatre.¹⁵⁰ The entertainment not only comes from the witty remarks between the Temple Judge and the Temple Imp and the “invented,” “out-of-character” moments, but also lies in the ending of the play. As Wang An-Ch’i points out, the final remarriage is not as much an example of the traditional “happy ending” (大团圆, *datuanyuan*) as it is a solution arrived at by way of having no choice.¹⁵¹ It is entertaining not because the characters can live happily ever after, but because it seems to prove the Chinese proverb, “Life is like a play” (人生如戏, *renshengruxi*), which can be roughly equated to Shakespeare’s line, “All the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” Therefore, Wang An-Ch’i proposes that the play’s theme is “Casually look at the world with a laugh,” just as the ending aria suggests,

好姻缘，恶姻缘，

Good marriage, bad marriage,

Hao yinyuan, e yinyuan,

姻缘进了面糊盆。

All goes into the flour paste basin.

Yinyuan jin le mianhupen.

善恶是非恩怨事，

Kind or evil, right or wrong, love or hate,

Shane shifei enyuan shi,

¹⁵⁰ Xu Dajun [徐大军], “Tan Kunju Zhang Xie zhuangyuan de xi le jingshen” [谈昆剧《张协状元》的戏乐精神, On the theatrical entertainment spirit of Kunju Zhang Xie the Top Graduate], *Xiwen* [戏文, Theatre literature] 1 (2002): 18-9.

¹⁵¹ Wang An-Ch’i [王安祈], “Xilihutu xiao kan renjian—xie zai Zhang Xie zhuangyuan lai tai yanchu zhiqian” [稀里糊涂笑看人间—写在《张协状元》来台演出之前, Casually look at the world with a laugh—notes before the tour performance of Zhang Xie the Top Graduate in Taiwan], *Xiwen* [戏文, Theatre literature] 3 (2001): 18.

稀里糊涂莫认真。

Do not take it too seriously if in confusion.

Xilihutu mo renzhen.

眼半闭，眼半睁，

Eyes half shut, eyes half open,

Yan ban bi, yan ban zheng,

笑看人间出出戏，

Watch smilingly the world's play, scene by

Xiao kan renjian chu chu xi,

scene.

莫再作媒人！

Never again be the go-between!

Mo zai zuo meiren.

3.3 Conclusion

Three post-2001 Kunqu productions have been analyzed in this chapter, namely, *Ban Zhao* by Shangkun, *Gongsun Zidu* by Zhekun, and *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* by Yongkun. Their creative processes all began with the performers issuing invitations to playwrights, either individually or as a group. Accordingly, the playwrights' literary creation aimed at fully exploring the performers' expressivity, based on their strengths and specialties in role categories.

Indeed, role category is a fundamental concern in these creative processes. It connects the literary work of the playwrights with the performative creation of the actors. It is pivotal in the actors' interpretation of the characters created by the playwright. It serves as the frame of reference for the performer's decisions regarding which acting skills and techniques from among the "four skills and five canons" to employ, and which to leave unutilized. Ultimately, performers in all three productions were recognized for their exploratory efforts in terms of role category: Zhang Jingxian for her breakthrough use of carefully selected aspects from almost all of the *dan* subcategories; Lin Weilin for

elevating the *wusheng* subcategory to the leading character at the center of a stage which was traditionally dominated by *xiaosheng*; and Yongkun's actors in *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* for playing “parts” beyond their role categories, characters, and roles.

In the focal analysis of *Ban Zhao*, Zhang Jingxian's working notes offered ample examples of inheriting skills and techniques from various *dan* role subcategories and applying them to portray the character of Ban Zhao over the course of her long lifetime. After the creation of the character, it was possible to identify the traits and even trademarks coming from specific subcategories, but it was impossible to categorize the character within the existing role category system. In creating this character, Zhang Jingxian seems to have carried on the exploratory practice initiated by Yu Zhenfei (俞振飞), founder and headmaster of the Shanghai Xiqu School, and master teacher to students in the first two Kunqu training programs, popularly known as *Kun da ban* (昆大班) (1954-1961), and *Kun er ban* (昆二班) (1959-1966). Zhang graduated from *Kun er ban*. As her senior *Kun da ban* colleague Yue Meiti recalled,

My teacher, Master Yu said: “Only act the character (就是要演人物, *jiushi yao yan renwu*). Do not ‘act’ the role category (不要演行当, *buyao yan hangdang*). It is the character that the audience remembers you for, not the role category. He said it as early as when I was still a student [at Shanghai Xiqu School], and he said it many times.¹⁵²

Yu's emphasis on the creation of characters seems a departure from the traditional stress on role categories embodied in the quotations from Zhou Chuanying (周传瑛).

¹⁵² Yue Meiti (岳美缙), interview, Shanghai, July 15, 2013.

Proposed over half a century ago, it might not be regarded as freshly innovative, yet it may still take more time to see if it will become part of the Kunqu performative tradition. However, judged from the creation of characters in *Sima Xiangru*, *Song of the Lute* and *Ban Zhao* by Yue Meiti, her classmate and colleague Liang Guyin (梁谷音), Zhang Jingxian, and Lin Weilin, the exploration Yu advocated has been followed and practiced by his students and an even younger generation of Kunqu performers.

Then, will these performers' pursuit of creating custom-made characters make them the creative authority in contemporary Kunqu productions? Not likely, in my opinion. A guiding principle for each production will more probably be jointly worked out by the invited playwright and the individual performing artists or groups, such as the goal of "Returning to the tradition" for *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*. But that principle might not identify with the theme of the script. Playwrights will therefore also go on with their own pursuits in literary creation. The playwright of *Ban Zhao*, Luo Huaizhen (罗怀臻), went even further. Although a professional playwright, Luo was neither specialized in Kunqu nor had previous training in writing *chuanqi* plays. As the quoted passages illustrate, Luo's playwriting works served as vehicles for his own purposes, such as his "participation" in the "discussion of human nature in Chinese cultural circles" and "answer" to the "question of Chinese intellectuals' professional ethics and moral beliefs in the face of the new micro-environment of market economy." Luo's position as the Vice President of the Chinese Theatre Association (中国戏剧家协会, *Zhongguo xijujia xiehui*) since 2010 seems to have given him even more authority in the creative process for productions based on his plays. Nonetheless, and despite the possible difference in positions, playwrights for the post-2001 Kunqu productions have tried to enhance

“dramatic quality” by making use of writing techniques such as reversal, suspense, comparison and contrast. Through well-knit, fast-paced plots, the characters are highlighted in moments that are often what Wang An-Ch’i referred to as the “dramatic climax,” and as the “emotional climax.” Definitely, these climatic moments are also the highlights in the performers’ creation of characters by means of their signature acting skills and techniques.

At the end of her investigation of Xiqu productions since the starting of Xiqu Reform in the 1940s, Wang An-Ch’i asked about the possibility of directors coming up as the new production center. Based on the research in this chapter, a new production center as such has not emerged. Having studied the productions of three newly written historical plays post 2001, I want to propose that, since the production emphasis transited from playwriting to performance, contemporary Kunqu productions have been created in what Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak summarizes as “the dynamics of committee”¹⁵³: with two creation centers, one being playwright, and the other, performers, supported by the remainder of the creative team including director, musicians and designers. Such a transition seems to have followed the course of Xiqu development and reflects the “common feature of the history and transmission of theatre.”¹⁵⁴ And such a committee dynamic speaks to the mechanism of modern Xiqu production that is popularly known as “one vegetable” (一棵菜, *yi ke cai*). In this creative mechanism, every component of the production team is an organically significant, indispensable, unique part of the whole “vegetable,” including the characters created, and the full staged play.

¹⁵³ Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak, ““Reform” at the Shanghai Jingju Company and Its Impact on Creative Authority and Repertory,” *TDR: The Drama Review*, 44, no. 4 (winter, 2000): 103, 107.

¹⁵⁴ Wang An-Ch’i [王安祈], “Kunju biao yan chuan cheng zhong Jingju yinzi de shen ru” [昆剧表演传承中京剧因子的渗入, The influence of Peking Opera on Kunqu in the twentieth century], *Xiju yanjiu* [戏剧研究, *Journal of Theater Studies*] 10 (2012): 136.

CHAPTER 4: FULFILLING SOCIAL ENLIGHTENMENT

Social enlightenment has long been a significant aspect of Kunqu. It is a conscious pursuit of Kunqu playwrights and performers, a requirement of the ruling class, and a key element appreciated by the audience. The focus of social enlightenment changes over time. In contemporary China, this term refers to a range of social missions, from ethical and moral to socio-political. The purposes of this chapter are to: (1) identify the social enlightenment focus in each of three post-2001 Kunqu productions; (2) analyze how these focuses resemble and differ from the relevant productions in the past; and (3) discuss how social enlightenment is achieved through inheritance and innovation in these productions. The three productions selected are *The Gold Seal* (金印记, *Jinyin ji*), *The Jingyang Bell* (景阳钟, *Jingyang zhong*), and *Boundless Love* (爱无疆, *Ai wujiang*).

4.1 Introduction

The function of social enlightenment in Xiqu as a whole is probably best embodied in the expression *gaotai jiaohua* (高台教化, “high stage enlightenment”). The expression, made up of four Chinese written-characters, is in two parts: *gaotai* (高台, lit., “high platform”) refers to the space of performance, hence a metonymy of theatre; and *jiaohua* (教化, lit., “education [and] conversion”) refers to the publicizing and spreading of morals, ethics, and ideas. Combined together, *gaotai jiaohua* is to educate and influence the audience in ideology, morality, and mentality through the art of theatre.^{155,156}

¹⁵⁵ Su Zhong [苏中], “De xi guilai—chong jie ‘gaotaijiaohua’” [德兮归来—重解“高台教化”, Morality, come back!—reinterpreting “high stage enlightenment”], *Qingming* [清明] 04 (2002): 186-7.

¹⁵⁶ Although the phrase “social enlightenment” does not fully convey the meaning of *jiaohua* in Chinese, to avoid the religious implication in “persuasion and conversion” and to facilitate the flow of narrative, I will adopt it as the English expression of *jiaohua* in this dissertation until a better choice comes up in the future.

Social enlightenment is consciously pursued by Xiqu playwrights. The socio-political function has long been a tradition in Chinese literature, specifically in classical poetry, and it is intrinsic in Xiqu, too, through the poetic element in the dramatic literature. Yet Xiqu has hardly been studied in comparison to other literary forms, as it was considered an “unorthodox school” (小道, *xiaodao*), or a “trifling skill” (末技, *moji*).¹⁵⁷ That belief was historically evident even among playwrights themselves. As Kong Shangren (孔尚任), one of the most prominent early Qing playwrights, says at the beginning of his “Little Introduction” (小引, *xiaoyin*) to *The Peach Blossom Fan*: “Although *chuanqi* is an unorthodox school ...” (传奇虽小道, *Chuanqi sui xiaodao*; 传奇, *chuanqi*, lit., “transmitting the marvelous,” is the literary form used for Kunqu plays). Certainly, what Kong really wanted to emphasize was not the concession beginning with “although” but the conclusion after a transition, “Isn’t it true?” (岂不信哉, *qi bu xin zai*) that “... to alert the world and change the customs, and to praise the sages’ doctrines and supplement the king’s enlightenment, it [*chuanqi*] is the most approximate and precise” (于以警世易俗, 赞圣道而辅王化, 最近且切, *yu yi jingshi yisu, zan shengdao er fu wanghua, zui jin qie qie*). Kong’s words exemplify the playwrights’ aspiration to justify their theatrical works through emphasizing the moral emphasis of their plays as well as their poetic beauty. The earliest and most explicit statement in this regard may be the opening poem in *The Lute* (琵琶记, *Pipa ji*) by Gao Ming (高明): “Indeed, if a play is not concerned with morality, however well written, it is of futility” (正是: 不关风化体, 纵好也徒然, *zhengshi: buguan fenghua ti, zong hao ye wangran*).

¹⁵⁷ Zhang Li’e [张丽娥], *Ming chuanqi jiaohua gongneng yanjiu* [明传奇教化功能研究, Research on the enlightenment function of the Ming *chuanqi*], Diss. (Shaanxi Normal University, 2016):1.

The Lute was written in the last years of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368). It centers on the journey of the young scholar Cai Bojie (蔡伯喈) in order to fulfill his duty as a son. Urged by his father to bring glory to the Cai family as the ultimate definition of filial piety, Bojie leaves his eighty-year-old parents and newly married wife, Zhao Wuniang (赵五娘), for the capital city to take the imperial examination. He excels as the top graduate, is appointed as a high-ranking official by the emperor, and is made son-in-law by Prime Minister Niu (牛). Bojie wants neither, but the emperor re-defines filial piety by setting service to the monarch as a person's highest measurement. Despite suffering great internal anguish for his actions, Bojie is forced to take office and marry the daughter of Prime Minister Niu, and stays in the capital for the following three years. Meanwhile, his hometown is struck by famine. Bojie's abandoned first wife, Wuniang, tries everything she can, even secretively eating chaff to save the rice for her parents-in-law, but Father and Mother Cai die one after the other. With the help of neighbors, Wuniang buries the couple, paints a portrait of them, and travels to the capital to search for her husband. She sings her story to the accompaniment of the titular lute. Luckily, she meets Mistress Niu, and, thanks to the latter's virtuous mind and tactful arrangement, not only are Bojie and Wuniang reunited but the three of them return together to Bojie's hometown to observe mourning for Bojie's parents. After three years, Prime Minister Niu arrives, announcing the emperor's decree that Bojie, his two wives, even his late parents are all commended for being the models of morality.

Thus, the son's duty is fulfilled and his mission to glorify the household accomplished, yet, to a modern observer, the happy ending has a "conspicuously ironic, tragic resonance: the family disaster leads to family glory, and Father Cai's initial dream

of fame comes true only in front of his grave.”¹⁵⁸ The “delayed glorification” seems to contradict a common-sense definition of filial piety. The character in the play suffers from this contradiction, too. Judging from Bojie’s anguish, it is against his own definition of filial piety: he has no desire to leave his aged parents at the beginning or be kept from returning home after his success at the examination. However, his definition is overwritten by others. First by his father, who claims that, ultimately, filial piety means to win honor for one’s parents by establishing oneself; therefore, Bojie leaves for the examination. And then by the emperor, who decrees that the final measure of filial piety is to serve the monarch, hence Bojie stays in the capital. Eventually, it is still by the emperor’s definition that Bojie is declared a filial model.

Therefore, it is no wonder that the founding emperor of the Ming Dynasty, Zhu Yuanzhang (朱元璋), is said to have been so deeply impressed by *The Lute* that he compared it to the “exquisite delicacies which rich families cannot lack” and summoned Gao to the capital city. However, Gao refused by pleading sickness and died shortly afterwards.¹⁵⁹ Any emperor would have welcomed the play with equal zest, for it is obedience that underlies filial piety—to father at home and to emperor at court. Zhu’s favoring of *The Lute* came from his urge to restore the dominance of the Han nationality after ending and dispelling the Yuan Mongols. Gao’s statement satisfies his need for the reestablishment of Confucian ethics and values, of which filial piety is the most basic.

What is more, social enlightenment is a focus of appreciation by the audience. Qing

¹⁵⁸ Xu Peng. *Lost sound: Singing, theater, and aesthetics in late Ming China, 1547-1644* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2010): 141.

¹⁵⁹ Xu Wei [徐渭], “Nan ci xu lu” [南词叙录, Records of Southern Play], *Zhongguo gudian Xiqu lunzhu jicheng* [中国古典戏曲论著集成, Collection of Chinese classical Xiqu treatises], vol.3, ed. *Zhongguo Xiqu Yanjiuyuan* [中国戏曲研究院, Chinese Academy of Xiqu Research] (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1959), 240.

drama critic Jiao Xun's (焦循) account of the audience's response to the play *Qingfeng Ting* (清风亭, "Pure wind pavilion") is an often quoted example in this respect. The play tells the story of an adopted son, Zhang Jibao (张继保). After gaining fame and power through reunion with his blood parents, Zhang not only refuses to recognize his adopted parents but banishes the heart-broken old couple after humiliating them, causing both of them to die of anger. As a heavenly condemnation, Zhang is struck to death by a bolt of lightning. Jiao Xun notes: "Everyone gnashes their teeth in anger at the beginning and are heartily delighted later on. When the cymbals and drums cease, they look at one another with serious faces; after their return, they praise and talk about the play for ten days without stopping."¹⁶⁰

Kunqu was a vehicle of social enlightenment as soon as it developed into a theatrical form. The play *Washing Silk* (浣纱记, *Huan sha ji*) is commonly regarded as a milestone marking this development in the mid-Ming Dynasty (1368–1644). Elements of loyalty, faithfulness and perseverance are indeed touched upon in *Washing Silk*. But more prominent from the perspective of social enlightenment may be the two plays that were written about the same time, *The Sword* (宝剑记, *Baojian ji*) and *Crying Phoenixes* (鸣凤记, *Ming feng ji*). The former was a historical play set in the Northern Song dynasty while the latter was a contemporary work about Ming society. Both plays focus on the struggles between loyal ministers and evil courtiers with the righteous prevailing in the end.

Once Kunqu took over dominance of the national theatre from Nanxi (南戏, lit., "Southern Play") and Zaju (杂剧, lit., "variety play") of the Yuan dynasty (1271–1368),

¹⁶⁰ Yu Weimin [俞为民], and Sun Rongrong [孙蓉蓉], "Lidai quhua huibian qingdai bian" [历代曲话汇编清代编, Anthology of Xiqu works from different dynasties, the Qing dynasty volume] vol. 3, (Anhui: Huangshan shushe, 2008), 476.

the tradition of social enlightenment was taken over, too. Therefore, plays that were created in earlier forms like *The Lute* were absorbed and incorporated in the Kunqu repertoire, and the social enlightenment focuses in those plays were transmitted and perpetuated in Kunqu. The earlier playwrights' conscious pursuit was also carried on by *chuanqi* playwrights, whose works serve as the literary foundation of Kunqu performance. Tang Xianzu, for example, is best known for his advocacy of spiritual freedom. As a matter of fact, Tang also laid equal emphasis on the social enlightenment function of theatre in advocating Confucian ethics.¹⁶¹

It is hard to put forward a complete list of the social enlightenment themes in Kunqu, which derive through inheritance from Nanxi and Zaju as well as inspiration from Ming socio-political practices. Nevertheless, it may still be safe to say that they stress merits and virtues that include but are not limited to loyalty (忠, *zhong*), filial piety (孝, *xiao*), benevolence (仁, *ren*), and integrity (义, *yi*). The themes evolved over different times. The most fundamental impetus for determining the focus has to be the dynastic change from the Ming to the Qing (1644–1911), when sentiments based on one's nationality and family background became the highlights. Among the themes were “national integrity” (民族气节, *minzu qijie*), “national enmity and family hatred” (国仇家恨, *guochoujiahen*) and “feelings for home and country” (家国情怀, *jiaguo qinghuai*). They found expression in Kunqu works, the most representative of which was the play *Tie guan tu* (铁冠图, lit., “Iron-crown paintings,” referring to paintings by the Iron-crown Taoist Priest). Created in the early years of the Qing Dynasty, the play presents a vast picture of

¹⁶¹ See Tang Xianzu's [汤显祖] “*Yihuang xian xi shen Qingyuanshi miao ji*” [宜黄县戏神清源师庙记, Record of the Temple of the theatre god Qingyuanshi of Yihuang county], (Ming) Tang Xianzu [汤显祖], *Tang Xianzu quanji* [汤显祖全集, Complete works of Tang Xianzu], ed. Xu Shuofang [徐朔方], (Beijing: Guji chubanshe, 1999), 1188-1189.

the changing world during the last days before the fall of the Ming dynasty. It tells about the life of different characters—from the last emperor Chongzhen (崇祯), who hung himself on a plum tree after the palace was taken, to Li Zicheng (李自成), leader of the peasant rebellion that ended Ming, to the lady in waiting seeking to revenge herself against the enemy for the deaths of the emperor and empress, to the would-be rulers of the Qing dynasty. The play ends with the emperor and all his loyal followers turning into immortals after death and ascending to heaven. It is believed to have influenced future works, including *Peach Blossom Fan* and *Palace of Eternal Life* with the theme of “writing the feelings of rise and fall through the romance of separation and reunion” (借离合之情 写兴亡之感, *Jie lihe zhi qing xie xingwang zhi gan*).¹⁶²

The 1956 production of *Fifteen Strings of Cash* (十五贯, *Shi wu guan*) was famous for having “saved the theatre form,” which had been in recession since the mid-Qing Dynasty. Its success could be attributed to both the transmitted performance tradition known as *chuanzibei* (传字辈, the “Transmission generation”)—in this case the generations of Kunqu performers—and to the innovative adaptation of the *chuanqi* style of playwriting.¹⁶³ However, its artistic success might not have contributed to the following revival of Kunqu as much as its socio-political success and resultant political favor. In April, 1956, Mao Zedong (毛泽东) and Zhou Enlai (周恩来), then the Chairman and Premier of China respectively, watched the performances twice along with other

¹⁶² Wang Kui [王馼], “‘Zhaohun’ ‘quguo’ liang guan qing—cong *Tieguan tu* dao *Jingyang zhong de* ‘tuotaihuangu’” [“招魂” “去国”两关情—从《铁冠图》到《景阳钟》的“脱胎换骨”, “Calling ghost” and “leaving homeland” are both connected with feelings—the fundamental change from *Tieguan tu* to *Jingyang Bell*], [影视与戏剧评论, Film, TV and drama review] 0 (2014): 184-5.

¹⁶³ Niu Biao Niu Biao 钮骠, et al. *Zhongguo de Kunqu yishu* [中国的昆曲艺术, The Chinese Kunqu art] (Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe, 1996), 227-32.

national leaders. Mao and Zhou praised the play as a model work for “anti-bureaucracy and anti-subjectivism as well as for seeking truth from fact (实事求是, *shishi qiushi*),” and called upon the whole nation to learn from it.¹⁶⁴ That instance is resonant with Zhu Yuanzhang as the supreme audience about 600 years previously. In this single adapted production alone, social enlightenment can be found as the conscious pursuit of Kunqu artists, as the requirement of the ruling class, and as a focus for audience appreciation.

I have selected three productions for this discussion of the role of inheritance and innovation in fulfilling Kunqu’s post-2001 social enlightenment function. *Gold Seal*, an adaptation of earlier *chuanqi* plays, serves as the primary example for case study. *Jingyang Bell*, adapted from *Tieguan tu*, is the secondary production to be analyzed, mainly in comparison to *Gold Seal*. *Boundless Love* is a modern Kunqu play based on a true story, set in present-day Beijing. It is the tertiary production for analysis.

4.2 Production Analysis

4.2.1 Gold Seal

GS was produced by Yongkun in June 2012 specifically for competition in the Fifth Kunju Arts Festival. The company endowed the production with the largest budget in its history, mobilized its resident artists, and invited playwrights, a director, and the leading male actor from outside. GS won the fourth place among all competing productions, as well as specific awards of excellence for the male and female lead actors and the flutist.

Hailed as an “aesthetic, inspirational” play,¹⁶⁵ GS tells of the story of Su Qin (苏

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Zhu Wenwu [朱闻武], “Weimei lizhi pian gandong Zhongguo Kunju jie—Yongkun *Jinyinji* ronghuo youxiu jumu jiang” [“唯美励志片”感动中国昆剧节--永昆《金印记》荣获优秀剧目奖, “Aesthetic

秦), a strategist of the Warring States period (475–221 BCE). Born to a farmer’s family, Su Qin studies for statesmanship. His parents and wife accept his choice, but his elder brother and sister-in-law give him a hard time whenever possible. To justify himself, he goes to the State of Qin to “sell” his ten-thousand-word essay to the king for fame and wealth. Blocked from seeing the king by the jealous Prime Minister Shang Yang (商鞅), Su becomes penniless after making ten revisions over three years, and has to beg his way home. His parents are disheartened; his brother and sister-in-law humiliate him relentlessly; and his wife does not leave her loom to speak to him. In despair, Su Qin dashes out amid wind and snow and decides to drown himself in the well. He is stopped by his Third Uncle, the only one who has been appreciative of his talent and supportive of his pursuit all along. Su Qin studies even harder and keeps himself awake at night by stabbing an awl into his thigh. He leaves for another attempt in a year, and this time succeeds. He leads an allied force comprised of armies from six States and defeats the most powerful Qin State, so he is appointed the Prime Minister-in-chief of the Six States, and receives the titular “gold seal.” Then, when Su Qin returns home, everyone kneels before him in awe, shame and guilt. But Su Qin thanks them all, for it is his sufferings along the way that made him what he is.

4.2.1.1 From Grudge to Gratitude: A Statesman’s Growth

Prior to Yongkun’s “inspirational production,” plays had been written on Su Qin since as early as the Song and Yuan Dynasties. Indeed, the story has provided popular subject matter for plays in many different Xiqu forms. As a character, Su Qin is a great

inspirational play” moves China Kunju Festival—Yongkun *Gold Seal* won the Excellent Production Award], *Wenzhou ribao* [温州日报, Wenzhou daily], 9 July 2012.

source of theatrical inspiration. He lived a dramatic life as a lobbying strategist,¹⁶⁶ and died a spectacular death.¹⁶⁷ His personal experiences have been perpetuated in Chinese history and language as common expressions.¹⁶⁸ However, rather than Su Qin's political and diplomatic achievements, what seemed most fascinating to the early playwrights were the worlds-apart treatments he received before and after his success.

That, too, is the concentration of the Ming *chuanqi* *Gold Seal* credited to Su Fuzhi (苏复之), the play on which Yongkun's production is based.¹⁶⁹ In this play, everyone in his family except his Third Uncle despises Su Qin and humiliates him, as described in Scene 16 when he comes home after his unsuccessful attempt: "parents don't recognize him [as son], sister-in-law doesn't cook [for him], and his wife doesn't leave her loom [to speak to him]." However, when he returns again as the Prime Minister-in-chief, they all react with awe and fright, and Su Qin ridicules and reprimands each of them heartily before the final reconciliation. Ming drama critic Lü Tiancheng (吕天成) exalts GS for "writing the fickleness of the world finely and fully" (写世态炎凉曲尽, *xie shitai yanliang qujin*), and ranks it as number seven of all dramatic works in his drama

¹⁶⁶ Su Qin first proposed plans for unification to the king of Qin but he failed. He then studied again and reformed his strategies. This time, he proposed that the Six States set up an alliance against the strongest state, Qin. He succeeded. The alliance was set up with him as the Chief Administrator, the "PM-in-chief" in plays, and the Qin was deterred and contained for some 15 years.

¹⁶⁷ Before dying by assassination ordered by his jealous rivals at court, Su Qin told the king of Qi to tear his body asunder by five carts (车裂, *cheliè*) in public as punishment for his crime of treason and post a high reward for those trying to kill him. As expected, the would-be assassins "turned themselves in" by claiming the reward, and Su Qin avenged himself posthumously.

¹⁶⁸ His sleep-proof method of "thigh-stabbing" was incorporated as half of the Chinese four-written-character idiom (成语, *chengyu*) *xuanliangcigu* (悬梁刺股, lit., hanging [one's hair] to house beam and stabbing in one's thigh) for industrious study. And his question to his elder brother's wife as to the reason for the drastic change in her attitude was crystalized into *qianjuhougong* (前倨后恭, lit., earlier arrogant [but] later humble).

¹⁶⁹ In its production program, Yongkun attributes the play to Su Fuzhi, but disputes on its authorship remain as there are traceable influences from other Su Qin plays throughout its evolution. More discussion in that regards will be given in the following section. Discussions of the *chuanqi* version of *Gold Seal* are based on the 1988 edition proofread and edited by Sun Chongtao [孙崇涛]. *Jinyinji* [金印记, *Gold Seal*], ed. Sun Chongtao [孙崇涛] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988).

catalogue *Qupin* (曲品).¹⁷⁰

The theme in the first draft of Yongkun's script was written in the same vein of thought as the Ming *chuanqi* play and its variants. However, Xu Chunlan (徐春兰), director of the production, found this inconsistent with the current social enlightenment framework, because "A satirical exposure of hideous human nature does not carry positive meanings or high aesthetic values in the present."¹⁷¹ In addition, Su Qin was not projected as a role of model in that play. As inspiring as his personal struggles might seem, he was driven by aspirations for power and fame and goaded by shame and indignation. Should the Prime Minister-in-chief settle scores for his wounded ego with his family? That really would not speak much for his character.¹⁷² To Xu, "Su Qin as a history-changing figure should garner favorable evaluations. Can he be the Prime Minister for Six States with a vengeful mindset? A person who goes through mental tests should be forgiving, and should have learned to be grateful."¹⁷³

Thus, as had Su Qin's ten-thousand-word essay, the playscript also went through about ten revisions by two playwrights.¹⁷⁴ Eventually, the character of Su Qin rises above his personal grudge and turns to gratitude for the hardships that have helped him grow. The play developed from one about "sweet revenge" to one telling of the growth of a young scholar into a mature statesman, inspired by his longing for peace in the world. What shines about Su Qin at the end of the play is "not the gold of the Prime Minister's

¹⁷⁰ (Ming) Lü Tiancheng [(明) 吕天成], *Qupin* [曲品, Ranking of plays], (Beijing: Lantian chubanshe, 1999), 25.

¹⁷¹ Wang Yan [王焱], interview, Beijing, October 19, 2013.

¹⁷² Wang Yan, interview.

¹⁷³ Zhu Wenwu [朱闻武], "Cong baofu dao ganen—kunju *Jinyinji* de renxing zhi shan" [从报复到感恩---昆剧《金印记》的人性之善, From revenge to gratitude—kindness of humanity in Kunju *Gold Seal*], *Wenzhou ribao* [温州日报, Wenzhou daily], 9 April 2012.

¹⁷⁴ Wang Yan, interview.

seal, but the glory of humanity.”¹⁷⁵ Gratitude and love is the theme of Yongkun’s GS.

4.2.1.2 Inheritance and Innovation in the Adaptation

Yongkun refers to their 2012 production as an adaptation of Su Fuzhi’s play. If an adaptation is usually expected to include both connections to the original work and departures from it, that expectation is even higher for Yongkun’s *Gold Seal*. The Ming *chuanqi* is already an incarnation of earlier literary and performing traditions in dramatic representations of Su Qin, and on top of that, Yongkun’s production team chose a new theme for social enlightenment, or to be more exact, a focus of social enlightenment was newly created for the play. Inheritance of traditions and innovative approaches are indispensable for such an adaptation. In the following discussion, I will first analyze the reasons behind the lasting popularity of the theme of changeable human nature in GS, then identify the application of literary and performing elements that give GS its theatrical appeal, and finally examine how the new theme is presented in Yongkun’s production, through a comparative study with older versions of the Kunqu play.

As mentioned earlier, for director Xu Chunlan, the theme of GS in older versions presented a challenge in terms of creating a positive social enlightenment message appropriate for the present. How could a negative theme have sustained such long lasting popularity? Explanations may be found in the playwrights and the audiences. On the one hand, the theme of the triumphant homecoming after finally achieving success is an unending obsession with the Song and Yuan dynasties’ lower-class literati playwrights, for projected in it are their own dreams of fulfillment and recognition; Sima Qian’s (司马迁) highly visualized description of the Su Qin tale captured their attention and focused it on

¹⁷⁵ Wang Yan [王焱], *Jinyinji qianyan* [《金印记》前言, *Gold Seal* foreword], dated May 31, 2012. Unpublished work, personal collection.

Su Qin.¹⁷⁶ On the other hand, by looking at the audience, Wang Limei (王丽梅) observes that “the story is the favorite of commoner audiences, specifically of the weak at the bottom of society, who feel the coldness and warmth of the world more keenly, and hence find more resonance in their hearts [with Su Qin’s trials and ultimate success].”¹⁷⁷

By the end of the Ming Dynasty, *GS* was one of the most popular Kunqu plays on stage, along with *The Lute* and *The Jade Hairpin*.¹⁷⁸ That was the outcome of continued efforts by playwrights and performers and their interactions with audiences. In three separate pieces of research on *GS* evolution, Su Fuzhi’s single authorship is questioned, because the play had gone through so many changes and developed so many variations.¹⁷⁹ Instead of the single author Su Fuzhi, there were possibly many authors who revised or rewrote the play in order to satisfy the demands for *GS* as a script for performance and as a text for reading; this was common with a large number of Ming *chuanqi* plays. This research also helps to explain the striking domestic emphasis in different versions of *GS*, by tracing the dominant influence from Nanxi (南戏, lit., Southern Plays), as against the socio-political stress that is typical in the Northern style

¹⁷⁶ Ban Youshu [班友书], “*Su Qin* xiwen yanbian yi zhi tan” [《苏秦》戏文演变一知谈, On evolution of the script for *Su Qin*], *Zhonghua Xiqu* [中华戏曲, Chinese Xiqu] 2 (1996): 253.

¹⁷⁷ Wang Limei [王丽梅], “Yi zhe dai quan hua ya wei su: lun *Jinyinji* taiben de chuancheng” [以折带全 化雅为俗:论《金印记》台本的传承, With the act as the full play, transform the elegant to popular: on the inheritance of the script for *Gold seal*], *Dongnan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexueban)* [东南大学学报(哲学社会科学版)] 6 (2010): 112.

¹⁷⁸ Jiang Xingyu [蒋星煜], *Zhongguo Xiqu shi gouchen* [中国戏曲史钩沉, An investigation of the Chinese Xiqu history] (Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2010), 608.

¹⁷⁹ Sun Chongtao (1984) holds an attitude that “there leaves a question open” (存疑, *cunyi*), Yu Weimin [俞为民] skips the author and addresses the play by its editor, and Ban Youshu [班友书] claims that “there is no definitive author” (“是没有绝对作者的,” *shi meiyou juehui zuozhe de*) for such plays. Sun Chongtao [孙崇涛], “*Jinyinji* de yanhua” [《金印记》的演化, Evolution of *Gold Seal*], *Wenxue yichan* [文学遗产, literature heritage], 3 (1984): 56; Yu Weimin [俞为民], “Nanxi *Jinyinji* de banben ji qi liubian” [南戏《金印记》的版本及其流变, Versions and evolution of Nanxi *Gold Seal*], *Wenxian* [文献, Documents], 4 (1993): 13; and Ban Youshu [班友书], “*Su Qin* xiwen yanbian yi zhi tan” [《苏秦》戏文演变一知谈, On evolution of the script for *Su Qin*], *Zhonghua Xiqu* [中华戏曲, Chinese Xiqu] 2 (1996): 257.

Zaju (杂剧, lit., Variety Play).¹⁸⁰ And more than the to-be-fulfilled dreams, the lower-class playwrights also project in GS their personal experiences with the hardships caused by Ming society's preference for money-making commerce over poverty-stricken scholarship.¹⁸¹ Through the application of playwriting skills, such projections increase the credibility of the action, the intensity of the conflict, and the laughability of the situation, which are further enhanced by performers in actual performance on stage. Yes, laughability is a signature Nanxi influence in the Yongkun 2003 adaptation of *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* (张协状元, *Zhang Xie zhuangyuan*), discussed in chapter 3. Laughability is also found in the theatrical gravity of the *chuanqi* play GS, to the extent that one of its variants is known by the expression “making one laugh to death” (笑死人, *xiao siren*).¹⁸²

In addition to Su Qin's extraordinary experiences and the theme, the play owes its theatrical attraction to the literary and performing elements of playwriting and acting. The *chuanqi* GS and its precedents are based on the historical account of Su Qin's path in life, and follow a storyline that can be summed up as “study, failure, return, second study, success, second return.” The forty-two scenes in the *chuanqi* are organized through a network, which is both spatially and temporally parallel, to build up the sense of comparison and contrast. Certainly, the most significant contrast is the one between Su Qin's two homecomings in the first and second halves of the play, which serves to present

¹⁸⁰ Sun Chongtao [孙崇涛], “*Jinyinji de yanhua*” [《金印记》的演化, Evolution of *Gold Seal*], *Wenxue yichan* [文学遗产, literature heritage], 3 (1984): 45-56; Ban Youshu, 253.

¹⁸¹ Lou Baitong [娄佰彤], “Ming Qing fengci xiju de jingpin: yi *Jinyinji* he *Huangjinyin* wei li” [明清讽刺喜剧的精品: 以《金印记》和《黄金印》为例, Masterpiece of satirical comedies in the Ming and Qing—take *Gold Seal* and *Yellow Gold Seal* for example], *Xiju wenxue* [戏剧文学, theatre literature] 5 (2015): 111.

¹⁸² The expression “*Xiao siren de Huangjin yin*” (笑死人的《黄金印》) roughly translates as “*Huangjin yin* (lit., yellow gold seal) that makes you laugh your head off.” It refers to the Qing Dynasty play that is developed from GS and performed in regional Xiqu forms. Lou Baitong, 110.

the theme of “fickleness of the world.” Also, there is the comparison between his brother’s happy life of wealth and Su Qin’s own daily financial difficulties. A scene or a groups of scenes that focuses on Su Qin is followed with a scene depicting his brother enjoying himself (Scenes 3 and 27), having a good time with his wife (Scene 15), or celebrating the parents’ birthday at the same time but in different places (Scene 35). In a similar way, scenes respectively featuring Su Qin and his wife are put next to each other to construct a correspondence between the couple. What is more, just as her husband tried to drown himself in the first half of the play, in the second half, Su Qin’s wife also throws herself into the water. Mother Su and Sister-in-law take away the silk she had planned to trade for food, her final means of provision. She is saved by Third Uncle, too.¹⁸³ Finally, GS strikes a dynamic “yin-and-yang” balance in arrangement of scenes throughout the play, as is seen in other representative *chuanqi* works. In this way, an unhappy scene is followed by one with a lighter mood (Scene 14 “Failing in exam and leaving State Qin” and Scene 15 “Brother enjoys summertime”), or the other way round (Scene 7 “Su Qin has his fortune told” and Scene 8 “Forcing wife to sell hairpin”); a domestic scene indoors moves to an outdoor travel scene (Scene 10 “Leaving family for exam” and Scene 11 “Travel west with zither and sword”); and civil scenes lead to martial scenes (Scene 30 “Against State Qin with strategies” and Scene 31 “Shang Yang gathers troops”) or vice versa (Scenes 32 “Battle at Hangu Pass” and Scene 33 “State Qin is defeated”). Scenes thus arranged not only fit in the path to Su Qin’s final success, but also provide a variety in dramatic rhythm to keep readers and audience interested.

The theatrical interest is also maintained through the artistic application of language in GS. The play is interspersed with a number of recurring phrases found in the

¹⁸³ So she said. To be exact, it was Third Uncle’s maid who saved her, but he offers her shelter afterwards.

lines of the characters. Repetition may risk causing boredom, but it also reinforces an impression. Those reappearing phrases stand as reminders for the theme of the fickleness of human nature and they help to establish the conflict between people of different values and ideals. Included in such “catch lines” are:

“A stomach full of books doesn’t cure hunger”

(满腹文章不疗饥, *man fu wenzhang bu liaoji*),

“A scholar’s cap often delays him”

(儒冠多误身, *ruguan duo wushen*),

“What a family it is to have such parents”

(人家有这样的父母, *renjia you zheyang de fumu*),

“After ten years’ hard study noticed by none, his fame fills the land once honors are won”

(十年窗下无人问, 一举成名天下知, *shinian hanchuang wuren wen, yijuchengming tianxia zhi*),

and “Su Qin is just/still the same Su Qin”

(苏秦只/还是旧苏秦, *Su Qin zhi/haishi jiu Su Qin*).¹⁸⁴

Su Qin’s mother and brother use the first phrase to mock the learned but financially troubled hero before he has succeeded, his wife sighs helplessly about her husband being misled by his scholar’s cap with the second one, and a comment from the viewpoint of Third Uncle as an onlooker is expressed through the third. However, it is not simple repetition when they are uttered again; more often than not, they are reused with variations. For example, Su Qin also uses the first two expressions, but he frames them as

¹⁸⁴ This line appears twice in the play with a slight difference. In Scene 18, it is “Su Qin is just the same Su Qin” and “Su Qin is still the same Su Qin” in Scene 40.

questions or in the negative, declaring his disagreement with them. In a way, these phrases are markers that indicate the stance of a person and the camp he or she belongs to. The fourth phrase is always on Su Qin’s lips to assert his ambition and determination, and is echoed by Third Uncle out of confidence in him. The last line, though, is exclusively Su Qin’s own language tag. In general, these lines contribute to characterization by reinforcing a character’s personality and thought.

In previous GS Kunqu plays, characters are created by following the convention of *jiaose zhi* (脚色制, role category system), with features that indicate the transformation from Nanxi to *chuanqi* playscripts.¹⁸⁵ The following Figure 9 lists the characters in Su Qin’s family.

Figure 9. Role Category of Characters in Su Qin’s Family

Character	Su Qin	Wife	Father	Mother	Brother	Sister-in-law	Third Uncle	Tang Er
Role category	<i>sheng</i> (生)	<i>dan</i> (旦)	<i>wai</i> (外, lit., “extra”)	<i>jing</i> (净, lit., “clean”)	<i>xiaosheng</i> (小生)	<i>tie</i> (贴, lit., “another”)	<i>mo</i> (末)	<i>chou</i> (丑, lit., “ugly”)
	male	female	“extra”	“clean”	younger	“another”	older male	“ugly”
	lead	lead	secondary	painted face	male	secondary		often
	character	character	male		character	female		comic

What calls for special attention in this play is the character of Mother Su, which is written for the *jing* role category. Unlike the well-known large-than-life characters in Kunqu and Jingju, the *jing* in Nanxi was usually a comic character played by a male actor.

¹⁸⁵For example, *xiaosheng* was not among the original seven role categories in Nanxi. It was developed later. in *chuanqi*. But Brother is sometimes categorized as *wai* and at other times *xiaosheng*, suggesting that it is in the middle of transition. Sun Chongtao [孙崇涛], “Jinyinji de yanhua” [《金印记》的演化, Evolution of Gold Seal], *Wenxue yichan* [文学遗产, literature heritage], 3 (1984): 49.

Truly, Mother Su carries a large part of the responsibility for driving the conflict forward, as well as creating the quality of laughability. She is loud, energetic, bitter-tongued and iron-handed, yet to say that she is a cruel and uncaring mother is unfair and untrue, at least regarding one of her children. She sharply discriminates between her two sons, holding the rich elder brother dear but taking Su Qin lightly; she leads the family's choral mocking of Su Qin for two rounds, even inflicting physical punishment by pinching him in the arm (Zhekun) and slapping him across the face (Shangkun), as in the *zhezixi* performance discussed on the following page; toward the ending of the play, while others are worrying and suffering regret at the news of Su Qin's return as Prime Minister, she is eager to take a share of the benefits from his new identity; when Su Qin completely ignores them and thanks no one but Third Uncle, she proposes to sue him in court and curse him to Heaven, for "Parents can never be wrong."¹⁸⁶

The character Su Qin is without doubt the center of the play. He is talented, ambitious, and firmly determined. He studies diligently and chases after his vision of success persistently against all odds. He knows appreciation and highly repays his Third Uncle's support. But Su Qin is no gentleman. Rather, he is presented more like an "anti-hero" than a hero. He holds grudges. He takes revenge. And he exploits his wife. To make up for the shortage in funding for his trip to the State of Qin, he forces his wife to sell her hairpin by hinting at replacing her with a new wife, should she not make contributions to his success. He bears the mocking by the rest of his family at his failure, yet he smashes his wife's loom when she does not talk to him and calls her "bitch" when she exits. In the final scene, Scene 42, after he has been ostensibly reconciled with his family and has granted them imperial commendations, he deliberately leaves her out, using his agitated

¹⁸⁶ *Jinyinji* [金印记, Gold Seal], ed. Sun Chongtao [孙崇涛] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988): 124.

wife as the family representative to complain one more time about what other family members had done to him. As Li Zhi (李贽) sums it up, except for Third Uncle and Su Qin's wife, there is no noble character in the Su family, and Su Qin is the worst among them all.¹⁸⁷ They are all no higher or larger than life. Yet approached from the opposite perspective, they are probably closer and truer to life, with exaggeration or understatement. They fit in the comic play and work for its theme.

It is the actual performance that finalizes characterization and, more importantly, keeps the play alive with the interaction between playwrights, actors and audiences. The literary and performative traditions preserved in GS are arguably best showcased by the extant *zhezixi* programs. The examples for case study are two *zhezixi* performances of “Failing in the exam and throwing oneself into the well” (落第投井, *Luodi toujing*), one by Zhekun in 1996, and the other by Shangkun in 2009.¹⁸⁸ The *zhezixi* scene consists of two *chuanqi* scenes combined, Scenes 16 “Whole family mocking” (一家耻笑, *Yijia chixiao*) and 17 “Throwing oneself into the well and meeting uncle” (投井遇叔, *Toujing yu shu*). These scenes are the highlight of the play's dramatic conflict, and the moment of greatest laughter at the family's melodramatic treatment of Su Qin when he has reached the lowest point in his life.

Through language, the *chuanqi* play offers a highly visualized *mise en scène* for

¹⁸⁷ Li Zhi [李贽], ed. “Jinyinji juan xia” [金印记卷下, *Gold Seal*, second volume], in *San ke wu zhong chuanqi* [三刻五种传奇, Third print of five *chuanqi* plays], 44. PDF, 5 March 2018. <<https://shuge.org/ebook/san-ke-wu-zhong-chuan-qi/>>.

¹⁸⁸ *Kunju xuanji dierji: Jinyinji Budi toujing* [昆剧选辑第二辑: 金印记 不第投井, Kunju collection 2: Failed exam and throwing oneself to well, *Gold Seal*], perf. Zhejiang Kunju tuan [浙江昆剧团, Zhejiang Kunju Troupe], Nanjing Longhu chuanbo gongsi [南京龙辉传播公司, Nanjing Longhui communication company], 1996; *Liangguo qingge: Yuan Guoliang zhuanji* [良国清歌: 袁国良专辑, Clear songs in good nation: Yuan Guoliang special issue], perf. Shanghai Kunju tuan [上海昆剧团, Shanghai Kunju Troupe], Jiangsu wenhua yinxiang chubanshe [江苏文化音像出版社, Jiangsu cultural audio-visual publishing house], 2011.

the two scenes. As mentioned earlier, Scene 16 begins with Mother Su hoaxing Su's wife to humiliate them both. It is followed by a sequence of "group action" (群戏, *qun xi*) between multiple characters. Upon Su Qin's entry, he first answers Mother Su's questions about his quest for fame, and his financial situation. Hearing that he has made no advances due to the jealous Qin Prime Minister, and that all the funds were depleted over three years of living in a strange land, Mother Su scolds him for vainly engaging in study and his unrealistic dream of success, rank and fame, and is his Brother and Sister-in-law join in. Not knowing what his wife has just been through, Su Qin turns to her to welcome him home, only to be met with "Get busy with your own business!" (工夫各自忙, *gongfu gezi mang*). In an outburst of accumulated anger, Su Qin strikes his wife's loom, exacerbating his mother's anger so that she beats him for causing more financial damage, and then beats his wife for "looking as she is unable to live without a husband." Su Qin then asks for clothing and food from Brother and Sister-in-law. What he gets in response is "Go to the lamp before Buddha (for warmth)!" and "There is a bowl of cat food in kitchen that you can take." Having had enough, Su Qin starts to leave but has to turn around at the sight of his father. Father Su initiates the second round of scolding, and Mother Su picks it up and ridicules him again, saying, "A stomach full of books doesn't cure hunger." Father and Mother Su exit. Echoing Mother Su's phrase of "does not cure hunger," Brother Su exits. Sister-in-law mocks Su Qin for not having the fate for fame and power and exits. Then the husband and wife have an exchange of words. Su Qin accuses his wife of ruining the good omen of his journey home by being reluctant to selling her hairpin; in *beigong* (背供), a conventional playwriting technique to speak out the inner thoughts of one character with his/her back towards another, his wife complains

that “Had I known that you would delay me, I would never have married you!” To his plea of not leaving him for the sake of “being husband and wife for one night means a mutual devotion for life,” she answers, “As the old proverb goes, ‘Tea and wine for brothers; salt and rice for husband and wife.’ Once there is no food, father and son become passionless. The husband and wife’s devotion can’t last, either.” With that she exits too. Finally, Su Qin, the last one en scène, also leaves, and the play moves to the next scene. Scene 17 consists of one solo section and one section of *duizi xi* (对子戏, lit., pair action). The former depicts Su Qin’s decision to drown himself, and the latter is between Su and his uncle, which includes their questions and answers about his encounters with family, and Su’s debate over whether to end his life. It ends with Su Qin being persuaded to go home with Third Uncle, and study for a full scale comeback.

This *zhezixi* performance embodies inheritance and innovation in GS.

Understandably, the inheritance of the literary tradition is inherent since acting is based on the *chuanqi* play and its variants, whereas innovation is inevitable in the process of readjusting the script to the new performance for the best possible theatrical effects.

The first noteworthy readjustment is the earlier entry of Father Su. In both *zhezixi* pieces, Father Su leads the family on stage at the opening of the scene, thus making it truly the “whole family mocking” from the beginning and speeding up the pace of the group action. More significantly, with his patriarchal presence, the intensity of the family mocking is increased. For example, as Su Qin stands in the center for the first round of mocking, Father, Mother, Brother and Sister-in-law all point fingers at him, singing in unison, “Like a homeless dog!” When Su Qin rushes off, it is Father Su who orders him back, and Brother pulls Su Qin back by the ear and pushes him to his knees at the center

of stage, ready for the next round, only this time it is done in pairs—first by Father and Mother Su, and then by Brother and Sister-in-law.

Readjustments are also made to rationalize the actions and make the characters more credible. The hoax serves to illustrate such rationalizations. Mother Su is “thanking Heaven and Earth” at the news of Su Qin’s inglorious return, because the family did nothing to support him. She fears that they would be given a hard time, should Su Qin return with success. Father Su blames his brother, Third Uncle, for encouraging Su Qin irresponsibly, but Sister-in-law accuses Su Qin’s wife of abetting her husband out of her own aspiration for the *fengguan xiapei* (凤冠霞帔, lit., Phoenix coronet and rosy cloud robe), the headdress and gown for an official’s wife. Hence, the hoax on Su Qin’s wife is proposed as a way to “vent the anger,” and is carried out with everyone’s participation. Su Qin’s responses are made more realistic and believable for someone in such a situation. Trying his best to get food and clothing for which he is in dire need, he swallows all the curses and insults from his family members and puts on an apologetic smile to everyone, while he battles between erupting in anger and yielding to practical necessity when his limits of tolerance are challenged. He is nicer with his wife, too. He doesn’t smash her loom. Instead, he bows and salutes her, begging her for attention. His wife doesn’t give him a cold shoulder, either. In Zhekun’s performance, they are holding each other’s hands when the other four leave after the scolding. Just then, Mother Su offstage to her from offstage. She hurries to answer her mother-in-law’s call, but Su Qin won’t let her go. In the struggle, she accidentally pushes him off balance. Seeing her hunger-weakened husband fall to the ground, she moves to help him, but does not dare ignore her Mother-in-Law’s persistent calls, and dashes off. Without getting to his feet, Su Qin futilely chases

after her with *guibu* (跪步, lit., kneeling steps), a conventional pattern of movement for occasions of urgent begging in desperation.¹⁸⁹ The scene is modified and thus more moderate than in *chuanqi*, but the result of all this scolding and rejection is the same—a blow too many for Su Qin. He exits with the decision to end his misery.

Mother Su remains the key character for the enhanced dramatic effects, including humor, through both inheritance and innovation. In the two *zhezixi* performances, the role is played by a male actor as is the convention for the (*fu*) *jing* role category in Nanxi. Zhekun's Mother Su wears a small white patch between her eyes, explicitly indicating the comic nature of the role. Another example of conforming to Kunqu conventions is that she speaks the local dialect of the Suzhou area, known as *subai* (苏白) in her colloquial speech (散白, *sanbai*).¹⁹⁰ As in *chuanqi*, Mother Su makes no attempt to hide her discrimination against Su Qin, but she gets more physical. For example, when Su Qin has just started singing the phrase, “I would like to tell you... (我告, *Wo gao*; 告, *gao*, “to tell”),” Mother Su jumps over to cut him off with a slap across the face, exclaiming, “You want to sue me? (唔要告啥人, *Wu yao gao sha ren*; 告, *gao*, “to sue”).” When Su Qin begs Sister-in-law to cook for him, Mother Su slaps him again for making such a request of a lady so delicate. Unable to take any more of it, Su Qin protests and asks her “Why

¹⁸⁹ When performing *guibu*, an actor “walks” on one bent leg and drags the other in a kneeling-down position along the floor. *Guibu* is mainly for *sheng* (male characters); its equivalent, *xibu* (膝步, lit., knee step), is mainly for *dan* (female characters) in similar situations. Wang Zhenglai [王正来], “Guibu” [跪步, lit., kneeling steps] and “Xibu” [膝步, lit., knee steps], in Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 582-3.

¹⁹⁰ Kunqu speech consists of heightened speech (韵白, *yunbai*) and colloquial speech. The latter can be further divided into the languages of different regions, such as *subai* (of Suzhou), *jingbai* (京白) of Beijing, *yangzhoubai* (扬州 bai) of Yangzhou, and so on. See more on Kunqu speech in Wang Zhenglai [王正来], “Nianbai” [念白, speech], in Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 518-9.

are we, both sons of yours, treated so differently?” she answers openly, “Because it is like the dragon having nine sons and each is different. The good is good, and the bad is bad.” She then gets carried away and says, “I just don’t like that son of bitch!” The rest of the family are appalled and rush to stop her. She then realizes the impropriety of her remark and returns to her seat, murmuring, “I got muddled with anger.” Another occasion for laughter comes at the end of the “mocking” scene in Shangkun’s version. When Su Qin has gone off, the four other members of the family also start walking towards the back of the stage to “enjoy the stewed pig hock without disturbance.” All of sudden, they smell the food getting burned. Mother Su goes offstage and returns with a prop hock. Brother fetches a basin of water and pours it over her and the burning hock. Shaking her head, she sighs, “Now we won’t have a stewed pig hock but a drenched chicken.”

Although there are differences between the Zhekun and the Shangkun enactments of the “mocking” section, most of them are minor. The biggest difference is in the “drowning” part. It is about 7 minutes long in Zhekun’s program, but in Shangkun’s performance, it runs over 17 minutes, more than 2 times the length of Zhekun’s. In general, Zhekun’s Su Qin is stronger both physically and vocally. He seems to be defeated but not yet destroyed, and he is more determined with indignation and self-dignity. It is with this determination that he leaves home to pay a last visit to Third Uncle before he finishes himself off. He sees the well on his way to his uncle’s home, and on the spur of the moment, he decides right away that this is where he will die. The “throwing himself in the well” is carried out in a similarly spirited way using the movement patterns called *qiangbei* (抢背, lit., seizing the back) and *guogao* (过高, lit., passing the height): he throws himself up in the air, passes over the prop well which is about one and a half

feet tall, rolls forward to land on his back and then stands on his feet.¹⁹¹ He is stopped by Third Uncle who, also swiftly and neatly, persuades Su to give up his suicide attempt. At the end of the scene, Third Uncle invites Su Qin to stay in his home to study. Being pushed offstage towards Third Uncle's home, Su Qin puts up several weak fights and turns around to his uncle with a broad smile of both embarrassment and joy. Shangkun's Su Qin is softer and seems less determined at the sight of the well. As in Zhekun's version, he decides to end his life in the well, but he obviously has reservations—even doubts about the decision. He stands over the well, looks into it, and he turns away, trembling. He really does not want to die, nor is he willing to end like this. Then, he seems to make up his mind with the exclamation, “I can't die!” He stands tall again with growing confidence as he starts to think of making a comeback by studying further; yet in a split second, he recalls that the jealous Shang Yang is still the Prime Minister of the State of Qin, and the road to success is blocked for good—no matter how hard he studies, it will not make any difference. He is instantly deflated. Eventually, he is ready to resign himself to his fate, and goes back to the well again, lamenting, “Wonderful essays are only fit to be made into paper money!” This extended section convincingly depicts Su Qin's mental struggles between the instinctive longing for life and his absolutely hopeless prospect. More importantly, this section exemplifies the synthesis of the performer's acting skills—in this piece song (唱, *chang*), speech (念, *nian*), and dance-acting (做, *zuo*)—in the Kunqu performative tradition. It offers the actor, Yuan Guoliang (袁国良),

¹⁹¹ *Guogao* is one kind of the *zhuozigong* (桌子功, lit., table skills); it is a movement technique with which that performer passes over a tall item on stage, usually a table. *Qiangbei guogao* is a specific type of *guogao* that combines somersaulting with the vaulting. Xi Yan [希砚], “Guogao” [过高, lit., passing the height], Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 591.

ample opportunities to demonstrate his vocal skills through the arias.¹⁹² While he is delivering the songs, he presents each line, each phrase, even each syllable of the lyrics with dance-like movements, a display of his mastery of dance-acting skills. The display also consists of employing specific patterns of movement vocabulary, such as using *guibu* (as does Zhekun's Su Qin) in the sequential process of turning away from the well and being drawn back to it.

What is specifically noticeable in Yuan's application of movement vocabulary is hair tossing (甩发, *shuafafa*). As he approaches the well with suicidal intention for the first time, he sings, "Only this cold pure water will wash away my shame!" and swings his hair from right to left and then from left to right. This "hair swinging" (摆发, *baifafa*) is a variant of the general movement pattern of hair tossing. After changing his mind from dying to living and then back to dying, he moves toward the well for the second time. Along with singing, "Wonderful essays are only fit to be made into paper money!" he whirls his hair in a single circle with each step he takes until he gets down on his right knee by the side of the well. Then he starts frantically whirling his hair in circles, letting the hair tips sweep across the floor with each round. This is the major hair tossing variant known as "hair flinging" (摔甩发, *shuashuafafa*), which is used to externalize "struggling hard in adversity."¹⁹³ Third Uncle stops Su Qin and persuades him to live on, quoting the parable of a pebble: it has limitless potential, but once thrown to the bottom of a well, its fate is sealed. Awakened, Su Qin kneels down before Third Uncle to express his gratitude. He

¹⁹² Yuan is the student of Ji Zhenhua [计镇华]. Ji is generally recognized as one of the best actors specializing in *laosheng*, the older male category and known for his superb vocal quality and singing techniques. It is highlighted in his portrayal of Li Guinian [李龟年] in the scene *Tanci* from *Palace of Eternal Youth*, as discussed in chapter 2.

¹⁹³ Xi Yan [希砚], "Shuai fa shi" [甩发式, swing hair style], in Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 589.

throws his hair from the back to the front and then back in the opposite direction to express gratitude and respect, which is the third and last variant of hair tossing known as “hair dropping” (坠发, *zhui fa*), thus concluding a complete set of hair tossing.

Although Zhekun’s *zhezixi* piece appeared earlier than Shangkun’s, there is no confirmed evidence indicating whether or not Shangkun’s version was developed on the basis of Zhekun’s. In either case, the multiple versions confirm the popularity and geographic spread of GS, and stand as examples of the continuation of Kunqu’s performative tradition through inheritance and innovation. The literary creation by playwrights and the performers’ synthesis of acting skills, movement vocabulary and conventions of performance all work together to serve the play’s theme, that is, to present the fickleness of human nature through Su Qin’s experiences. It is tragic that Su Qin finds no place for himself but the bottom of the well, but it is fun for the audience to watch how his family members expose the hideous side of humanity; and the fun is multiplied by seeing those people’s attitudes changing along with the change in Su Qin’s position. But audiences are entertained, not enlightened.

With its new focus on social enlightenment for the current era, Yongkun’s production adapts the play from primarily entertaining for modern audiences to appropriately enlightening for them, as well. In the process of adaptation, literary and performative traditions are transmitted while innovations are made, often inextricably. And this begins with the playwriting. Yongkun takes over the old plot and follows the basic storyline. Their eight scenes are based on the popular scenes that are both featured in various anthologies of highlight scenes and performed in *zhezixi* programs.¹⁹⁴ But the

¹⁹⁴ Wang Limei.[王丽梅], “Yi zhe dai quan hua ya wei su: lun *Jinyinji* taiben de chuancheng” [以折带全化

structure of the play has been changed. With the constraint of a three-hour maximum, Yongkun does not have the luxury for a full *chuanqi* play. By trimming off the non-Su-Qin scenes and consolidating the rest, the production arranges its eight scenes along a linear storyline that is wholly Su Qin-centered and is performed almost entirely from his perspective. Figure 10 will help clarify the connection of these 8 scenes to the *chuanqi* play and *zhezixi* scenes.

As Figure 10 shows, Yongkun's GS opens with Su Qin studying, then being visited by his wife bringing breakfast and his parents on their way to working in the fields. Adapted from scene 2 of the *chuanqi* play, it skips the conventional Kunqu opening with the Prologue and scenes of main characters' self-introductions, and swiftly introduces characters and their interrelationships. By moving a later scene forward and combining it with several others, Yongkun's scene 2 brings up the remainder of the re-appearing characters, ushers in the conflict, and sets Su Qin on the track of his first journey for fame and wealth. Scenes 3 to 6 are built upon four older corresponding scenes depicting Su Qin's experiences after returning from the first, unsuccessful attempt. Scene 7 skims the encounters after Su Qin launches his second journey and leaps to the moment when he is decorated with honors for his achievements. In scene 8, Su Qin comes home again and thanks everyone for helping with his development. The original scene 40, in which Su Qin thanks only his Third Uncle while ignoring all others, is rewritten into a single section and relocated to the very end. He sits down with Third Uncle and says, "I, Su Qin, am still the same Su Qin." He then mentions the sponsored travel expense he still owes him, and they laugh together.

雅为俗:论《金印记》台本的传承, With the act as the full play, transform the elegant to popular: on the inheritance of the script for *Gold seal*], *Dongnan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexueban)* [东南大学学报(哲学社会科学版)] 6 (2010): 108-109.

Interestingly, Yongkun's GS, at least on the face of it, registers little difference in Su Qin's developmental trajectory from older versions. Then, how is the enlightening theme of gratitude and love presented in this production? The answer is: it is done through characterization, the part of artistic creation that the Yongkun production team concentrated on. It is a complete and organic work that lasts from scene 1 to scene 8, starting with the playwrights' literary creation and ending with the actors performing on stage.

Figure 10. Scenes of GS in Yongkun's Production, the *Chuanqi* Play, and the *Zhezixi* Pieces

	Yongkun Scenes	<i>Chuanqi</i> Scenes*			<i>Zhezixi</i> Scenes
		Correspondence	Included **	Excluded	
1	Industrious study (勤读, <i>qin du</i>)	2	Su Qin sighing to himself		1, 4
2	Celebrating birthday (庆寿, <i>qingshou</i>)	35	Brother celebrating father's birthday	3 Brother arranging feast 6 Feast before flowers 8 Forcing wife to sell hairpin 10 Leaving family for exam	5, 9
3	Failing in exam (不第, <i>budi</i>)	14	Failing in exam and leaving State Qin		11-13, 15
4	Poor return (穷归, <i>qiong gui</i>)	16	Whole family mocking		Failing in exam & throwing in well
5	Throwing in well	17	Throwing in well and meeting uncle		

	(投井, <i>toujing</i>)					
6	Stabbing thighs (刺股, <i>cigu</i>)	18	Stabbing thighs for reading		19	
7	Appointed Prime Minister (封相, <i>feng xiang</i>)	34	Su Qin appointed Prime Minister	20 Leaving again for State Wei 24 Sighing on long journey	21-23, 25-33	Appointed Prime Minister ¹⁹⁵
8	Glorious return (荣归, <i>ronggui</i>)	42	Conferring and reuniting	36 Sending messenger for letter 37 Third Uncle getting message 39 Parents learning of triumph 41 Empty return from walking in snow 40 Encountering snow at Acceptance Pavilion	38	Conferring and reuniting ¹⁹⁶

Note:

* Scene titles are given in literal English translation to save space.

** “Included” are the original *chuanqi* scenes kept in sections, arias or key phrases. Titles are skipped for the “Excluded.”

¹⁹⁵ This scene known as “*fengxiang*” [封相] is not performed as a Kunqu *zhezixi* program any more but is still preserved in other Xiqu forms such as 粤剧 (*yueju*), the Cantonese “Opera.”

¹⁹⁶ It is on the list of extant Kunqu *zhezixi* pieces by Zhou Qin [周秦], but no visual or written documents of it were found during the preparation for the dissertation. Zhou Qin [周秦], “Kunqu de yichan jiazhi ji baohu chuancheng” [昆曲的遗产价值及保护传承, Kunqu’s value as heritage and its protection and transmission], *Minzu yishu yanjiu* [民族艺术研究, Ethnic arts study] 5 (2017): 15.

The playwrights can be said to have inherited not only the plot of the play, but also the full cast of all characters, who appear in their eight scenes: Su Qin, his wife, Father and Mother, Brother and Sister-in-law, Third Uncle and his servant Tang Er (唐二); the inn keeper in the capital of Qin, in scene 3; and the whole set of Kings of the Six States and their retinues, in scene 7.

They are “recast” by Zhang Lie (张烈) and Wang Yan (王焱), playwrights of the Yongkun production. One significant change in the supportive characters is Mother Su. Playwrights Zhang and Wang rewrite Mother Su as a *laodan* (老旦, older female character) played by a female actor. More importantly, they create her as a prototype Chinese “loving mother” (慈母, *cimu*). In scene 2, she sends Su Qin a black fur coat to keep him warm on his journey to the State of Qin. In scene 4, she bends down over Su Qin’s feet and cries, because he has starved and frozen on his way home, like a beggar. In scene 7, when she learns that Su Qin has left home again, she is concerned. Sadly, Mother Su does not see her son’s homecoming in the final scene.

The “recast” of Mother Su is an epitome of the rearrangement of characters in light of the new theme and its modern social enlightenment focus. Su Qin’s wife is now fully supportive of her husband’s every decision, traveling afar to seek rank and fame in the remote state, or seeking means for preserving peace in his studies. Except for a very mild complaint at his first return, she is a fine example of a traditional “virtuous wife” (贤妻, *xianqi*). Father Su is also rewritten. Though still a “strict father” (严父, *yanfu*) who is against wasting time and money, he also cares for his younger son and offers to pay half of the expense for his first journey. Even Tang Er is reformed. In the *chuanqi* play, he is a reluctant squire-servant who was originally a hired porter. When the inn keeper is

pressing for payment for the accumulated accommodation fees, he takes advantage of the moment to collect his wages “with interest” from his hirer and literally “dumps his carrying pole” (撂挑子, *liaotiaozi*) on Su Qin for the journey back home. In Yongkun’s production, Tang Er keeps loyal company with Su Qin in all his journeys and becomes the mouthpiece for venting what had in the original play been Su Qin’s vengeful mocking in the final return scene. Of course, Su Qin stops him. Third Uncle did not need to be morally elevated as he had always been a flawlessly positive character.

Recreated also are the two remaining characters in the family: Su Qin’s Brother and Sister-in-law. While the other family characters have been morally elevated and no longer participate in what had been the “whole family mocking” scene, the rich but cruel Brother and his wife are modified in the opposite direction. Though Sister-in-law is still a *tiedan* (贴旦), a secondary female character, she is given more weight than her husband, mainly to provide a balance between the positive and negative characters, and to maintain a force great enough to push Su Qin to the verge of drowning himself. The transformation of Mother Su does not end with her being cast as *laodan* and a loving mother. Playwrights Zhang Lie and Wang Yan strip away all her un-motherly traits and reallocate them to Sister-in-law.

It is more historically correct, so to speak, since the exchange between Su Qin and his Sister-in-law about her radically changed attitude toward him was condensed in the idiom *qianjuhougong* (前倨后恭, lit., earlier arrogant [but] later humble). Sima Qian recorded this verbal exchange in his *Grand Scribe's Records* (史记, *Shiji*) as such.

Su Ch'in laughed and said to his older brother's wife, 'Why were you so arrogant before and so respectful now?' His sister-in-law crawled over on

her hands and knees, pressed her face to the ground, and apologized, “We see that your position is high and your gold abundant, Chi Tzu [Jizi].”¹⁹⁷

Ban Youshu (班友书) suggests that this “fairly folklore-colored description with vivid characters” inspired playwrights of the Song-Jin Dynasties to write on Su Qin.¹⁹⁸ From the passage above, we can see that Sima Qian’s record did lay the foundation for further theatrical development of the character Sister-in-law.

Zhang and Wang also take over the wooden laundry stick that Mother Su beats his wife with in *zhezixi* performances, and put its successor in Sister-in-Law’s hands, creating a thematic image especially for her which recurs multiple times in the play. At the end of scene 2, when Su Qin is ready to begin his first trip, Sister-in-law and Brother deliberately come to see him off. She presents him with a wooden stick, saying that the chances for him to realize his dream of rank and fame are just as slim as for an old wooden stick to bloom. At the beginning of scene 4, Sister-in-law, in place of Mother Su in older versions, tricks Su Qin’s wife and makes her believe that her husband is coming home successfully, as an official. Just when she is getting ready to go welcome him, Sister-in-law stops her and tells her to check if the wooden stick has bloomed, before revealing to her that his title of office is “head of the beggar’s house.” After Su Qin returns home, starving, without telling him what it is, Sister-in-law gives him cat food from a chipped bowl. When Su Qin finds out, she drops the stick in front of him and says, “See, the wooden stick will not bloom!” In scene 5, even Su Qin expresses doubts about himself using the same analogy before attempting to drown himself in the well:

¹⁹⁷ Ssu-ma Ch’ien [司马迁], *The Grand Scribe’s Records* [史记, *Shiji*], vol.7, eds. & tr. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. et al. (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), 96-121.

¹⁹⁸ Ban Youshu [班友书], “*Su Qin xiwen yanbian yi zhi tan*” [《苏秦》戏文演变一知谈, On evolution of the script for *Su Qin*], *Zhonghua Xiqu* [中华戏曲, Chinese Xiqu] 2 (1996): 253.

I am afraid that I was born slow-witted
(恐是我天生愚钝, *kong shi wo tiansheng yudun*),
like the wooden stick that will not grow with the breeze of spring
(似棒槌难偕春风, *si bangchui nan xie chunfeng*),
all my life, I cannot be outstanding
(一世不得峥嵘, *yishi bude zhengrong*).

But when he returns again in the final scene, his Sister-in-law holds the stick up in front of him, begging for forgiveness. It is decorated with her hand-picked flowers and leaves, for “now that our brother has become a prominent official, the stick blooms as a matter of course!”

The playwrights have rewritten all the characters except Su Qin as what are essentially “stock character” types familiar to Chinese audiences: the virtuous wife, strict father, loving mother, supporting elder, loyal servant, wealthy but non-benevolent brother and evil sister-in-law. They have been changed in line with the new theme. These rewritten characters also help to prepare for the biggest re-creation, that of the male lead character Su Qin.

On the process of re-creating Su Qin, playwright Wang recalls.

[He] starts off as a scholar, young, talented, ambitious, thinking the world is his, yet he knows little of the outside world. Spurred by his brother and sister-in-law, he leaves his study for fame and power, swearing that he will never come back without a gold seal. That shows how inexperienced he is in life. After three years, he is unable to make any advance but all his money is gone. He has nowhere else to go but return home as the last

fortress of consolation, but on top of parents' disappointment in and brother and sister-in-law's humiliation of him, his wife's simple question "What are you going to do in future?" becomes the straw that breaks the camel's back. In sheer self-doubt and self-denial, he wants to drown himself forthwith. Third Uncle's words make him see that a solution is out there; he just hasn't found it yet. Once he does, he will be able to fulfill his ambitions fully.¹⁹⁹

Thus, Su Qin goes back to study and the play comes to scene 6, "Stabbing thighs."

The above review not only relates character analysis but also summarizes the development of the play prior to scene 6. This plot development is the reflection of Su Qin's path of growth in this play about a statesman's development. It is an inspiring story, certainly not because he once hit the lowest point in his life, but because he started afresh from there to reach the peak of his career. The focus of the play is shifted away from "Failing the exam and throwing himself into the well," and a new focus is called for. Now that studying for the second time is the turning point in the course of Su Qin's life, "Stabbing thighs" is naturally made the new focus of the play.

However, the playwrights found the creation of this scene especially difficult. As Wang Yan recollects, "For two months, I wrote not a single word. The director called every day, pressing, urging, begging, but I had to ask her to wait. I needed to find an adequate justification for 'stabbing thighs.'"²⁰⁰ The cause of the difficulty was twofold. One cause arose from the weak foundation for adaptation in the earlier GS plays. Take,

¹⁹⁹ Wang Yan, interview, Suzhou, October 30, 2013.

²⁰⁰ Wang Yan [王焱], "Su Qin reng shi jiu Su Qin: tan Yongjia Kunju tuan *Jinyinji* de chuanguo" [苏秦仍是旧苏秦: 谈永嘉昆剧团《金印记》的创作, Su Qin is still the old Su Qin: on the creation of Yongjia Kunju Troupe's *Gold Seal*], *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai theatre] 8 (2012): 8-9.

for example, scene 18 in the *chuanqi*. It is titled “Stabbing his thigh in order to continue studying” (刺股读书, *cigu dushu*), but only a small section is devoted to Su Qin’s study. Ironically, after stabbing himself, he falls asleep again, only to be wakened up by his wife, who has been seeking him; the remainder of the scene involves skirmishes between Su Qin, his wife, and Third Uncle. The other cause comes with the new theme for social enlightenment. Originally, in the *chuanqi* play, Su Qin declares unequivocally what he wants: “After ten years’ hard study noticed by none, his fame fills the land once honors are won.”²⁰¹ However, this will not fit in the new theme, for “that would be someone craving personal fame and gain.”²⁰² After having read on Su Qin extensively, the playwrights finally found it: “Su Qin did it for the ideal of ‘preserving the peace of the world’ (平天下, *ping tianxia*).”²⁰³ That seems to have some good grounds in history. The State of Qin did abstain from engaging in warfare with other states for about fifteen years after Su Qin helped form the Six States’ alliance, thus peace between States was preserved during that period.

Scene 6 constitutes the most significant part in the characterization of Su Qin and it is achieved through innovative applications of language, which is fitting for this scene about study and learning. In Chinese, the concept of studying (学习, *xuexi*) is often expressed with a more colloquial term, *dushu* (读书), literally meaning “reading books.” That is in fact the term used in this play. The playwrights were faced with a three-pronged question in regard to this “book-reading”: First, why does Su Qin read so painstakingly?

²⁰¹ *Jinyinji* [金印记, Gold Seal], ed. Sun Chongtao [孙崇涛] (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988), 61.

²⁰² Wang Yan [王焱], “Su Qin reng shi jiu Su Qin: tan Yongjia Kunju tuan *Jinyinji* de chuanguo” [苏秦仍是旧苏秦: 谈永嘉昆剧团《金印记》的创作, Su Qin is still the old Su Qin: on the creation of Yongjia Kunju Troupe’s *Gold Seal*], *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai theatre] 8 (2012): 8.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

Second, what does he read? And third, how does he do it? The first question is answered by Su Qin's ambition to preserve world peace, which the playwrights "discovered" for him. Instead of making a straightforward statement here, they indirectly establish the purpose for reading back in scene 1, through a brief conversation between Su Qin and his wife, who brings him breakfast:

(Su Qin snaps a chopstick)

Wife: Ah! It was a fine chopstick, why did you break it?

Su Qin: There is a reason for it...

Wife: Isn't it that one chopstick breaks easily but ten chopsticks won't be broken? Brothers should help each other...

Su Qin: It is true for a family, and for the world, as well.

The conversation indicates that Su Qin has discovered the ideal of "preserving the peace of the world." All his efforts in reading back then and later are to serve that purpose. This conversation also implies the way to achieve that goal: through mutual help with unity among brothers of a family and alliance between states. Moreover, this foreshadows both his success at the inter-state levels and his gratitude toward his family in the end.

The books to read are identified through an original use of the pre-Qin (Dynasty) classics, that is, works from the Spring and Autumn Period and the Warring States Period. In the reading scenes 1 and 6, Su Qin quotes five passages in full from the *Book of Songs* (诗经, *Shijing*), *Book of Documents* (尚书, lit., "Esteemed Documents") and *Guiguzi* (鬼谷子, works of the legendary master strategist). Quotations such as these are not generally found in the *chuanqi* version of GS or seen in earlier Kunqu plays. Yes, Tang Xianzu quoted from *Book of Songs* too, but it was just a fraction of the original piece and

justifiable for a poetry-teaching scene. It is highly possible that, to the old-day literati with profound training in classical Chinese literature, a long and “faithful” quotation held little literary appeal and/or presented no mental challenge; additionally, it might have estranged the common audiences of that day, a large percentage of whom were illiterate. But Zhang and Wang’s usage of quotations is not meant to educate the contemporary audience on Chinese classics but to serve the dramatic purposes in the play. Su Qin quotes from *Book of Songs* to express his regret that he cannot afford to indulge in romantic moments with his wife as he is fully absorbed in study. The other four quoted passages are of a much greater importance because they are immediately related to the books Su Qin reads. The quotations address, respectively, a scholar’s willpower, a monarch’s administrative tactics, and ways of communication and persuasion.²⁰⁴ They are linked to the search for a “solution” that Wang Yan talks about in her recollection—the reasons that the playwright was looking for to justify Su Qin’s “thigh stabbing.”²⁰⁵ Historically, there is no secret in the two strategies for alliance back in the Warring States period: one was aligning with the most powerful State of Qin against the others, while the other was allying the six weaker States together against Qin. The key to success lay in a lobbying strategist such as Su Qin, and his persuasive power. As his early experience proves, how could he succeed without achieving the first step of being heard? By following the quotations, he comes up with the idea of shifting the perspective from himself, to the ones with whom he would communicate.

Although the quoted works of earlier masterminds do not yet offer a ready answer

²⁰⁴ Wang Yan, GS script unpublished. 5, 16, 17, 18.

²⁰⁵ Wang Yan [王焱], “Su Qin reng shi jiu Su Qin: tan Yongjia Kunju tuan *Jinyinji* de chuangzuo” [苏秦仍是旧苏秦: 谈永嘉昆剧团《金印记》的创作, Su Qin is still the old Su Qin: on the creation of Yongjia Kunju Troupe’s *Gold Seal*], *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai theatre], 8 (2012): 8.

for the ultimate solution, they serve to delineate the path of Su Qin's search, which ultimately will lead to that solution. His reading and the works he reads are parts of the track of his mental growth.

Modern playwriting techniques are used to show how thigh-stabbing helps Su Qin overcome the challenges facing him in his search for a solution. There are three key concepts in this process of battling to read: the book, the awl, and the sleepiness (困, *kun*). For their presentation, three specific rhetorical methods are employed. Personification is the first. It is "the book" that helps him discover his ideal of preserving peace of the world. To illustrate what "the book" means to Su Qin, Wang Yan wrote an aria to the fixed-melody (曲牌, *qupai*) entitled "A Letter" (一封书, *Yifengshu*).

(一封书)	(A Letter)
俺与你, <i>An yu ni</i>	You and I
自幼结下同心。 <i>Ziyou jie xia tongxin</i>	Since my childhood have been of one mind.
你一字一句皆无言, <i>Ni yi zi yi ju jie wuyan</i>	Silently, your each word and each line
把我一生指引。 <i>Ba wo yisheng zhiyin</i>	Offer me guidance through life.
伴着我孤独岁月, <i>Ban zhe wo gudu suiyue</i>	In lonely years, you are by my side,
养就我济世心。 <i>Yang jiu wo jishi xin</i>	Nurturing my heart for mankind.
我把你, 视为君, <i>Wo ba ni, shiwei jun</i>	You are the master in my eyes;
甘做你脚下臣。 <i>Ganzuo ni jiaoxia chen</i>	At your feet, this subject happily lies.
我平天下报你老兄好知音。	With peace to the world I requite

Wo pingtianxia bao ni laoxiong hao zhiyin you, my good friend, the soul mate of mine.²⁰⁶

When writing the aria, the playwright invested it with her own experiences with “the book”—study, including “diligence, setback, confusion in the pursuit of knowledge, joy in making progress, desperation caused by failures, and consequently, hatred of my ideal and the book.”²⁰⁷ Therefore, “the book” is treated not as an inanimate thing but as a live person, as Su Qin’s “friend since childhood,” “companion,” “guide,” “master” and “soul mate.”

The next rhetorical method applied is metaphor. “The sleepiness” metaphorically stands for the challenges in the seeking of truth through “reading books.” Even though the written Chinese character *kun* specifically means the sleepy state caused by tiredness in scene 6, its phonetic is a constituent part of phrases such as *kunhuo* (困惑, puzzlement), *kunnan* (困难, difficulty), *kunrao* (困扰, perplexity), *kunnao* (苦恼, distress), and *kunjing* (困境, dilemma); therefore, “sleepiness” serves as a metaphor in a broad sense for all the interruptions, disturbances and distractions that stand in the way of Su Qin’s pursuit of truth from books.

The awl is the instrument Su Qin employs to dispel the various obstructions of his “sleepiness” and help him focus on “the book,” and it is given more meanings through the third rhetorical method, symbolism. Objects with symbolic meanings are not uncommon in past Chinese literary and artistic works, including Xiqu plays and films. Examples of symbols for keeping direction and guiding the mind range from the Pole Star,

²⁰⁶ Translation by Yang Ming.

²⁰⁷ Wang Yan [王焱], “Su Qin reng shi jiu Su Qin: tan Yongjia Kunju tuan *Jinyinji de chuanguo*” [苏秦仍是旧苏秦: 谈永嘉昆剧团《金印记》的创作, Su Qin is still the old Su Qin: on the creation of Yongjia Kunju Troupe’s *Gold Seal*], *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai theatre], 8 (2012): 8-9.

the Big Dipper, a compass, a beacon, a torch, and great leaders' publications. The symbolic meanings are usually associated with some shared features of these items; for example, most of them give out light and they can direct people. Looked at from this perspective, although the awl primarily functions to keep Su Qin awake by the pain he inflicts with it, the awl also has a somewhat shiny property, which reinforces its symbolism as the guiding "star" (星辰, *xingchen*) in his study.

The ending aria is the longest one in scene 6. It is totally devoted to the awl. As the title of the fixed-melody "Triple Sobering-ups" (解三醒, *Jie san cheng*) suggests, it is composed of three sections. In the first section, playwright Wang Yan draws an analogy between the silvery awl and the Warring States' glistening weapons arranged in formations, an image that urges Su Qin to exert himself in study. In the second section, Su Qin compares the awl to "the heavenly axe that clears the chaos" and "the divine hairpin that divides the Milky Way" before claiming it as "guardian deity of my study."²⁰⁸ In the final section, he begs the awl "not to allow my spirit to have even a moment of losing its focus until I finish reading ten-thousand volumes of books," after which he will "look for a world amid the packs of tigers and wolves." With an ideal for world peace, a clear vision of what to seek from the books, and a determination to keep reading painstakingly, success is sure to follow. As Wang Yan puts it, "The appointment as Prime Minister and granting of the gold seal becomes an inevitability."²⁰⁹

My discussion of the Yongkun production, so far, has concentrated on the aspect of literary creation, but this does not imply that the emphasis attached to the two

²⁰⁸ The playwright makes two allusions in this section. "Clearing the chaos with axe" refers to Pan Gu (盘古) in Chinese myth who created the universe by cutting open the chaos with an axe and separating heaven from earth; *Xi wangmu* (西王母, Queen Mother of the west) is the one creating the Milky Way with a hairpin.

²⁰⁹ Wang Yan, interview, Suzhou, October 30, 2013.

traditions in this production is lop-sided. The performative tradition preserved in the extant *zhezixi* performances is indeed limited. But on the other hand, it is artfully integrated into the new production through transmission and innovation, which are intertwined in many cases. On the basis of the playwrights' new plot and characters, performative elements, conventions, and practices found in earlier stage presentations have been taken over and incorporated in Yongkun's performance.

Scene 5 "Throwing himself into the well" is, again, an exemplary showcase. Like the two *zhezixi* examples, it is a shining moment for the actor playing Su Qin to demonstrate performance skills in singing, speaking and dance-acting, but Yongkun's Su Qin seems to shine with more brilliance. Take the application of movement vocabulary alone, for example. Wang Zhenyi (王振义), the actor who plays Su Qin, utilizes not only the movement patterns of the two *zhezixi* actors combined together—*guibu* ("kneeling steps"), *shuifa* (hair tossing), and *qiangbei* (lit., "seizing the back," somersault before landing on the back), but he also makes use of other dance-like movements to present the character's inner thoughts in the drowning section. He does a *yuanchang* (圆场, "round circles")²¹⁰ counterclockwise for one and a half full circles, starting at downstage center at a slow pace, accelerating with the accompanying music picking up the pace, and ending at upstage center; from there, he pivots twice while taking off his fur coat that is torn and worn, and makes three more pivots tossing it, all the while moving towards stage right;

²¹⁰ *Yuanchang* (圆场, lit., "round field") is a *bushi* (步式, "step convention"). When doing it, an actor lifts his/her left foot pointing slightly outward and steps forward, with heel treading forward and instep flexed, and presses down, then the right foot follows in the same manner, and two feet alternate. It starts at a relatively slow pace and then becomes faster. The steps should be even and have springiness. The stride length is between about 26.5 to 33 centimeters for male actors. Wang Zhenglai [王正来], "Yuanchang" [圆场, "round circles"], in Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 581.

then, he completes another *yuanchang* across the stage from right to left until he staggers to a halt at the sight of the well. He murmurs, wondering if this is the place to end his life, and steps his left foot on the edge of the well to look into it. All of a sudden, as if startled by the realization of imminent death, he swirls around and tries to move away from the well, shaking from head to heel. As he is doing all this, he performs a sequence that is made up of *bietui cuobu* (别腿搓步, “cross-leg slipping steps”),²¹¹ *yaozi fanshen* (鹞子翻身, “sparrow-hawk-flip”)²¹² and *huabu houdie* (滑步后跌, “slippery-step backward fall”),²¹³ until finally, his left arm and leg drop down lifelessly as he resigns himself to his fate. Those movement conventions are not employed in the older *zhezixi* programs, but as part of the performative tradition of Kunqu, they are utilized in Yongkun’s production as inheritance and through innovation. For instance, even the *qiangbei* movement pattern used in both *zhezixi* is done differently in the Zhekun version. Wang Zhenyi performs it by doing the somersault from the top of the well, which is about 2 feet tall, incorporating

²¹¹ *Bietui cuobu* (别腿搓步, “cross-leg slipping steps”) is another type of step movement. It is divided into the left and right style according to the direction of movement. The one Wang Zhenyi does is the right style. When performing it, Wang lifts up the lower hem of his robe with both hands to reveal both legs with their knees bent. With the body still facing front, he moves his left leg across diagonally to land his left foot in front of the right foot; the right foot in the back is then lifted but lands in the same spot; then, the left foot keeps moving further towards the right in small and quick steps barely off the floor, and the right foot follows each step in the same manner. Like *yuanchang*, the movement starts at a slow pace and accelerates later. Wang Zhenglai [王正来], “Bietui cuobu” [别腿搓步, “cross-leg slipping steps”], in Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 583.

²¹² *Yaozi fanshen* (鹞子翻身, “sparrow-hawk-flip”) is a type of *yaogong* (腰功, “waist skill”). It is a movement that mimics the flipping of the sparrow-hawk. Ping Guo [平国], “Yaozi fanshen” [鹞子翻身, “sparrow-hawk-flip”] Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 590.

²¹³ *Hua bu hou die* (滑步后跌, “slipping step backward fall”) is also a step movement that is divided broadly into the male style and female style. In the male style, the left foot steps forward, the upper body leans backward and then lands on the right buttock as well as the bent right leg. When landing, the right hand helps support the body on the floor, while left leg and left arm are held up, pointing forward. Wang Zhenglai [王正来], “Huabu tuidie” [滑步后跌, “slippery-step backward fall”, in Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 584.

a modified variation of the conventional “table skill” called *xiagao* (下高), “down from the height,” which traditionally is performed from a table top.

However, the example that fully epitomizes the large scale, innovative inheritance of both the literary and performative traditions is scene 7 “Appointed the Prime Minister” (封相, *feng xiang*). As explained in the note to Figure 10, this scene is no longer performed as a Kunqu *zhezixi* piece. But thanks to the auspicious meaning of the title of the piece, it is still preserved in other Xiqu forms including *yueju* (粤剧, Cantonese “Opera”) and is usually performed on occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, wedding ceremonies, and major lunar festivals that call for celebration and festivity.²¹⁴ It is also appreciated for its stage spectacle. As Su Qin is appointed Prime Minister of the Six States, theoretically the other characters should appear in multiples of 6: 6 kings, accompanying ceremonial marshals, eunuchs, ladies-in-waiting, soldiers, carriage drivers, etc. It is not hard to see why its performance is “not only a show, but also an advertisement [for the company presenting it],” since it is a display of a performing group’s capacity in terms of the number of performers and the variety of their specialized role categories.²¹⁵

Yongkun’s GS borrowed, or probably restored, this part of living performative

²¹⁴ Zuo Xiaoyan [左小燕], “You zheme yi chu xi: guanyu Yueju *Liuguo feng xiang*” [有这么一出戏: 关于粤剧《六国封相》], There is such a play: on the Cantonese Opera *Appointed as prime minister by the Six States*, *Xiqu yishu* [戏曲艺术, Xiqu art], 01 (2002): 97-100. Discussed in this essay are connections between the *yueju* program and Kunqu, the cast of performers, costumes and props as well as performing occasions.

²¹⁵ This information is summarized on the basis of the commentary in the video recording of the 1981 joint celebrative performances of *Fengxiang* by the Yueju [Cantonese “Opera”] performers from Guangdong (Canton) province and Hong Kong. *1981 nian Sheng Gang hong ling da hui chuan Bi tian heshou + liuguo da fengxiang* [1981 年省港红伶大会串《碧天贺寿+六国大封相》], Year 1981 (Guangdong, Canton) Province and Hong Kong star actors’ collorative performance of *Offering congratulations on longevity and Appointment as Prime Minister by Six States*. Bilibili, uploaded by Yunzaishuangtian [云在霜天, Cloud in frosty sky], 19 Oct. 2018, <www.bilibili.com/video/av34123837>. And Zuo Xiaoyan [左小燕], 97.

tradition for their scene 7, “Appointed the Prime Minister.” It is amid such grandeur and spectacle that Su Qin’s endeavors reach their culmination. Because it was only a matter of when that inevitable success would arrive, “Su Qin [therefore] takes it calmly.”²¹⁶ Based on the actual performance, however, the calmness in Su Qin’s welcome seems closer to coldness. Soon after the opening of the scene, Su Qin, tired after consecutive journeys between the Six States, falls asleep. A song about Su Qin’s achievements in setting up the alliance and defeating the State of Qin is sung in unison, as the secondary curtain opens to reveal eight soldiers lined up in the back; another six soldiers enter and march down, holding the banners of the Six States; then the kings of the Six States enter, salute each other and, and stand in two separate lines. As the song ends, a eunuch comes to center stage and reads the imperial edicts issued in honor of Su Qin’s great contributions; Su Qin is appointed the Prime Minister-in-Chief of the Six States, and granted the gold seal that accompanies this title. But for a fleeting instant in which Su Qin sits up and says, as if in dream, “Thank you, your majesty!” he his asleep the entire time. Finally, as the stage direction dictates, the kings “salute him solemnly and ritualistically” and take their leave. Everyone else leaves, too, until there is only Su Qin on the empty stage, still asleep.

Scene 7 is created specifically with the technique of contrast (对比, *duibi*).²¹⁷ Here, the playwrights build up a particular contrast that is “externally heated and internally cold” (外热内冷, *wai re nei leng*), the one between Su Qin’s internal calmness towards honor and power and the high-profile people and proceedings around him. The contrast is enhanced by the grand stage presentation created with the elements from the Cantonese “opera” *zhezixi* piece. It is another example of handling traditions through

²¹⁶ Wang Yan, interview, Suzhou, October 30, 2013.

²¹⁷ Wang Yan, telephone interview, Beijing, July 18, 2018.

inheritance and innovation, initiated by the playwrights and consummated by the production team in performance. Once again, their goal is to present the theme of gratitude and love.

Once attained, honor and power don't matter anymore; likewise, insult and humiliation are in the past. What matters is Su Qin's pursuit of world peace through gratitude and love. That remains unchanged from the very beginning, as evidenced by his statement, "I, Su Qin, am still the same Su Qin." It is another instance of the innovative use of language. The words are inherited from the language tag for Su Qin in the *chuanqi* play, but relocated after he thanks his father, brother and sister-in-law, the line is rid of the previous taste of indignation and acquires the new sense of gratitude. And thus ends Scene 8 and the whole Yongkun GS play.

4.2.1.3 Summary

As a play of lasting popularity, it is quite natural that GS has been chosen by contemporary Kunqu artists for adaptation. Factors contributing to the play's popularity in earlier productions include the hero Su Qin's extraordinary experiences, the literary merits in the *chuanqi* work and its variants, and the theatrical tradition preserved in *zhezixi* performances. These factors are centered on entertaining the audience by exposing the fickleness of human nature through the different attitudes towards Su Qin before and after his success.

The Yongkun production team considered this entertaining theme to be negative and unfitting for present aesthetic values and social enlightenment goals. Through the playwrights' literary creation, the play was rewritten into a story of a statesman's growth, and its theme is gratitude and love. The playwrights reorganized the plot by re-creating

the focal moment in the play. Previously, the focus was on the “Whole family mocking” Su Qin. By re-creating the characters of the Su family members to project a dominantly positive presence, the negative impact of the scene was reduced. Then, the playwrights revised and expanded the scene “Stabbing his thigh,” making it the new highlight of the play. In creating this scene and other parts of the play as well, the playwrights employed specific writing techniques with innovative applications of language: new interpretations of old key phrases and images from the *chuanqi* work, passages quoted from Chinese classic works, rhetorical methods such as personification, metaphor and symbolism, and the technique of contrast. Elements, conventions and practices of Kunqu performative tradition, including those preserved in the *zhezixi* pieces, are employed through transmission and innovation. The best example of this is the spectacle created by incorporating elements from the Cantonese “opera” *zhezixi* performance in Scene 7, “Appointed the Prime Minister.” This spectacle sharply contrasts with Su Qin’s internal calmness and peace of mind regarding fame and power. These attributes are not a part of his ambition; they are just what comes after he realizes it—the creation and preservation of world peace. The entire effort of the Yongkun GS production team was to present this theme of gratitude and love as the social enlightenment focus.

However, although prominently featured in discussions and critiques of the play published by journalists and critics, this theme of gratitude and love has never been explicitly stated by a member of the Yongkun production. Liu Wenhua (刘文华), the head of Yongkun and producer of Yongkun’s GS, came closest when he remarked on having fortunately secured a good play:

This script is great in its intention and has practical significance and the

power to inspire people. Especially, when Su Qin comes home in triumph after having gone through humiliations, he returns good for evil, which reflects the pursuit of goodness. It is a theme of harmony. A theme as such is not often seen on stage. The originality of GS is very eye-catching against the common practice of repeating traditional themes at the Kunju Festival.²¹⁸

Liu seems to be suggesting a connection between Yongkun's theme of gratitude and love and the guiding ideology of building a harmonious socialist society put forward by the Communist Party of China in 2004. If Liu or someone else involved in the production had clearly confirmed this connection, it would certainly have endowed their social enlightenment theme, as well as the entire production, with greater authority. But the claim is made only faintly. Similarly, the catch line at the end of the play, "I, Su Qin, am still the same Su Qin," could easily have been favorably connected to the requirement set forth by CPC Chairman Xi Jinping (习近平) in 2017, to "remain true to our original aspiration and keep our mission firmly in mind" (不忘初心, 牢记使命, *buwang chuxin, laoji shiming*). But so far, no such connection has been made by those involved in the production, or by journalists and critics. Despite the positive reception of the play evidenced by the multiple awards it has won, there seem to be reservations about making an outright statement of thematic connection to governmental goals, and caution—even timidity—in attempting a bolder claim.

Why would these Kunqu artists hold such an attitude toward interpreting a theme for social enlightenment? What other players might there be during the creation process

²¹⁸ Zhu Wenwu [朱闻武], "Yongkun *Jinyinji* jin Hangzhou" [永昆《金印记》进杭州, "Yongkun *Gold Seal* comes to Hangzhou], *Wenzhou ribao* [温州日报, Wenzhou daily], 9 July 2012.

for a production? How might such issues affect transmission and innovation of Kunqu's literary and performance aspects? Possible answers to these questions are explored in the following discussion of another adapted work, *Jingyang Bell* (景阳钟, *Jingyang zhong*).

4.2.2 Jingyang Bell

Jingyang Bell was created by Shangkun (上昆) on the basis of the *chuanqi* play *Tieguan tu* mentioned in the introduction of this chapter. The production is known as the company's third "grand slam" winner, a term borrowed from tennis. After *Ban Zhao* (2001) and *Palace of Eternal Life* (2008), *Jingyang Bell* won all the major theatre awards, including the *Zhongguo Xiqu Xuehui jiang* (中国戏曲学会奖, Chinese Xiqu Academy Award). A symposium called "Learning from the past and integrating the present—weeding through the old to bring forth the new" (鉴古融今•推陈出新, *Jian gu rong jin—tuichen chuxin*) was convened about it in May 2014. "Leaders" at different levels, "experts and scholars from different parts of China," as well as the Shangkun artists in the *Jingyang Bell* production, attended and gave speeches at the conference.²¹⁹ The term "leaders" may need a little more explanation than "experts and scholars." It is a respectful reference to government officials, here indicating those involved in departments concerned with theatre, arts, culture and propaganda. As is common practice with other winners of the same award, an anthology was expected to come out shortly afterwards which would be made up of the leaders' comments, the experts and scholars' critiques, and the creative team members' recollections and summaries.

²¹⁹ *Shanghai Kunju tuan* [上海昆剧团, Shanghai Kunju Troupe], "'Jian gu rong jin—tuichen chuxin': Kunju Jingyang zhong xueshu yantaohui zai hu yuxing" [鉴古融今•推陈出新"昆剧《景阳钟》学术研讨会在沪举行, "Learning from the past and integrating the present—weeding through the old to bring forth the new": symposium on Kunju Jingyang Bell was convened in Shanghai], *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai Theatre] 06 (2014): 2.

Indeed, the *chuanqi* play *Tieguan tu* (铁冠图, lit., “Iron-crown paintings,” Paintings by the Iron-crown Taoist Priest) offered a rich resource from which contemporary Shangkun artists could learn for the benefit of their production. The beneficial elements, again, fall into the two categories of the literary and performative traditions embodied in the play. *Tieguan tu* is another play that owes its lasting popularity to performance rather than language.²²⁰ Though its authorship remains a point of dispute, it is generally believed that the play was created by performers as a “synthesis of different performance versions,” with episodes taken from various sources and incorporated into a whole.²²¹ It was popular not only throughout the Qing dynasty but also in the following Republican Era (1912– 1949), so much so that “it would be sold out every time it was mounted.”²²²

As Stephen Owen observes, *chuanqi* plays “were often vast, sprawling works, usually with twenty to fifty scenes.”²²³ This “vast” and “sprawling” characteristic seems conspicuous in *Tieguan tu* than in other *chuanqi* plays examined in this dissertation, perhaps because it is presumably a synthesized piece with episodes from various sources. The play is composed of scenes that highlight different focal characters and are only

²²⁰ See Hua Wei [华玮], “Shui shi zhujue? Shui zai guankan?—lun qingdai Xiqu zhong de Chongzhen zhi si” [谁是主角? 谁在观看?—论清代戏曲中的崇祯之死, Who is the Main Character? Who is the Viewer?—A Discussion of the Death of Chongzhen in Qing Dynasty Drama]. *Xiju yajiu* [戏剧研究, Theatre Research], 11 (2013): 23-60; Hua Wei [华玮], “Xin faxian de Tieguan tu-Baishi jin jie” [新发现的《铁冠图·白氏尽节》], *The newly discovered Iron-Crown Paintings: Ms Bai Dies for Chastity*, *Zhonghua Xiqu* [中华戏曲, Chinese Xiqu], 02 (2013): 249-64.

²²¹ Wang Kui (王馼), “‘Zhaohun’ ‘quguo’ liang guan qing—cong *Tieguan tu* dao *Jingyang zhong de ‘tuotaihuangu’*” [“招魂”“去国”两关情—从《铁冠图》到《景阳钟》的“脱胎换骨”], “Calling the ghost” and “leaving homeland” are both connected with feelings—the fundamental change from *Tieguan tu* to *Jingyang Bell*, [影视与戏剧评论, Film, TV and drama review], 00 (2014): 185.

²²² Wang Yueyang (王悦阳), “*Tieguan tu*: chongxian liyuan jueban jingdian” [《铁冠图》: 重现梨园绝版经典, *Tieguan tu*: representing the “out-of-print” theatrical classic], *Xinmin zhoukan* [新民周刊, Xinmin weekly], 36 (2018), 94.

²²³ Stephen Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 880.

loosely connected together, with Li Zicheng (李自成), the leader of the peasant rebellion at the end of the Ming dynasty, being the sole character who appears throughout. The play begins with prefect Bian Dashou (边大绶) destroying Li Zicheng's ancestral graves to place a curse on his future, but the rebel army is victorious in successive battles. The Ming General Zhou Yuji (周遇吉) fights ferociously to guard the Ningwu Pass (宁武关), yet in the end, he is defeated and shot to death with arrows. Li's rebel army is closing in on the Ming capital Beijing. Officers and officials at the court all fear war and try to shy away from their duties. The eunuch Du Xun (杜勋) is assigned to supervise the city defense, but he colludes with the rebel army for profit and opens the city gates to let Li's army in. The Ming dynasty's last emperor, Chongzhen (崇祯), sends away his son the crown prince, kills his daughter, and forces his wife the empress to commit suicide before he hangs himself. His only companion in the last moment of life is Wang Cheng'en (王承恩), a loyal eunuch who kills Du Xun when he comes to induce him to capitulate, and then joins the emperor. However, as soon as the rebel army occupies the city, its generals start to become corrupt. One example is Li's senior general, Liu Zongmin (刘宗敏), who seizes Wu Sangui's (吴三桂) concubine. Wu is the Ming general stationed at the Shanhai Pass (山海关, *Shanhaiguan*) to guard against the Qing to the northeast. He has agreed to surrender to the rebel army but, insulted by what Liu has done, instead turns into the mortal enemy of the rebel army. He invites the Qing army to join him in the fight against Li Zicheng. Li is defeated, seeks refuge in the mountains and is killed by the villagers. Chongzhen and his loyal ministers and subjects all ascend to heaven and turn into immortals. The play ends with the Iron-crown Taoist priest (铁冠道人, *Tieguan daoren*)

expounding the messages in the paintings. At the beginning of the dynasty, the first Ming emperor asked him about the destiny of the Ming. As he could not directly reveal Heaven's mandate, he painted three paintings as prophecies instead. From top to bottom, they depict respectively the prosperity upon the founding of the Ming, the death of the last emperor, and the upcoming rulers of China on horseback. And that is how this play got its title, *Tieguan tu*, "Paintings by the Iron-crown Taoist Priest."

Xiqu scholar Fu Jin (傅谨) summarizes its unique artistic feature, "The wide range and variety of role categories in it make it hard to [imagine] having them all at once in the same performance; it [the performing art] is therefore imparted along different lineages, and exerts great influence."²²⁴ He further explains:

The performance stars multiple leading actors, and different scenes are performed by different characters via "relay" (接力, *jieli*), so the different parts of the same play are spread and inherited in different role categories. For example, the scenes "Dui dao buzhan" (对刀步战, Duet with broad sword on foot) and "Bie mu luan jian" (别母乱箭, Farewell to mother and shower of arrows) feature *wusheng* (武生, martial male) and *laosheng* (老生, older male) characters; "Zhuang zhong fen gong" (撞钟分宫, striking the bell [and] separating the imperial harem) features a *guansheng* (官[冠]生, official [crown] male) character; and "Cihu" (刺虎, Assassinating the Tiger) features *dan* (旦, female) role characters. The different role

²²⁴ Fu Jin's specific remark on this play came out as part of a newspaper article on the performance by the journalist Wang Run [王润]. See Wang Run [王润], "Jing kun yishujia lianmei chengxian *Tieguan tu*" [京剧艺术家联袂呈现《铁冠图》], *Jingju and Kunqu artists are in collaboration to present *Tieguan tu**, *Beijing wanbao* [北京晚报, Beijing evening], 19 Sept., 2018.

categories contribute to the richness of artistic diversity in this play.²²⁵

The examples Fu Jin cites are the most popular ones among the 18 *zhezixi* scenes that were passed on through the Qing dynasty.²²⁶ They are known for the “attention to both civil and martial skills and equal emphasis on singing and dance-acting” (文武兼顾, 唱做并重, *wenwu jiangū, chāng zuò bīn zhōng*). To be more specific, the scene “Dui dao buzhan” is the specialty of *changkao* (长靠, long-armored) *wusheng* actors for their mastery of skills necessary to fight with three different sets of weapons. As the scene title suggests, “Bie mu luan jian” comprises two sections, “Farewell to mother” and “Shower of arrows.” The starring role is played by a *wenwu laosheng* (文武老生, lit., “civil and martial” older male role) actor, stressing speech and song skills in the first section and acrobatic and fighting skills in the second. “Zhuangzhong” and “Fen gong” are the highlight scenes for the *guansheng*. The scenes depict Chongzhen, the last emperor of Ming dynasty, on his last day of his life. They are filled with extreme emotions as he sends his Crown Prince son to flee, kills his princess daughter, witnesses their mother and his empress committing suicide, and steps onto the path that leads to the end of his own life. The emotional surges are vocalized and visualized through the performer’s singing, speaking, and extensive employment of a variety of movement patterns. Similar emphasis on performance to externalize inner feelings is found in the “Cihu” scene, too. Both Kunqu master actor Han Shichang (韩世昌) and great Jingju *dan* artist Mei Lanfang (梅

²²⁵ The character who is assassinated is Li Guo [李过], whose nickname is Tiger, hence the scene title. And the specific *dan* role category in this scene is a *cishadan* [刺杀旦, lit., assassin and murderer *dan*]. The scene features three female assassin characters who kill others and three female victim characters who themselves are killed.

²²⁶ As the previous discussion of *Gold Seal* has demonstrated, the division of *chu* [出, scenes] in *zhezixi* pieces is not as specific and strict as in the literary texts of *chuanqi* plays. A *zhezixi* can be a single *chuanqi* scene or parts from different scenes combined together. The analysis here follows the way these scenes are referred to in common practice.

兰芳) played the former lady-in-waiting to the Ming emperor and empress who has become an assassin out for revenge. Among the many acting skills used by these actors in performance, one specific dance-acting skill stands out, the *bianlian* (变脸, changing face).²²⁷ Unlike the famous mask-changing technique of the same name found in Chuanju (川剧, Sichuan “opera”), this *bianlian* involves the performer changing facial expressions between sweet love when facing her enemy and sheer hatred when turning away from him.

The above narrative illustrates that this modern production of *Tieguan tu* has inherited and transmitted significant aspects of traditional performance. But the creation of this modern production was “a hard bone to bite,” as Jingju artist Shang Changrong (尚长荣) puts it.²²⁸ The reason for this goes beyond the artistic. *Tieguan tu* has been a banned play (禁戏, *jin xi*) since the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1949.

Ironically, for a play with such blatant themes of “mourning for the personal fate of [Emperor] Chongzhen” and “grieving for the lost Ming dynasty,” not only was *Tieguan tu* spared by the strict literary inquisition of the Qing dynasty, but it in fact became a major stage attraction throughout the Qing.²²⁹ While Hua Wei (华玮) attributes

²²⁷ Cong Zhaohuan [丛兆桓], “Kunqu zhong de gudian ming ju (xia)” [昆曲中的古典名剧(下), Famous classic plays in Kunqu (second half)], *Wenshi zhishi* [文史知识, Chinese Literature and History], 09 (2014), 94.

²²⁸ Shi Chenlu (施晨露), “Nan ken de yinggutou jin cheng “na jiang zhuan yehu”—Shangkun xinbian lishiju jingyang zhong wu yi qi gao bian yan bian gai, jihu na bian zhuan ye lingyu suoyou zhongyao jiangxiang” [难啃的硬骨头今成“拿奖专业户”—上昆新编历史剧《景阳钟》五易其稿边演边改, 几乎拿遍专业领域所有重要奖项, The hard bone becomes serial winner of awards—Shangkun’s new historical play *Jingyang Bell* goes through five revisions with its script and makes changes along performances, sweeping almost all the major awards in the field], *Jiefang ribao* [解放日报, Jiefang Daily], 20 May 2014.

²²⁹ Hua Wei [华玮], “Shui shi zhujue? Shui zai guankan?—lun qingdai Xiqu zhong de Chongzhen zhi si” [谁是主角? 谁在观看?—论清代戏曲中的崇祯之死, Who is the Main Character? Who is the Viewer?—A Discussion of the Death of Chongzhen in Qing Dynasty Drama], *Xiju yanjiu* [戏剧研究, Theatre Research], 11 (2013): 58.

the cause to “at least a prima facie intent to praise the Qing,”²³⁰ Zhou Yude (周育德) directly defines the play as one that “embodies the ‘main theme’ of the Qing dynasty” (体现清王朝“主旋律”, *tixian Qing wangchao zhuxuanli*).²³¹ Originally a musical term, “main theme” is employed to mean the major pursuit in a play, a literary work, a group of people, or even a dynasty; for instance, it refers to a theatrical theme that supports a major governmental policy or initiative. What Zhou means is that the play *Tieguan tu* embodies a primary goal of the Qing dynasty, especially in its early years, which was to justify their conquest of China at the end of the Ming dynasty as stemming from Heaven's mandate. It is probably for the same reasons that *Tieguan tu* was banned after 1949. First of all, the army of the peasant rebellion led by Li Zicheng was cursed and condemned in the play as being composed of traitors and villains. Second, whether by lamenting Ming Emperor Chongzhen or, through the Qing rulers’ “meticulous manipulation and utilization of the historical memory,”²³² praising the new rulers, its author(s) nonetheless sided with the feudal ruling class. It was therefore considered “ideologically reactionary” (思想反动, *sixiang fandong*),²³³ especially in the second half of the 20th century, because it runs counter to the socialist view of China’s historical progression, as summarized here by Sun Mei (孙玫): “The rebellions by the peasant class against the landlord class pushed

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Zhou Yude (周育德), “*Tieguan tu* de tuichenchuxin—shuo Kunju *Jingyang zhong*” [《铁冠图》的推陈出新—说昆剧《景阳钟》], Weeding through the old to bring forth the new out of *Tieguan tu*—on Kunju *Jingyang Bell*, *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2014* [中国昆曲年鉴 2014, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera—China, 2014], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖] (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2015), 114.

²³² Hua Wei [华玮], “Shui shi zhujue? Shui zai guankan?—lun qingdai Xiqu zhong de Chongzhen zhi si” [谁是主角? 谁在观看?—论清代戏曲中的崇祯之死, Who is the Main Character? Who is the Viewer?—A Discussion of the Death of Chongzhen in Qing Dynasty Drama], *Xiju yanjiu* [戏剧研究, Theatre Research], 11 (2013): 24.

²³³ Guo Liang [郭亮], “Kunqu biao yan yishu de yidai fanben—*Shen yin jian gu lu*” [昆曲表演艺术的一代范本--《审音鉴古录》], Model for a generation of the Kunqu performance art—*Record of inspecting sounds and learning from the past*, *Xiju bao* [戏剧报, Chinese Theatre] Z7 (1961): 54.

forward the development and progress of Chinese feudal society and were the determining force that pushed forward the progress of Chinese history.”²³⁴ Third, the play ends with the emperor and all his loyal followers turning into immortals after death and ascending to heaven, making feudal superstition a further reason for banning it.²³⁵

Unlike for *Fa Zidu* (伐子都, Attacking Zidu), the original play adapted for the Kunqu production *Gongsun Zidu* discussed in chapter 3, there is no record of *Tieguan tu* on the official list of banned plays. Knowledge of the banning is clearly shared among the authors of publications on Shangkun’s *Jingyang zhong*, but there is no definitive evidence of exactly when the play was banned, or when the ban was lifted. However, after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976), *Tieguan tu*-based *zhezixi* and full productions began returning to the stage. At Shangkun, the first were presented by Cai Zhengren (蔡正仁), Shangkun’s leading actor specializing in *guansheng* roles. After returning from five days of study with his former master teacher Shen Chuanzhi (沈传芷), Cai Zhengren publicly performed the two scenes “Zhuangzhong” and “Fen gong” on Sept. 7, 1986. In October, Shangkun then made a performance tour to Beijing with a production titled *Tieguan tu*, which was made up of the scenes “Bie mu luan jian,” “Zhuangzhong,” “Fen gong” and “Cihu.”²³⁶ An adaptation was then premiered by Shangkun on May 6, 1990, under the title *Jiashen ji* (甲申记, Record of [the year] Jiashen). The play had five scenes,

²³⁴ Sun Mei [孙玫], “Lishixing de zhuanbian: cong jinxi, gai xi dao baohu feiwuzhi wenhua yichan” [历史性的转变: 从禁戏、改戏到保护非物质文化遗产, The Historical Transformation from Xiqu Prohibition and Xiqu Adaptation to Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection], *Wenhua yichan* [文化遗产, Cultural heritage] 01 (2010): 18.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, 19.

²³⁶ The production seemed to have aroused little response either positively or negatively. See Li Dake [李大珂], “Kuoda xilu yu huoyue pinglun—chuantong jumu zayi” [扩大戏路与活跃评论—传统剧目杂议, Broaden the play categories and make active the commentaries—discussion on the traditional plays], *Zhongguo xiju* [中国戏剧, Chinese Theatre] 10 (1987): 46.

“Wei jing” (围京, Besieging the Capital), “Zhuangzhong,” “Fen gong,” “Ruzhu” (入主, Entering as the [new] host) and “Cihu.” Two of these scenes were newly written, namely, “Wei jing” and “Ruzhu.” As Tang Baoxiang summarizes them, “at the sight of the pitiful scene after the assassination and the news of Wu Sangui (吴三桂) surrendering to the Qing, Li Zicheng involuntarily gets engrossed in thought.”²³⁷

In 2011, Cai Zhengren retired from his post as Shangkun’s director (团长, *tuanzhang*). The new leadership decided to mount another production based on *Tieguan tu*, possibly both to pay tribute to the older master performers and for the transmission of their performing art to the company’s younger actors. Various outside resources in playwriting, directing and designing were employed, and three conferences with “leaders, experts and scholars” were held during the creative process for “advice and suggestions.”²³⁸ *Jingyang Bell* is composed of six scenes, “Ting yi” (廷议, Court conference), “Ye pi” (夜批, Overnight reading), “Zhongjian” (中箭, Shot with an arrow), “Zhuangzhong,” “Fen gong,” and “Tiannu” (天怒, Heavenly wrath).²³⁹

As the following Figure 11 illustrates, the performative tradition embodied in the two scenes of “Zhuangzhong” and “Fen gong” was preserved and passed on in the production of *Jingyang Bell*. More specifically, the new play carried on the artistic

²³⁷ Tang Baoxiang [唐葆祥], “Jiashen ji” [甲申记, Record of [the year] Jiashen], in Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] ed., *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera] (Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002), 187-8.

²³⁸ Information regarding former *Tieguan tu*-related productions is openly circulated among reports and papers on *Jingyang zhong*. See for one example in Zhang Yue [张悦], “Lao xi xin tan—cong Kunju *Tieguan tu* dao *Jingyang zhong*” [老戏新探 “禁戏” 新生 —从昆剧《铁冠图》到《景阳钟》], Old play’s new exploration and “banned play”’s new life—from Kunju *Tieguan tu* to *Jingyang Bell*, *Zhongguo yishu bao* [中国艺术报, China arts daily], 26 May 2014.

²³⁹ The earlier version in 2012 under the title of *Jingyang zhong bian* (景阳钟变, lit., “Jingyang bell change”) had of seven scenes. The number was reduced to six scenes in July 2013. However, as the title of Shi Chenlu’s article suggests, the production team has been revising all along the performances, so the number may change again.

lineage for the *guansheng* role subcategory: from the Qing Kunqu performers to the “Transmission generation” actors, those who graduated from the Suzhou Kunju Transmission Institute (苏州昆剧传习所, *Suzhou Kunju chuanxi suo*) in early 1920s; from the “Transmission” generation actors to Cai Zhengren and his fellow classmates in the First Kunqu Performer Training Program (第一届昆曲演员训练班, *Diyijie Kunqu yanyuan xunlian ban* (1954 - 1961), known as “Kun daban” (昆大班, “Kunqu class one”); from the Kun daban actors to Li An (黎安), the actor playing Chongzhen in this current production, who graduated from the Third Kunqu Performer Training Program (1985 - 1992) at the Shanghai Xiqu School, popularly referred to as “Kun sanban” (昆三班, “Kunqu class three”). What is more, Li An was formerly the student of Yue Meiti (岳美缙), the leading actor for the *jinsheng* (巾生, “(scholar) cap *sheng*”) role subcategory, those *sheng* specializing in roles of young male scholars. He later became Cai Zhengren’s student to learn how to portray Chongzhen in the *guansheng* role subcategory. The experience of transmission thus also broadened the performing expertise for Shangkun’s succeeding performers.

Figure 11. Inheritance of 18 *Zhezixi* Scenes in Post-Qing Dynasty

Tieguan tu-based Productions

Production	<i>Tieguan tu</i>	<i>Tieguan tu</i>	<i>Jiashen ji</i>	<i>Jingyang zhong</i>
Company	“Transmission generation”	Shangkun	Shangkun	Shangkun
Year	1926	1986	1990	2013
<i>Xun tu</i> (询图, inquiry into the paintings)				
<i>Tan shan</i> (探山, scouting in mountains)	Yes			
<i>Ying hong</i> (营哄, camp chaos)	Yes			
<i>Zhuo Chuang</i> (捉闯, catching Li Zicheng)	Yes			
<i>Jie xiang</i> (借饷, borrowing funds)	Yes			
<i>Guan tu</i> (观图, watching the paintings)				
<i>Dui dao</i> (对刀, duet with broad swords)	Yes			
<i>Bai ken</i> (拜恳, petitioning)	Yes			
<i>Bie mu</i> (别母, farewell to mother)	Yes	Yes		
<i>Luan jian</i> (乱箭, shower of arrows)	Yes	Yes		
<i>Zhuangzhong</i> (撞钟, striking the bell)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Fen gong</i> (分宫, separating the harem)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<i>Shoumen</i> (守门, guarding the gate)	Yes			
<i>Guiwei</i> (归位, returning to heaven)				
<i>Sha jian</i> (杀监, killing eunuchs)	Yes			
<i>Cihu</i> (刺虎, assassinating Tiger)	Yes	Yes	Yes	
<i>Ye yue</i> (夜乐, night music)				
<i>Xing kao</i> (刑拷, extortion with torture)				
Total	14	5	3	2

Note:

1. The 1926 production by the “Transmission” performers is said to have had 14 scenes, with “Dui dao” and “Buzhan” counted as two scenes.
2. Five scenes—“Xun tu,” “Guan tu,” “Guiwei,” “Ye yue,” and “Xing kao”—were not included in the productions listed in the Figure; nor are they found in the *zhezixi* repertoires of the Kunqu companies included in this research. It is therefore highly possible that those five scenes have been “lost” in the process of transmission.

In addition to inheritance, this 2013 production is known for its innovations. The most conspicuous one is that Chongzhen has become the focal character of the play. Li Zicheng, the peasant rebellion leader, does not even appear on stage; neither do the paintings that represent Heaven's mandate, which the Qing rulers utilized to justify their “inheritance” of control over China from the Ming dynasty. Accordingly, the “title subject”—the Jingyang Bell—is given symbolic meanings. The bell is struck three times in the production. The first time occurs in the opening scene, for convening the court to discuss the defence of the capital against the insurrectionary army. The Minister of Defense then steps forward for the mission—he fights to the death, courageously and desperately, in the following scene, “Shot with an arrow,” which is built upon the *zhezixi* “Shower of Arrows,” a display of combat skills. The second time, the bell rings on the cusp of the fall of the besieged capital. No officers or officials answer the call. The only person who eventually shows up is a eunuch. He wins the emperor’s trust, and is assigned to safeguard the city gate, which the eunuch then opens to usher in the enemy. The third and last time coincides with Chongzhen’s flight from the palace. Obviously, the bell is not struck by a hand from the Ming court but from the enemy’s camp, and thus its tolling not only serves as a death knell for the Emperor but also signals the change of regimes.

While depicting the emperor’s predicament, the play attacks many social ills keenly felt by the modern audience—corruption, materialistic pursuits, and betrayal in the face of either threat or temptation. At the end, the emperor makes a final appeal before he commits suicide: “Future generations, learn the lessons from my failure and do not commit the same errors!”—an explicit attempt to evoke the present-day zeitgeist through the mouth of a historical figure.

Undoubtedly, incarnated in *Jingyang Bell* are the traditional *guansheng* performing skills as well as the company's persistent effort to preserve and transmit *Tieguan tu*. Meanwhile, a glance at Figure 11 reveals that only two of the original *Tieguan tu* scenes are inherited in this 2013 production—a remarkably small number for such a rich database of performative tradition. This limitation is enhanced when viewed in comparison with either Shangkun's earlier productions of *Tieguan tu*, or Yongkun's *Gold Seal*. The limited number of extant *zhezixi* pieces from *Gold Seal* were not a rich resource for Yongkun's production, but were fully tapped. The following remark by critic Hu Xiaojun (胡晓军) was possibly intended as both interpretation and justification for the paucity of original *Tieguan tu* scenes in the 2013 production: “In essence, [the Shangkun artists have carried out]‘only subtraction without addition’ as regards the original ideological connotation of *Tieguan tu*.”²⁴⁰ “Only subtraction without addition” is similar to the principle of “only deletion but no addition” advocated by Pai Hsien-yung for the production of The Youth Version of *The Peony Pavilion*; as discussed in the chapter on that production, Pai meant that, while words could be taken out of the original script, no new words were to be added, in order to maintain the play's authenticity. However, Hu was not referring to added words or scenes, but rather to additional ideological connotations. Building upon his previous newspaper article on *Jingyang Bell*,²⁴¹ Hu further elaborates on the reasons behind the choices of what to give up in the

²⁴⁰ Hu Xiaojun [胡晓军], “Shenshen de miandui liangchong ‘lishi’—cong Kunju *Jingyang zhong bian kan lishi tici gudian Xiqu wenben de dangdai chuangbian*” [审慎地面对两重“历史”——从昆剧《景阳钟变》看历史题材古典戏曲文本的当代创编, Prudently facing the two folds of “history”—on the contemporary creation of classic Xiqu texts with historical subjects through Kunju *Jingyang Bell change*], *Yishu pinglun* [艺术评论, Arts Criticism], 03 (2013): 95.

²⁴¹ Hu Xiaojun [胡晓军], “Xintai shenshen, zuowei wentuo—cong Kunju *Jingyang zhong bian kan ‘gu’ xi ‘jin’ bian*” [心态审慎 作为稳妥—从昆剧《景阳钟变》看“古”戏“今”编, Prudent in mind, stable in action—on “historical” plays’ “modern” adaptation through Kunju *Jingyang Bell change*], *Wenxue bao* [文

production, “[Subtractions] were probably made for two reasons. The first was to evade (规避, *guibi*) the thread and content of the Li Zicheng peasant rebellion, and bypass some known-to-all forbidden psychological zones.”²⁴² The second was “to evade complexity in the personality of Chongzhen.”²⁴³ “A theme of ‘corruption and subjugation’ (贪腐亡国, *tanfu wanguo*) was manifested” in order to achieve the second purpose.²⁴⁴ Hu’s concept of evasions is echoed by An Kui (安葵) and Liu Zhen (刘桢).²⁴⁵ But the theme of “corruption and subjugation” has met with neither positive nor negative responses, perhaps “to evade the complexity” of the fall of the Ming dynasty.

“Leaders, experts and scholars” formed a special group for the *Jingyang Bell* production. More than just an audience at the performances, they were invited to be part of the creation process for their “advice and suggestions.” They offered endorsement, too, in such comments as “Obviously, the adapted plot is more rational.”²⁴⁶ They might have contributed to the production’s sweeping victory at various contests and festivals.

学报, Literature Press], 28 March 2013.

²⁴² Hu Xiaojun [胡晓军], “Shenshen de miandui liangchong ‘lishi’—cong Kunju *Jingyang zhong bian kan lishi ticao gudian Xiqu wenben de dangdai chuangbian*” [审慎地面对两重“历史”——从昆剧《景阳钟变》看历史题材古典戏曲文本的当代创编, Prudently facing the two folds of “history”—on the contemporary creation of classic Xiqu texts with historical subjects through Kunju *Jingyang Bell change*], *Yishu pinglun* [艺术评论, Arts Criticism], 03 (2013): 94.

²⁴³ *ibid.*, 95.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 94

²⁴⁵ An Kui (安葵), “Chongzhen zhi si de beiju neihan—kan Shanghai Kunju Tuan yanchu de *Jingyang zhong*” [崇祯之死的悲剧内涵—看上海昆剧团演出的《景阳钟》], The tragic connotation of Chongzhen’s death—watching *Jingyang Bell* performed by Shanghai Kunju Troupe], *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2014* [中国昆曲年鉴 2014, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2014], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖] (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2015), 114; Liu Zhen (刘桢), “Jian zou pianfeng jiu mao xin yan—Shanghai Kunju Tuan Kunju *Jingyang zhong gaibian chuyi*” [剑走偏锋 旧貌新颜—上海昆剧团昆剧《景阳钟》改编刍议, Sword deflects the front and new look of an old face—my humble opinion of Shanghai Kunju Troupe’s Kunju *Jingyang Bell*], *Zhongguo wenhua bao* [中国文化报, China Culture Daily], 17 July 2014. In the article, Liu uses *huibi* (回避) a synonym of *guibi*.

²⁴⁶ Liu Zhen (刘桢), “Jian zou pianfeng jiu mao xin yan—Shanghai Kunju Tuan Kunju *Jingyang zhong gaibian chuyi*” [剑走偏锋 旧貌新颜—上海昆剧团昆剧《景阳钟》改编刍议, Sword deflects the front and new look of an old face—my humble opinion of Shanghai Kunju Troupe’s Kunju *Jingyang Bell*], *Zhongguo wenhua bao* [中国文化报, China Culture Daily], 17 July 2014.

However, what specific “advice and suggestions” they offered remains largely unknown to those who did not participate in the creative process.²⁴⁷ What also remains missing are the explanations and justifications for the discrepancies between the honors and awards that *Jingyang Bell* has won, and the limitations in inheritance and innovation revealed above in the production analysis. There have been about 50 news reports and academic papers published in regard to the production. More often than not, they formed the foundation of the speeches at the conference, which were to come out in print later, as part of the anthology on the production. But by July 2019, over five years after the symposium, there has been no update concerning its future publication. In addition to the unspecified theme(s) of the play, answers are also yet to be found regarding the morality conveyed in Chongzhen’s final call to future generations, “to learn from my errors.” In the absence of answers, either in the production or from the special group of “leaders, experts and scholars,” can it be that they have indeed learned that lesson, and it is to treat those difficult questions “prudently and soundly,” with evasion?

4.2.3 Boundless Love

Boundless Love (爱无疆, *Ai wujiang*), originally titled *The Story of Saving Mother* (救母记, *Jiu mu ji*), is a Beikun (北昆) production that debuted on May 30, 2012. It was included in the list entitled “Praising the spirit of Beijing and eulogizing the great era—Beijing 2012 excellent theatrical works” (颂扬北京精神, 讴歌伟大时代—2012年北京市优秀剧目展演) and performed in October 2012 as a tribute to the opening of the

²⁴⁷ Gao Jun [高均], the drummer of the production, cited an example. Some expert(s) pointed out that it was improper to refer to the peasant rebellion army as *zekou* (贼寇, pronounced in mandarin *zeikou*), a derogative expression, so revisions were made to rid the language of this disapproving tone. Gao Jun, interview, Shanghai, July 30, 2013.

Eighteenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China.²⁴⁸

Allegedly inspired by an actual event that took place in the city of Beijing, *Boundless Love* tells a story of “severing his liver to save mother” (割肝救母, *ge gan jiu mu*)—a young man donates part of his liver for transplantation to save his mother.²⁴⁹ Son Gao Lingyun (高凌云) and daughter Gao Xiaoyun (高小云) are raised by their widowed mother. Lingyun is sponsored by the state scholarship fund to study in a doctoral program in life sciences at Tokyo University, but he initially refuses to go, for it means that he will have to leave his mother behind. She has been troubled by liver disease for years. Sister Xiaoyun, her fiancé friends and neighbors make solemn promises to take care of her. Mother Gao also urges him to go, saying that this research abroad will not only fulfill his own hopes but also his late father’s final wish. Lingyun eventually concedes. Lingyun attains great achievements in research, yet he never stops thinking about his mother. Mother Gao’s condition deteriorates with the late stage of cirrhosis and she is in dire need of a liver transplant. Xiaoyun is pregnant and her blood type does not match. People in Beijing step forward to help but there is no matching donor. In anxiety, Lingyun’s brother-in-law contacts him and informs him of the situation. Lingyun is heart-broken and wants to return home immediately. Lingyun’s Japanese adviser Prof. Teng (藤)

²⁴⁸ Wang Yan [王焱], “Beifang Kunqu Juyuan 2012 Niandu Kunqu gongzuo zongshu” [北方昆曲剧院 2012 年度昆曲工作综述, Overview of Kunqu activities], *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian* 2013 [中国昆曲年鉴 2013, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2013], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖] (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2013), 33.

²⁴⁹ Wang Yan, interview, Beijing, Oct. 28, 2013. However, the actual source of the story remains obscure after multiple attempts to locate it. Based on news reports during that period of time, the most likely archetype for the son-donor is from Guangzhou. He was studying abroad before his return for the transplantation surgery. He also has a younger sister, as in the play. Shi Shanwei [石善伟], “*Liuxuesheng huiguo ge gan jiu mu—cheng muqin sheng wo yang wo jiu gai baoda*” [留学生回国割肝救母—称母亲生我养我就该报答, Chinese overseas student returns to sever his liver to save his mother—says mother gave birth to me and raised me so I should repay her], *Guangzhou ribao* [广州日报, Guangzhou daily], 8 September 2011.

cherishes his talent and tries to convince him that he should set career before kinship. Despite Prof. Teng's remonstrations, Lingyun comes back to China to donate part of his liver to his mother. Prof. Teng follows him to the hospital to stop him, but Lingyun's Korean classmate Jin Mingshan (金明善) makes Teng realize that he himself is also subject to affections. All that Teng does is out of his care for Lingyun. However, Mother Gao does not want her son to take risks and sacrifice his health for her. She vanishes from the hospital. Everyone goes out to search for her. Finally, the son and daughter find their mother. Together, the children review their growth under her care. Lingyun reiterates his resolution to repay their mother's love and dedication.

4.2.3.1 Inheritance

Definitely set in the years after 1911, *Boundless Love* falls into the category of modern play (现代剧, *xiandai ju*). Modern plays in Kunqu and other Xiqu forms are often criticized as “spoken drama plus singing” (话剧加唱, *huaaju jia chang*). To avoid earning this label, both the literary and performative traditions must be fully employed to characterize the production as still being Kunqu.

Achieving this begins with the literary creation of the play script. First of all, it must ensure the “Kunqu-ness” of the language, which means that the arias must be written to appropriate fixed-melodies (曲牌, *qupai*). As previous discussions have illustrated, Kunqu (*chuanqi*) playwrights' creation is a process that is not only literary but also musical. In writing, they take into consideration the musicality of each of the written characters in the tonal language of Chinese and put them to the fixed-melodies according to rules that have already been “fixed.” After the work of composers, arias in fixed-melodies are of course presented to audiences through the singing of the actors, which

completes the process of combining the poetic beauty of *chuanqi* and the musical beauty of Kunqu. *Boundless Love* was written by Wang Yan (王焱), the resident playwright at Beikun, who is also the co-author of *Gold Seal*. *Boundless Love* is constructed in 10 scenes. They are “preluded” by an “opening” (开篇, *kaipian*) that is set to the fixed-melody “Yumeiren” (虞美人). This follows the practice of the *fumo* (副末, lit., “assistant *mo*,” secondary male character) *kaichang* (开场, introduction) in the literary tradition of Kunqu. As in *The Lute* and *Peony Pavilion*, the opening usually states the playwright’s intention and offers a summary of the plot. Wang Yan experimented with something different in her “opening,” because “modern audiences often have an idea of what the play is about before coming to the performance.”²⁵⁰ Instead of directly stating the intention and plot summary, she offers an eight-line aria that includes key words such as *youyou suiyue* (悠悠岁月, a long time), *wangu* (万古, forever), *bujin* (不尽, endless), *zhenqing* (真情, true feelings), *jinshi* (今世, this age), *jinghua* (京华, the capital), *getai* (歌台, song platform), *gantian dongdi* (感天动地, moving heaven and earth), and *kun sheng* (昆声, Kun[qu] sound). Put together, these words suggest “to sing about eternal true feelings in today’s Beijing with Kunqu on stage.” Another 32 *qu* poems set to fixed-melodies (*qupai*) were composed to be sung in the 10 scenes, and three more were written for heightened speech (韵白, *yunbai*).²⁵¹

As discussed throughout this dissertation, the literary aspect of the Kunqu tradition stresses theme and plot as well as poetic creation. Clearly, the theme of *Boundless Love* is

²⁵⁰ Wang Yan, interview, Beijing, June 30, 2018.

²⁵¹ The playwright’s work is to be finalized by the performers. For more details regarding the performers’ finalization, specifically, in aspects of movement, song and speech, please see the summary section of this chapter.

focused on filial piety, “[one of] the core values of Chinese traditional culture.”²⁵² More importantly, filial piety is the key element that connects this modern play to many other works in the Kunqu repertoire with similar focuses for social enlightenment. It is not possible to find a perfect match in the extant Kunqu repertory for “severing his liver to save his mother” in the sense of modern medicine. But sons and daughters (and in-laws) in traditional tales with the theme of filial piety may instead give up livers to their parents as food or soup. Rather than by transplantation surgery, it is usually through the miracles wrought by delighted gods that parents are healed.²⁵³ But there is an abundance of plays with the theme of filial piety. For example, *The Lute*, which was quoted in the introduction of this chapter, resonates significantly as it “looks only at the filial son and his virtuous wives.”²⁵⁴

As the playwright’s notes indicate, she tries to re-define filial piety “from a contemporary perspective”: first, a series of questions is raised, “What is ‘filial piety’? Is it obedience? Or is it respect?” Then, an answer is offered, “It is love, [and] it is affection for one’s family members.”²⁵⁵ The questions are in fact a summary of the original definition of filial piety, with its focus on obedience and respect. How is filial piety, “the only choice Chinese have had for correctly relating to their parents since ancient times,”

²⁵² Wang Wei [王薇], “Bai shan xiao wei xian—guan xinbian Kunju *Ai wujiang*” [百善孝为先 观新编昆剧《爱无疆》], *Filial piety is the foremost of all virtues—watching new Kunju Boundless Love*, *Zhongguo yanyuan* [中国演员, China actor], 04 (2012): 17.

²⁵³ For example, see the Yuju (豫剧) play, *Bai Haitang ge gan jiu mu* [白海棠割肝救母, Bai Haitang severs liver to save mother], *Anhui wenhua yinxiang chubanshe* [安徽文化音像出版社, Anhui culture Audiovisual Publishing House], 2002.

²⁵⁴ Although the playwright Wang Yan (王焱) denies direct influence from any specific older play, she firmly acknowledges drawing on the literary tradition. Wang Yan, interview, Beijing, June 30, 2018.

²⁵⁵ Wang Yan (王焱), “Muai zi xiao chuan wandai—xie zai Kunqu dangdai ju *Ai wujiang* shouyan zhiqian” [母爱子孝传万代—写在昆曲当代剧《爱无疆》首演之前, Mother’s love and son’s filial piety pass on for thousands of generations—written before the premiere of the contemporary Kunqu play *Boundless Love*], unpublished work, personal collection.

depicted similarly and differently in this play?²⁵⁶

One of the resonating examples is in plot arrangement. *The Lute* is known for the “three rejections” (三不从, *san bu cong*), the three attempts Cai Bojie makes to reject, first, his father’s urging to leave home for the imperial exam, then the official appointment by the emperor, and finally the marriage proposed by Prime Minister Niu, but none of his refusals is accepted. The elements of obedience and respect are also part of the filial piety found in *Boundless Love*, and there seem to be three incidents of rejection, as well. The first rejection takes place when Lingyun refuses to leave his sick mother and go to Japan. Like Father Cai, Mother Gao finally persuades her son to leave, but she mobilizes all the possible resources from daughter, friends and neighbors to no avail until, finally, she presents his father’s unfulfilled wish as the highest order of filial piety. Lingyun respects this and obeys. But at the second rejection, when his adviser Prof. Teng tries to prevent him from saving his mother, he does not budge, but rather takes action and returns to China. In the last case, when Mother Gao refuses to risk Lingyun’s health for an unguaranteed chance of survival, he does not yield either, and sticks with his rejection of her refusal. By recounting the care and support he received from her, Lingyun shows his mother the reason for his decision and determination. Lingyun succeeds in winning his mother’s approval, just as he has gained Prof. Teng’s understanding with the help of Jin.

Aside from the first time, Lingyun does not simply give up out of respect and obedience when his second and third rejections are refused by his adviser and his mother. Contrasting with the internally troubled Bojie who accepts the denials of his rejections

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

and obeys his elders and superiors, Lingyun perseveres and persuades his adviser and his mother to accept his decisions. Thus, obedience and respect might ostensibly be weak or even missing in *Boundless Love*. However, a closer analysis reveals the differences underlying the specific social enlightenment focuses of the two plays. In *The Lute*, obedience and respect within the concept of filial piety are unconditional, and that is why the play won Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang's favor. There is no choice but to conform to a parent's (or superior's) will. And in other plays known for their focus on filial piety, the characters find themselves in similar situations or dilemmas. For example, in the *Story of the Jumping Carps* (跃鲤记, *Yue li ji*), in order to please his ill-tempered mother, the son has to divorce his wife, even though he knows his wife is terribly wronged and he himself suffers from the separation. Disrespecting decisions by such authorities as Prime Minister Niu is simply unthinkable, let alone disobeying the emperor. The fabrics of such social networks go one-way only, from emperor to subjects and from senior to junior. In *Boundless Love*, human relationships are founded on a two-way interaction. The mother loves the son, and the son appreciates his mother's love and offers what he can to extend mother's life. Filial piety is thus not a passive duty to be fulfilled but an active return of love.

4.2.3.2 Innovations

For a play involving the contemporary vocabulary of liver transplantation and video chat, innovation seems inevitable in *Boundless Love*. For a production to have been selected for the list of "Beijing 2012 excellent theatrical works," it must have been "original, contemporary, and associated with Beijing" (原创的, 当代的, 北京的,

yuanchuang de, dangdai de, Beijing de).²⁵⁷ Innovations were made in three key aspects through the “interdisciplinary” collaboration of theatre artists from different disciplines.

One example is the director’s original employment of the chorus. The chorus in *Boundless Love* is not a Xiqu element, nor is it of Chinese origin. It is a concept that the director took from ancient Greek drama. The chorus is led by the *fumo* playing the news reporter and is made up of actors in other supporting roles. And the chorus really does sing. When the news reporter is singing the opening song from the upstage center, members of the chorus come from different directions and gather at downstage right. After finishing the first half, he joins the chorus, and everyone sings in unison for the second half of the Opening. In addition to vocalization, the chorus takes up multiple parts all at once. They play the son and daughter in childhood, the neighbors, the passerby on the street, as well as volunteers for the liver donation, and the stage crew moving a prop stone bridge; through collaborating with lighting, the chorus also serves as the secondary curtain by providing cover for the lead characters’ entries and exits and indicating the scene changes.

There is no “scenery” in the traditional sense. All scenery is projected onto three huge LED (Light Emitting Diode) screens set along the upper stage. In addition to the use of current vocabulary such as ‘email,’ ‘DNA,’ and ‘life science’ in the stage language, the three LED screens stand out as the physical embodiment of contemporary digitalization. They can be used for both domestic settings and outdoors landscape. When the doctor pays a visit to the Gao’s in scene 1, images of the interior of the residence are displayed

²⁵⁷ Wang Yan [王焱], “Beifang Kunqu juyuan 2012 Niandu Kunqu gongzuo zongshu” [北方昆曲剧院 2012 年度昆曲工作综述, Overview of Kunqu activities], *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian* 2013 [中国昆曲年鉴 2013, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2013], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖] (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2013), 33.

across the screens, each with a different image. The separate sections can also merge into a complete large picture, such as the round, bright moon in the night sky in scene 5, which enhances Lingyun's longing for his mother at the Mid-Autumn Festival, when family should come together for a reunion.

The screens also play a part in creating the sense of "being associated with Beijing." Thematic images of Beijing are also created through music, most especially use of the song titled *Rang women dang qi shuang jiang* (让我们荡起双桨, "Let us row our oars"). Originally the theme song in the 1955 film *Zuguo de huaduo* (祖国的花朵, Flowers of motherland), the song continues to enjoy a long-lasting, wide-spread popularity. Many distinctively Beijing images are mentioned in it, including the White Pagoda, Stone Bridge, and the "green trees and red walls" at Beihai (北海, North Lake) Park, which used to be part of the imperial palace. Through projection, those landmark images of Beijing appear on the screens. A moveable stage property representing the stone bridge in the song also presents a running image through the play. At the end of scene 1, little Lingyun is down with a high fever and Mother Gao carries him on her back to the hospital. They take a short break on the bridge, and it is here that Mother Gao sings the song "Let us row our oars" to Lingyun. Again, it is on the bridge that the son and the daughter find their mother and the family is reunited. The stone bridge prop also helps to increase the dimensions of the performance space in the earlier mentioned scene 5. Lingyun and his mother are at opposite ends of the bridge, singing about missing each other. They are under the same moon but separated by the ocean. Then, the spirit of Father Gao enters and joins in the singing of longing. Thus, the stone bridge across the stage not only stands for their separation by the sea, but also the separation between the

living and the dead. Elements from the song are employed musically, by incorporating the melody from the refrain in the aria sung by Father and Mother Gao.²⁵⁸

4.2.3.3 Summary

Filial piety has been a social enlightenment focus in Xiqu plays in both feudal dynasties and modern-day China. It is the ideal norm that helps with the health of a family and reinforces social stability, because the family is the nuclear cell that makes up society. The parent-child relationship is not only significant to the household but also to the country. As the Chinese proverb goes, “Filial piety is the first and foremost of all virtues.”

Through re-defining the long-cherished virtue of filial piety, playwright Wang Yan and her Beikun colleagues tried to respond to the administrative desire for contemporary expressions of social enlightenment. In creating a modern Kunqu play, they looked to the Kunqu literary tradition for lyric writing, plot organization, narrative structure, and characterization. In the stage presentation of a production expected to be “original, contemporary and [representative of] Beijing,” the director collaborated with the playwright, composer, designers, and of course actors, to work out ways to create visual and audio thematic images, explore stage space and incorporate non-Kunqu, even non-Chinese, theatrical elements. However, in employing traditions and innovations, the focus was to re-define filial piety. The feudal precedent emphasizes obedience and respect which are imperative, unconditional, and one-sided—son to father at home and subject to monarch at court. The filial piety *Boundless Love* offers is founded on emotional interaction. It is voluntary, humane, and mutual. Within the family, parents care for

²⁵⁸ Wang Dayuan [王大元], interview, Beijing, November 1, 2013. Wang is the composer of *Boundless Love*.

children and children repay their love; outside the family, there is a “family-like affection” between adviser and advisees, colleagues, friends, neighbors, and even strangers in Beijing. Thus, *Boundless Love* presents a filial piety that is not the traditional rigid moral demand placed on blood-based ties, but rather a system that allows the two-way traffic of love to flow in and between family cells, enhancing the elasticity of social networks and the stability of society. This sublime state may be summarized with the title of a 1986 Chinese popular song: *Let the World Be Filled with Love* (让世界充满爱, *Rang shijie chongman ai*).

4.3 Summary

In the three productions analyzed in this chapter, great significance is attached to social enlightenment focus, both by Kunqu artists as a conscious pursuit, and by the ruling class/administrators as a requirement. Of the two adaptations from earlier Kunqu plays, Yongkun’s *Gold Seal* transforms lead character Su Qin’s revenge through personal struggles into a statesman’s growth for the peace of the world; thereby changing its focus from exposing the dark side of human nature to advocating gratitude and love, and answering the CPC’s call for constructions of harmonious society.

Shangkun’s *Jingyang Bell* aims at carrying on the company’s long investment in the Qing *chuanqi* play *Tieguan tu*, while bypassing possible entanglement in the issues for which the play was banned between the 1950s and the mid-1980s. Extensive deletions from the original play removed essentially all of the scenes related to the peasant rebellion led by Li Zicheng, and the production was re-focused solely on the Ming dynasty’s last emperor, Chongzhen. Through Chongzhen’s search for the causes for the Ming dynasty’s fall, the production suggests a theme of “corruption leading to

subjugation,” which resonates with the current government’s campaigns against corruption. A special group of “leaders, experts and scholars” were invited to be part of the creation process, “for advice and suggestions.” They took on the roles of adviser, audience, and critic, and they probably also functioned as a delegate from the supreme audiences of the founding Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang of the Ming, and the first generation of national leadership of the PRC.

Beikun’s modern play *Boundless Love* looks to filial piety, one of the most fundamental themes in the Kunqu repertory, and tries to tell a story of filial piety that is “original, contemporary, and Beijing’s.” The theme of “the first and foremost of all virtues” helps maintain the characteristics of Kunqu in the literary and consequently musical creation.

The summaries above seem to lay more emphasis on the literary aspect, but the pursuit of social enlightenment certainly calls for inheritance and innovation in other aspects such as performance, music and design. Again, inheritance and innovation are intertwined in the creative process, just as the different artistic aspects are interconnected. Take the role category system for example. In the production of *Jingyang Bell*, great importance is attached to inheritance of the performative tradition for the *guansheng* (“official” male character) subcategory, through the portrayal of the same character Chongzhen by different generations of actors. In *Gold Seal*, Mother Su stands as evidence of innovation in character portrayal, through the change from one role category—the *jing* (淨, “painted face”) role in *chuanqi*—to another, the *laodan* (老旦, older female character), in the current production. And in *Boundless Love*, the role category-based performative skills and techniques are applied to newly created characters such as

Lingyun, Mother Gao, and Prof. Teng. As a modern Kunqu play that is “original, contemporary, and Beijing’s,” *Boundless Love* also makes innovations in musical expression by including non-*qupai* materials, such as those from the Beijing-themed song, and in staging, such as the digitalized presentation of scenery and the flexible utilization of the performance space, including both the stone bridge stage property and the chorus.

Before concluding this summary, I would like to point out that Kunqu performers are faced with tremendous challenges when creating productions set in the modern era, most especially regarding the use of the traditional acting skills and techniques that have been passed on from the Qian-Jia Period (1736-1820). As discussed earlier, modern plays in Kunqu and other Xiqu forms as well are often criticized as being “spoken drama plus singing” (话剧加唱, *huaju jia chang*). Unfortunately, all the efforts made by everyone involved—the playwright, director, composer, designers and the entire cast of performers—did not save *Boundless Love* from being criticized in this way, as “spoken drama plus singing.”

Strictly speaking, such “spoken drama plus singing” criticisms are not precise. There is certainly the “singing.” In *Boundless Love*, the arias are all written in *qupai*, fixed-melodies, in conformity with the Kunqu tradition both for script and music, and they are vocalized in the singing style of Kunqu. But it is not necessarily “spoken drama” in other aspects. While speeches are not delivered as either heightened speech (韵白, *yunbai*) or colloquial speech (散白, *sanbai*) as in traditional Kunqu, neither are they spoken as in the western-based spoken drama. And Kunqu actors are consciously beware of this. For example, Yang Fan (杨帆), the actor who plays Lingyun, firmly states: “We cannot perform it as ‘spoken drama plus singing’; it must be ‘Kunqu presenting a modern

play’ ” (不能把戏演成“话剧加唱,” 而应该是“昆曲表现当代戏,” *Buneng ba xi yan cheng “huaju jia chang,” er yinggai shi “Kunqu biao xian dang dai xi”*).²⁵⁹ Yang then goes into the specifics of his performance, “In speech, I employ the recitation style; combined with the traditional *jingbai* (京白, “Beijing speech,” one of the colloquial speech styles), this helps the audience to understand, and maintains the sense of melody and performance in Xiqu speeches.”²⁶⁰ Similarly, the movements in *Boundless Love* are not presented in Kunqu style, but movement is not in spoken drama style, either. Except for a very few occasions, elements and conventions of traditional Kunqu movement are not incorporated in the actors’ performance, which is attributed to the actors’ choice to break “the boundary of *hangdang* (行当, role category), and get close to real life.”²⁶¹ But the actors’ performance is also not really true to life. Rather, the movements of hand, feet and body are performed in a meticulous, stylized yet non-Kunqu way. For example, when Mother Gao is in a hurry, she does not utilize the usual movement vocabulary such as the movement pattern *yuanchang* (圆场, “round circles”),²⁶² nor does she just walk fast or run, as someone would if in a hurry in real life; instead, she strides, taking ultra-huge quick steps in her semi-high-heeled leather shoes. When she is striding, she does not follow not the usual traditional sequence of moving the foot by lifting the toes, kicking the heel forward, and landing first on the heel, then the ball, and finally the toes of that foot, and then repeating it with the other foot. Instead, Mother Gao lifts one foot about an

²⁵⁹ Yang Fan [杨帆], “Paiyan Kunqu dangda xixi *Ai wujiang* de tihui” [排演昆曲当代戏《爱无疆》的体会, Experience of rehearsals and performances of Kunqu modern play *Boundless Love*], *Zhongguo yanyuan* [中国演员, Chinese actors], 28.4 (2012): 20.

²⁶⁰ Yang Fan [杨帆], “Paiyan Kunqu dangda xixi *Ai wujiang* de tihui” [排演昆曲当代戏《爱无疆》的体会, Experience of rehearsals and performances of Kunqu modern play *Boundless Love*], *Zhongguo yanyuan* [中国演员, Chinese actors], 28.4 (2012): 20.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*

²⁶² See note 55.

inch high, thrusts it forward along a plane that is barely off the floor, and lands it fully on the sole, all at once. When she is in a thoughtful mode, her actions—whether combing her hair, turning her body, or casting a look—all take longer than they would in real life, by a noticeable split second. The modern version of leather shoes, all in white color, with semi-high heels, are part of the attire for Lingyun, Mother Gao, his sister Xiaoyun and her fiancé, and are seen in Beikun's other modern play productions, as well. They may have made some impact on the design of Mother Gao's foot movement. But those modern-fashioned shoes do not prevent Yang Fan from moving with the *yuanchang* pattern when Lingyun is anxiously looking for his mother, missing from the hospital on the eve of the transplantation operation.

On a few occasions, however, unmodified traditional Kunqu movement vocabulary is employed. For instance, Yang Fan, a *wusheng* (武生, martial male) role actor, also performs the *fanshen* (翻身, “flip,” a type of *yaogong* [腰功, “waist skill”])²⁶³ and *qiangbei* (抢背, “seizing the back,” a somersault before landing on the back) movement patterns. He employs “these traditional techniques both to express the character's inner feelings externally and to demonstrate the characteristics of the Xiqu technique.”²⁶⁴ In the video record of the performance given on May 30, 2012, Yang's performance of this professional *wusheng* technique was received with utter silence by the audience. I can see two ways to interpret this silence. It might be that the cheers and applause which would normally follow such expert performance were quenched by the disagreement between the highlight of skill and the heaviness of the moment in the play.

²⁶³ See note 57.

²⁶⁴ Yang Fan [杨帆], “Paiyan Kunqu dangda xixi *Ai wujiang* de tihui” [排演昆曲当代戏《爱无疆》的体会, Experience of rehearsals and performances of Kunqu modern play *Boundless Love*], *Zhongguo yanyuan* [中国演员, Chinese actors], 28.4 (2012): 20.

Or, more broadly, the silence might be a recognition of the inconsistency between this demonstration of traditional technical skill and the overall performative style of the production.

Behind the reproachful criticism of being like “spoken drama plus singing” lies the striking truth that, other than singing, almost no traditional Kunqu skills and techniques seems to be employed in modern Kunqu play productions, nor is innovative Kunqu expression presented. On the surface, the costume and makeup designs in modern plays deprive the actors of their extended body parts such as the water sleeves, artificial beard, “swing hair,” and thick-soled boots that are utilized in the creation of characters in newly written historical plays. The cause underlying this defect, in terms of both inheritance and innovation, may be rooted in the conflict between “a form that features characters living in the past” and “content that tells stories happening in the present.”²⁶⁵ It took centuries for the performative skills and techniques to be initiated, refined and perfected for presenting “characters living in the past.” It will certainly also take time, whether measured by decades or centuries, for Kunqu and other forms of Xiqu to develop the performative system needed to tell stories set in modern times, defined as beginning with the Republican Era (1911-1949). The actors in *Boundless Love* have attempted to work out new movement patterns for their hands and feet, to build up a new system of acting skills and techniques for walking, running, or raising their hands. Judged on the basis of *Boundless Love* as well as four other post-2001 modern play productions to be briefly discussed in the following, concluding chapter, Kunqu artists are still working on this new development of which they are a part.

²⁶⁵ Fan Xing, *Tradition and Innovation: The Artistry in Jingju Yangban Xi* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2010): 457.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

This research began with a review of the background of contemporary Kunqu productions, and then proceeded to an analysis of three major focuses in ten post-2001 Kunqu productions. This concluding chapter completes the analysis by cross-examining the ten productions with different focuses, summarizes the propulsion of the dynamics between inheritance and innovation in these creations, and proposes topics for further study.

5.1 Cross-examination of the Productions with Different Focuses

A total of ten Kunqu productions have been analyzed, arranged in three chapters, each of which has a specific overall focus: “Redefining Kunqu,” “Exploring artistic expressivity,” and “Fulfilling social enlightenment.” Inevitably, there have been overlaps between the separate parts of the analysis, and there is also the chance that discussions in certain directions have been under-pursued. Before this research comes to its conclusion, it would be therefore beneficial to examine the productions in each chapter with borrowed lenses from the other two chapters, so as to complete the analysis.

Four productions were analyzed in Chapter 2: the Youth Version of *The Peony Pavilion*, the New Edition of *Jade Hairpin*, *The Peach Blossom Fan*, and *The Palace of Eternal Youth* by Shangkun. Among them, *The Peony Pavilion*, published in the Ming dynasty, is arguably the finest and most acknowledged masterpiece of Kunqu in the history of the form; *The Peach Blossom Fan* and *The Palace of Eternal Youth* are masterpiece works from the early Qing dynasty. These representative classic plays stand for what Kunqu was and still is. Through their contemporary productions, Kunqu is redefined as a comprehensively beautiful theatre art form, a time-honored practice, and a

living tradition. Simply interpreted, this “comprehensively beautiful” characteristic means being “beautiful in everything.”²⁶⁶ The “all-in-beauty” concept Pai Hsien-yung (白先勇) advocates includes all other aspects of production—from costume, to makeup, to stage design, to lighting—in addition to the literary text of the play, and the performance of the actors as well as their physical beauty. His approach seems to be well grounded in that it essentially restates the theoretical paradigm, “everything within the world of the play must above all be beautiful,”²⁶⁷ that Elizabeth Wichmann proposed for Jingju, the other major representative form of Chinese Xiqu. Antique musical instruments, paintings, and calligraphic renderings of the poetry from the Tang Dynasty in the scenery were employed in the productions to evidence Kunqu’s status as a time-honored practice. And the living tradition of Kunqu was of course embodied in the national-level master performers, their teenage students, the young actors, and the training process itself. Both the new stage settings and the performativity in the actors’ body and age can be taken as examples for exploring artistic expressivity, the focus of Chapter 3.

The productions also seem to have fulfilled the function of social enlightenment (教化, *jiaohua*, lit., “education [and] conversion”), which was the focus in Chapter 4. *Jiaohua* refers to the publicizing and spreading of morals and ethics. When combined together with another term, *gaotai* (高台, lit., “high platform,”), the concept means to educate and influence the audience in ideology, morality, and mentality through the vehicle of theatre.²⁶⁸ Broadly speaking, these productions educated their audiences in

²⁶⁶ Pai Hsien-yung [白先勇], telephone interview, Santa Barbara, CA, May 12, 2012.

²⁶⁷ Elizabeth Wichmann, *Listening to Theatre: The Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera* (Honolulu: U of Hawaii P, 1991), 2.

²⁶⁸ Su Zhong (苏中), “*De xi guilai—chong jie ‘gaotaijiaohua’*” [德兮归来—重解“高台教化”, Morality, come back!—reinterpreting “high stage enlightenment”], *Qingming* [清明], 04 (2002): 186-7.

terms of the classics of Chinese literature, Chinese theatre, and Chinese culture. Specifically, in terms of ideology, ethics and morality, the productions of the Youth Version of *The Peony Pavilion* and the New Edition of *Jade Hairpin* praised the courageous pursuit of love, freedom and happiness; in addition to singing of loyalty and commitment to love, *The Peach Blossom Fan* and *The Palace of Eternal Youth* also advocated concern for one's family and nation, especially in tumultuous times, and castigated darkness in human nature such as greed and corruption.

Three historical plays were analyzed in Chapter 3: *Ban Zhao*, *Gongsun Zidu*, and *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*. In literary creation, the playwrights were recognized for what Wang An-Ch'i referred to as the in-depth exploration of "the subtlety and secrecy of human nature, complicated and multifaceted," through the utilization of such playwriting techniques as suspense, conflict, and reversal.²⁶⁹ In performance, the actors were acclaimed for their breakthroughs in terms of Kunqu's traditional role category system, breakthroughs made from different perspectives. Kunqu's redefinitions from Chapter 2 are also an applicable lens through which to look at those three productions. For instance, the cast in *Ban Zhao* was made up of three generations of actors who graduated from the same Kunqu training program, and both the stringed instrument *guqin* (古琴) and the *qupai* used for the aria composed to its accompaniment boast a history of at least several thousand years. They further evidence Kunqu as both a time-honored practice and a living tradition. In addition, the elevation of the status of *wusheng* and martial plays with

²⁶⁹ Wang An-Ch'i [王安祈]. "'Yanyuan juchang' xiang 'bianju zhongxin' de guodu—dalu 'xiqu gaige' xiaoying yu dangdai xiqu zhi xing zhuanbian zhi guancha" [「演员剧场」向「编剧中心」的过渡—大陆「戏曲改革」效应与当代戏曲质性转变之观察, The transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama: an investigation of mainland drama reform and the transformation of the nature of contemporary theater], *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* [中国文哲研究集刊, Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy], vol.19 (2001): 267.

Gongsun Zidu can be viewed as a restoration of the lost tradition and practice in the mid-Qing dynasty that laid equal weight on both civil and martial plays in Kunqu.²⁷⁰ As for *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*, it is a reworking of a Nanxi (Southern Play) piece, a literary and performance form from the Southern Song dynasty which was a predecessor to the *chuanqi* literary form used for Kunqu plays, and is therefore a part of the literary tradition of Kunqu.

In terms of social enlightenment, the title character of *Ban Zhao* seems intended to serve as a role model for Chinese intellectuals: to persevere in their pursuit of academic growth and moral integrity in the face of temptations and interruptions from wealth, rank and vanity. Through the device of comparison and contrast, the playwright Luo Huaizhen illuminated two possible paths for life: despite the difficulties in their lives, Ban Zhao and her collaborator Ma Xu enjoy everlasting glory in history, while her talented husband Cao Shou perishes at a young age after taking a shortcut to fame and power, and leaves no positive legacy at all. In the second production, Gongsun Zidu has long, fierce internal conflicts after he acts on the spur of the moment and shoots an arrow into Kaoshu's back. But in a contemporary Chinese reading, his final choice of death seems to make him rise above the vices such as egoism, selfishness, and vanity that had once gotten the upper hand of him. He loses his life, but he wins the battle for his conscience. *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* does not seem to have such internal conflict. He is selfish, greedy, glib, brazen, and he always puts his life above anything else, including his reputation and integrity. However, as a “play for satirical admonition” (讽谏作戏,

²⁷⁰ Yang Miao [泱淼], “Wuhang” [武行, martial category], in *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2002), 566.

fengjian zuoxi),²⁷¹ all his faults were “just poked at lightly” but not pierced.²⁷²

In Chapter 4, three more productions were analyzed: *Gold Seal*, *Jingyang Bell*, and *Boundless Love*. These productions display enhanced social enlightenment themes: *Gold Seal* focuses on the hero Su Qin’s love and gratitude leading to peace in of the world; *Jingyang Bell*, in the vein of thought found in *Peach Blossom Fan*, extolls loyalty and integrity, and excoriates corruption and treachery; and *Boundless Love* eulogizes the “first and foremost of all virtues,” filial piety.

Again, the most resonance between the three productions can be found in the issue of balancing innovative contemporary practice with the inheritance of tradition. *Gold Seal* was adapted from a *chuanqi* play bearing the same title that won great popularity throughout the Ming and Qing dynasties. *Jingyang Bell*, also an adapted work, was based on the *chuanqi* play *Tie guan tu* (“Iron-crown paintings”) from the early Qing dynasty. Although *Boundless Love* was set in contemporary Beijing, its predominant theme of filial piety, as well as the use of the “three rejections” (三不从, *san bu cong*) technique in its plot and structure, suggest strong influence from the play *The Lute* (琵琶记, *Pipa ji*). Written by Gao Ming (高明) between the end of the Yuan and the beginning of the Ming dynasties, *The Lute* was regarded as the “ancestor of *chuanqi*” (传奇之祖, *Chuanqi zhi zu*). As newly written historical plays, *Gold Seal* and *Jingyang Bell* include the extant *zhezixi* scenes as the basis for their creations; as the only modern play (现代戏,

²⁷¹ Cai Xinxin [蔡欣欣], “Lan yuan xin pa gu yun yang: guan yongjia Kunju Zhang Xie zhuangyuan” [兰苑新葩古韵扬: 观永嘉昆剧《张协状元》], *New flower in orchid garden with ancient charm: watching Yongjia Kunju Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*, *Xiwen* [戏文, Theatre literature] 3 (2001): 21

²⁷² Wang An-Ch’i [王安祈], “Xilihutu xiao kan renjian—xie zai Zhang Xie zhuangyuan lai tai yanchu zhiqian” [稀里糊涂笑看人间—写在《张协状元》来台演出之前, Casually look at the world with a laugh—notes before the tour performance of *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* in Taiwan], *Xiwen* [戏文, Theatre literature] 3 (2001): 18.

xiandaixi), *Boundless Love* takes the furthest step in exploring artistic expressivity from the perspective of stage presentation, including costume, makeup, lighting and stage design.

5.2 The Propulsion of the Dynamics between Inheritance and Innovation

In Chapter 1, I argued that it is such dynamics between inheritance and innovation that create what Kunqu is and what it will be. The production-based analysis in Chapters 2 to 4 provided specific examples for the examination of such dynamics, and the above cross-examination of those productions with different focuses further testifies that inheritance and innovation as well as their mutual influences on each other existed in all the case studies of contemporary Kunqu production and are identified in different stages and aspects of the productions.

The productions in Chapter 2 were promoted as the restaging of four representative Kunqu plays with maximal authenticity. The literary and performative traditions were preserved and represented through inheritance, but the productions are also noteworthy for the eye-catching innovations in other departments such as costumes and stage settings. In Chapter 3, the leading actors' innovation in the performative creation of Kunqu was built upon their inheritance of the acting skills and techniques within the role category system. The three productions in Chapter 4 manifested an interesting departure in pursuing Kunqu's function of social enlightenment. *Gold Seal* and *Jingyang Bell* were based on the *chuanqi* plays from the Ming and Qing dynasties, but they tried to employ the social enlightenment focuses with a present-day spirit, whereas as a play that was inspired by a contemporary event, *Boundless Love* emphasized the connection of its theme to filial piety, one of Kunqu's longest, most fundamental

ideological concerns.

In addition, a check-and-balance mechanism was identified between inheritance and innovation in these productions. Take their literary creation as an example. Among the ten productions analyzed in this dissertation, eight could be traced back to older, earlier predecessors in Nanxi of the Song and Yuan dynasties, *chuanqi* of the Ming and Qing dynasties, or regional Xiqu forms in the late Qing dynasty. Only two plays, *Ban Zhao* and *Boundless Love*, are newly written, original works. In *Ban Zhao*, although the playwright Luo Huaizhen followed some of the playwriting principles such as “one person, one event,” it is conspicuously noticeable that he does not carry out his pursuit in conformity with the literary creation as in Kunqu’s tradition. On such occasions, not only do the Kunqu performers try to maintain the Kunqu look by enhancing their utilization of Kunqu acting skills and techniques, , but the Kunqu musicians apply musical elements from the fixed-melodies (*qupai*) in the renowned, unmistakable Kunqu classics to the playwright’s arias to keep them sounding like Kunqu. *Boundless Love*, however, seems to be a counter-example. Although the production was larded with innovative devices to make it “original, contemporary, and Beijing’s,” its playwright Wang Yan stated clearly that the play was a modern instance of depicting contemporary life through Kunqu; therefore, it was written by strictly following the rules of Kunqu playwriting.

Finally, inheritance and innovation are sometimes hard to tell apart. The best evidence lies in the play *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*. The performers’ playing multiple characters, the stage props presented by human bodies or only mimed, and the entertaining property of the “play” (戏, *xi*) as a “game” (游戏, *youxi*), are all practices that trace back to the early stage of Xiqu’s origin, yet have disappeared in its development. Certainly, playwright

Zhang Lie did not simply restore those old practices but artfully modified, updated and rearranged them. It was his inheritance of the past tradition, yet it looked so innovative that even Xiqu scholars found it difficult to distinguish inheritance from tradition in this example of artistic creation today.²⁷³

However, the inheritance of the “full authenticity” that prevailed when these productions premiered—e.g. in the late 1590s for *The Peony Pavilion* and in 1699 for *Peach Blossom Fan* in 1699—is more likely a marketing slogan, the reality being simply out of the question. As it is explicated in China for primary school materialistic dialectics education: “Man cannot step into the same river twice.”²⁷⁴ The audiences are different, the performers are different, the theatres are different, and so the performances are different. Even Zhekun’s (浙昆) reproduction of *Fifteen Strings of Cash*, first debuted in 1956, was received differently in 2016. Change is part of continuity. Therefore, instead of preserving the “authenticity” from the past, efforts should be focused on future development. As long as Kunqu goes on, innovation is bound to take place. But only innovation on the basis of inheritance can guarantee that the productions, even by the seven professional Kunqu companies, are still recognized to sound and look like Kunqu.

5.3 Further Study

This dissertation serves as a first step in the examination of contemporary Kunqu productions as a collective artistic endeavor, covering a fifteen-year span. Further research in related topics would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Kunqu both as a classical Chinese artistic form and a representative of cultural heritage in

²⁷³ Zhou Yude [周育德], “Fugu hu? Chuangxin hu? — Zhang Xie zhuangyuan suixiang” [复古乎? 创新乎? — 《张协状元》随想, Restoration of the ancient? Innovation?—random notes on *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*], *Xiju zhi jia* [戏剧之家, Home of theatre] 6 (2003): 30-32.

²⁷⁴ Wang Zisong [汪子嵩], *Xila zhexue shi* [希腊哲学史, History of Greek philosophy] (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1997), 41.

the post-2001 context of Intangible Cultural Heritage. The following topics may serve as starting points for scholarly efforts in certain directions.

First, a comparative study between the productions not included in this dissertation and those case studies analyzed herein would contribute to a better understanding of the contemporary Kunqu creation between 2001 and 2015. Ten productions were selected for this research, as they embodied the general characteristics of Kunqu creative practice in this period and represented specific focuses of artistic pursuits. To discuss all productions with similarities would lead to repetition and redundancy and affect efficiency in the process of analysis. For instance, as a custom-made piece to highlight the martial skills for the *wudan* (武旦, martial female character) actor Gu Haohao (谷好好), *An Expanse of Red Peach Blossoms* (一片桃花红, *Yipian taohua hong*) by Shangkun in 2004 would fall into the same category as Zhekun's *Gongsun Zidu*; the play *Doctor of the Xiang River* (湘水郎中, *Xiangshui langzhong*) that Zhang Lie was invited to write for Xiangkun in 2006 might be represented by his work *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* for Yongkun; Beikun's productions of *Guan Hanqing* (关汉卿) in 2007 and *Dream of the Red Chamber* (红楼梦, *Hongloumeng*) in 2012 shared similarities with *Gold Seal* and *Jingyang Bell* in adapting extant *zhezixi* programs, presenting themes with contemporary spirit, and exploring the usage of the performative space. Following on my research—for instance, the example of cross-examination in the first section of this concluding chapter, separate studies in specific categories may deepen the understanding of reasons behind such similarities as well as the artists' distinctive decisions and various conditions that give rise to differences.

Second, in addition to the span of 15 years, an examination of productions before

2001 and after 2015 may better contextualize contemporary Kunqu development as a significant part of Kunqu history. Although the analysis in this research was conducted within the temporal framework of 2001 to 2015, the study of the contemporary Kunqu practice is not limited to this time period. Such an ongoing process may be contextualized with studies along two coordinate axes: to vertically compare the different versions of the same works, and to horizontally compare different creative teams' works during the same period. While I touched on these two research possibilities in chapter 2, further exploration was not possible within the limited focus of that chapter. One could compare the production of *The Peony Pavilion* by Pai Hsien-yung and Sukun to those by: Beikun in 1980; Shangkun in 1998, directed by Chen Shizheng (陈士争), and in 1999 directed by Guo Xiaochuan (郭小川); and Sukun in 2000. The other would be a comparison between the production of *The Palace of Eternal Youth* by Shangkun, used as a case study in this research, and the production by Sukun in 2004. Such studies would shed light on the understanding of artistic principles in the process of creation.

Third, a summary of how practitioners are redefining Kunqu as “comprehensively beautiful, time-honored, and living” was proposed in Chapter 2. As fine as it is, that observation was based on the four productions between 2004 and 2008. In 2009, Yueju (粤剧, “Cantonese Opera”) was proclaimed a masterpiece of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) by UNESCO, followed by Jingju in 2010. Although Kunqu’s redefined characteristics seem sufficient for scholarly discussions within Kunqu circles, the question of distinctions among the three ICH-designated Xiqu forms would immediately prompt challenges to Kunqu’s exclusive claim to having sovereignty over such characteristics. Comparative studies between Kunqu and other Xiqu forms including Jingju, Yueju, and Chuanju (川剧, “Sichuan Opera”)

in the ICH context need to get underway as soon as possible.

Fourth, a specific study solely on the modern play (现代戏, *xiandaixi*) productions would help understand advancements as well as limitations in the contemporary Kunqu artists' exploration of how to depict modern people and life. So far, this is an insufficiently studied subject. That may be due to the limited number of the Kunqu modern play productions. Between 2001 and the end of 2018, there were only five modern play productions in Kunqu: *Last Song in the Old Capital* (旧京绝唱, *Jiu jing juechang*) (2011), *Romance at Taoran Pavilion* (陶然情, *Taoran qing*) (2011), *Regret for the Past* (伤逝, *Shang shi*) (2011), *Boundless Love* (爱无疆, *Ai wujiang*) (2012), and *Seizing Luding Bridge* (飞夺泸定桥, *Fei duo Ludingqiao*) (2016). Except for *Regret for the Past* which was produced by Shangkun, all were Beikun productions. In general, these modern play productions have been not only under-studied but also under-appreciated. Allegedly, at one performance of *Seizing Luding Bridge* in 2016, the theatre with a 400-people sitting capacity hosted only eight audience members.²⁷⁵ Nonetheless, such plays demonstrate contemporary Kunqu artists' efforts to explore and experiment with the possibilities for presenting the "content that tells stories happening in the present" with "a form that features characters living in the past."²⁷⁶ Not only would a study of those productions facilitate an understanding of the creation process for Kunqu modern plays but it might also resonate with research on similar subjects in other Xiqu forms.

Fifth, the methodology of comparative study could be applied to the analysis of contemporary Kunqu playwrights and their playwriting. From a glance at the credits for the

²⁷⁵ He Yi [何毅], interview, Beijing, July 30, 2017. He graduated from Chinese Xiqu Academy and is a part-time agent for performance events. The theatre referred to was the August 1st Theatre (八一剧场, *Bayi juchang*).

²⁷⁶ Fan Xing, *Tradition and Innovation : The Artistry in Jingju Yangban Xi* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 2010): 457.

ten productions, one can tell that playwrights who are able to write in the Kunqu idiom are extremely few. A comparative study could be made on different plays written by the same playwright, contributing to the understanding of the playwrights' personal characteristics in theme, language, choice of writing techniques, and social and political concerns. For instance, analysis could focus on Luo Huaizhen (罗怀臻) and his three Kunqu plays, *Ban Zhao* by Shangkun in 2001, *An Expanse of Red Peach Blossoms* by Shangkun in 2004, and *Memorial Remarks at the Plum Shadow Monastery* (影梅庵忆语, *Ying Mei an yi yu*) by Beikun in 2014. Another study could be devoted to Zhang Lie (张烈), three of whose Kunqu works have been included in this research: *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*, *Gongsun Zidu*, and *Gold Seal*. In addition, a comparative study could be made of Zhang and Luo as two leading figures in current Kunqu playwriting. Another possible specific focus of study would be to examine the possible influence from Western, specifically Greek, tragedy on the creation of *Gongsun Zidu*. Comparisons between its predecessor, *Crusade on Zidu*, and Shakespeare's *Macbeth* can be dated back to the 1990s.²⁷⁷ And concepts of Greek tragedy such as hubris, hamartia, and discovery and reversal could be easily applied to the interpretation of Zidu's arrogance, his action of shooting the arrow, and Ying Kaoshu's great intention that came to light posthumously in Zidu's dream. The playwright-themed comparative studies might eventually lead to the discovery of reasons behind the shortage of playwriting resources and its implications for contemporary Kunqu creation.

Sixth, collaborative research with ethnomusicologists would promote understanding of inheritance and innovation in the musical aspect of contemporary Kunqu productions. As

²⁷⁷ One example of a comparative study between *Crusade on Zidu* and *Macbeth* can be seen in Su Guorong [苏国荣], *Xiqu meixue* [戏曲美学, Xiqu aesthetics] (Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1999): 327-8.

explained in Chapter 1, this research was focused primarily on the literary and acting traditions of Kunqu, although musical elements were discussed in the analysis to some extent. One possible study from the perspective of musical analysis might concern the key scenes in these productions adapted from older versions, including “Striking the bell” and “Separating the harem” in *Jingyang Bell*, “Stabbing thighs” in *Gold Seal*, Scene Five in *Ban Zhao*, Scene Six in *Gongsun Zidu*, and the final scene in *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*. The emphasis would be on a comparison of the musical choices in the contemporary productions with those in their predecessors.

Finally, continued study of inheritance and innovation in the role category system as manifested in *Ban Zhao* and *Gongsun Zidu*, would add new impetus to research on Kunqu performance. After these two productions, Kunqu artists’ efforts in this direction seem to have decreased. Although Lin Weilin continued his “martial play in civil presentation” (武戏文唱, *wuxi wenchang*) with “an equal emphasis on civil and marital presentations” (文武并重, *wenwu bingzhong*) in the Kunqu production of *Great General Han Xin* (大将军韩信, *Da jiangjun Han Xin*) in 2014, it was the only instance of its kind. Such attempts for breakthroughs were not found in Kunqu performers of the older generations. Probably, it was because Zhang Jingxian and her classmate-colleagues from the “Kun da ban” and “Kun er ban” at Shangkun, as well as Hou Shaokui and his Beikun colleagues of the same age, are all officially in retirement. Whether or not there are the star actors to initiate the process, the playwrights’ work is always the foundation for the creation. But that playwriting endeavor seems to have been discontinued. Some say that a subcategory-crossing character such as *Ban Zhao* is not repeatable.

I see it differently. There are adequate opportunities to cross the boundaries between

the role subcategories in *sheng* (生, [young] male characters), *jing* (净, “painted face” larger-than-life male characters) and *chou* (丑, “ugly,” often comic male characters). With a different perspective, such opportunities would multiply. During my series of interviews with the Beikun playwright Wang Yan (王焱), she mentioned that she was planning to write a Kunqu adaptation of Shakespeare’s *The Merchant of Venice* to enrich her repertory. In response to my question to what role category Shylock would be, she said it would be a *chou*. I recommended that she consider all the possibilities of role categories and subcategories for this changeful character at different stages of the plot development and in different moods. A full range of the big *jiamen* for male characters including *sheng*, *jing* and *chou* could be applied to him, and even many finer *jiamen* subcategories could be exploited for some brief sections. I also suggested a candidate for playing such a Shylock: Wu Shuang (吴双) from Shangkun, who is capable of a wide range of expression,. Originally a *jing* performer, when playing the eunuch Fan Lun in *Ban Zhao*, Wu employed some *chou* elements of performance and a certain degree of femininity borrowed from the *dan* role category. There has been no update on this potential project.

In my years of seclusion while writing, I was inspired by the Jingju performer Wen Ruhua’s (温如华) production of *Fair-faced Young Man* (白面郎君, *Baimian langjun*), which debuted in 1983, for further experiment on possible breakthroughs in role (sub)categories with cross-gender performances. Wen was a *xiaosheng* actor, but he studied privately with master female impersonator Zhang Junqiu (张君秋). At the beginning of this play, Wen played the title character Zheng Tianshou (郑天寿), who is known by his nickname “Fair-faced Young Man.” In order to save his wife, who has been forcefully abducted by the local despots Cai and his sister, he infiltrates himself into the Cais’ fortress by transforming himself

into their noblewoman relative whom they had never met. In the end, Zheng resumes his male identity, saves his wife, and captures the Cais with the help of other heroes. The show involved a series of cross-gender performances: a male performer working as female impersonator took up the role of a male character who pretended to be female through most part of the play until going back to the male character in the end. There are no female impersonators currently working in the seven major professional Kunqu companies of this research, but there have been two generations of male impersonators. In *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia also takes an opposite-sex identity by playing a male in the court scene. The specific Kunqu male impersonator I would assign to playing Portia is Weng Jiahui (翁佳慧), who played the lead male character, Jia Baoyu (贾宝玉), in Beikun's production of *Dream of the Red Chamber* (红楼梦, *Hongloumeng*) in 2012. The creation of Portia would further explore the expressivity in the Kunqu role category system further with changes in the character's gender identities.

If the Kunqu version of *The Merchant of Venice* remains a possibility, I would want to make my initial step toward "applying theory to practice," specifically with playwriting, to carry out my plans for the creation of Shylock and Portia using plural possibilities for identity representation based on the role category system of Kunqu. During that process, my identity would go through transformation too, from researcher, reader, audience, and critic, to playwright. Put within Zhang Geng's framework of "three stages in artistic creation," it would translate as changing from the player in the third stage of appreciation to the player in the first stage of literary creation. There might be a little expansion in Zhang Geng's system, but from the point of view of Kunqu, it would be a restoration of the old practice of Kunqu playwriting. By theorizing such identity transformation, I am ready to turn myself into a case

study for any attempted research on Zhang Geng's theory of Xiqu aesthetics. Last, but not least, the personal experience of playwriting and communicating with candidate actors for the characterizations of Shylock and Portia, as well as observing rehearsals and performances, could all be taken as field research aimed at carrying on the investigation of the dynamics of creative authority in contemporary Kunqu productions, an endeavor similar to the work that my adviser, Elizabeth Wichmann-Walczak, carried out with the Shanghai Jingju Company (上海京剧院, *Shanghai Jingju yuan*) in the 1990s and 2000s.

APPENDIX A

Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
2001

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun	
2001	<p>1. <i>Guifei dong du</i> (贵妃东渡, Imperial concubine crosses east) 2. <i>Shiji ban</i> <i>Changshengdian</i> (CSD) (世纪版长生殿, Century version Palace of Eternal Youth, PEY)</p>	<p>1. <i>Pipa xing</i> (琵琶行, <i>Song of the lute</i>) 2. <i>Ban Zhao</i> (班昭)</p>					<p><i>Zhang Xie</i> <i>zhuangyuan</i> (张协状元, Zhang Xie the top graduate)</p>	

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 2002

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2002		1. <i>Taohuashan (THS)</i> (桃花扇, Peach blossom fan, PBF) 2. <i>Sima Xiangru</i> (司马相如) 3. <i>Chai chuan ji</i> (钗钏记, Story of hairpin and bracelet)					

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 2003

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2003	<p><i>Huanmen zidi cuo lishen</i> (宦门子弟错立身, Grandee's Son takes the wrong career)</p>	<p>1. <i>Lü mudan</i> (绿牡丹, Green peony) 2. <i>Jingpin gongcheng ban Mudanting (MDT)</i> (精品工程版牡丹亭, <i>Masterpiece project version of Peony Pavilion, PP)</i> 3. <i>Miaoyu yu Baoyu</i> (妙玉与宝玉, Miaoyu and Baoyu) 4. <i>Shangshi</i> (伤逝, Regret for the past) 5. <i>Yuyu chengqing wanli ai</i> (玉宇澄清万里埃, Clear the universe of dust) 6. <i>Zhao buzhu de chuntian</i> (罩不住的春天, The Spring can't be covered up) 7. <i>Cangsheng da yi</i> (苍生大医, Great doctor) 8. <i>Ke cong yuanfang lai</i> (客从远方来,</p>			<p><i>Zhengli ben Cailouji</i> (整理本彩楼 记, Rearranged version of <i>The painted building</i>)</p>	<p><i>Sha gou ji</i> (杀狗记, Killing dog)</p>	

		Guest far afar) 9. <i>Baiyi tianshi song</i> (白衣天使颂, ode to the white-coat angels)					
--	--	---	--	--	--	--	--

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 2004

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2004		1. <i>Qixi ban Changshengdian</i> (七夕版长生殿, Chinese Valentine's Day version of PEL) 2. <i>Yipian taohua hong</i> (一片桃花红, An Expanse of Red Peach Blossoms) 3. <i>Longfeng shan</i> (龙凤衫, Dragon-phoenix robe)		1. <i>Qingchun ban Mudanting</i> (青春版牡丹亭, Youth Version of PP) 2. <i>Quanben Changshengdian</i> (全本长生殿, complete version of PEY)			

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 2005

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2005		<i>Handan meng</i> (邯郸梦, Handan dream)	1. <i>Jinghua ban Mudanting</i> (精华版牡丹亭, Essence version of PP) 2. <i>Xiao Sun tu</i> (小孙屠, Young butcher Sun)			<i>Zhegui ji</i> (折桂记, Winning the laurels)	

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 2006

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2006	<i>Baihua Gongzhu</i> (百花公主, Princess Beihua)	<i>Quanben Changshengdian</i> (全本长生殿, complete version of PEY) (2006-2007)	1. 1699• <i>Taohuashan</i> (THS) (1699•桃花扇, PBF: 1699) 2. <i>Yinyuehui ban</i> <i>THS</i> (音乐会版桃花扇, Concert version of PBF) 3. <i>Chuancheng ban THS</i> (传承版桃花扇, Transmission version of PBF) 4. <i>Shi wu guan</i> (十五贯, Fifteen strings of cash)	<i>Xi Shi</i> (西施)	<i>Doctor of the Xiang River</i> (湘水郎中, Xiangshui langzhong)		

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 2007

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2007	1. <i>Xixiangji</i> (西厢记, Romance of west chamber) 2. <i>Guan Hanqing</i> (关汉卿)	<i>(Quanben Changshengdian</i> [全本长生殿, complete version of PEY]) 1. <i>Xunqin ji</i> (寻亲记, Search for family) 2. <i>Fengzheng wu</i> (风筝误, Kite's Mistake)	1. <i>Lü mudan</i> (绿牡丹, Green peony) 2. <i>Tang Xianzu yu Simeng</i> (汤显祖与四梦, Tang Xianzu and the "Four Dreams")		<i>Bimuyu</i> (比目鱼, Sole Mates)	<i>Pipaji</i> (琵琶记, <i>The lute</i>)	1. <i>Gongsun Zidu</i> (公孙子都) 2. <i>Xu Jiujiing Shengguan ji</i> (徐九经升官记, Xu Jiujiing's promotion)

APPENDIX A (Continued)
Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
2008

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2008	Dadu ban <i>Xixiangji</i> (大都版西厢记, Grand capital version of Romance of west chamber)	1. <i>Yu Yan ban MDT</i> (俞言版牡丹亭, Yu [Zhenfei] and Yan [Huizhu] version of PP) 2. <i>Xue shou ji</i> (血手记, Bloodstained hands) 3. <i>Zi chai ji</i> (紫钗记, Purple hairpin) 4. <i>Nanke ji</i> (南柯记, Story of the southern branch)	1. <i>Zhezixi ban THS</i> (折子戏版桃花 扇, <i>Zhezixi</i> version of PBF) 2. <i>Jingjian ban THS</i> (精简版桃花扇, Abridged version of PBF) 3. <i>Cang•Ben</i> (藏•奔, Hiding and escaping)	<i>Xinban Yuzanji</i> (新版玉簪记, new version of the Kite's mistake)			1. <i>Xiandai ban Huanshaji</i> (现代版浣纱 记, Modern version of <i>Washing silk</i>) 2. <i>Quanben MDT</i> (全本牡丹亭, Complete version of PP) 3. <i>Xinban Xiyuan ji</i> (新版西园记, New version of the West Park)

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 2009

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2009			1. <i>Qingchang ban THS</i> (清唱版桃花扇, Oratorio version of PBF) 2. <i>Liang Shanbo yu Zhu Yingtai</i> (梁山伯与祝英台, Liang Shanbo and Zhu Yingtai)				<i>Hongni guan</i> (红泥关, the Hongni Pass)

APPENDIX A (Continued)
Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
2010

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2010	<p>1. <i>Xinban CSD</i> (新版长生殿, New version of PEY)</p> <p>2. <i>Nan Tang yishi</i> (南唐遗事, Story of the past South Tang)</p> <p>3. <i>Lian xiang ban</i> (怜香伴, Two belle in love)</p>	<p><i>Jinghua ban CSD</i> (精华版长生殿, Essence version of PEY)</p>	<p>1. <i>Nanjing ban THS</i> (南京版桃花扇, Nanjing version of PBF)</p> <p>2. <i>Quanben Xixiangji</i> (全本西厢记, Complete version of Romance of West Chamber)</p> <p>3. <i>Hudie meng</i> (蝴蝶梦, Butterfly's dream)</p>			<p>1. <i>Baihua Gongzhu</i> (百花公主, Princess Beihua)</p> <p>2. <i>San qing Fan Lihua</i> (三请樊梨花, Three invitations of Fan Lihua)</p> <p>3. <i>Shi wu guan</i> (十五贯, Fifteen strings of cash)</p> <p>4. <i>Baishezhuang</i> (白蛇传, White snake)</p> <p>5. <i>Xinban Jing chai ji</i> (新版荆钗记, New version of Thorn hairpin)</p>	<p><i>Shi wu guan</i> (十五贯, Fifteen strings of cash)</p>

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 2011

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2011	<i>Honglouloumeng</i> (HLM) (红楼梦, Dream of red chamber, DRC)			<i>Lankeshan</i> (烂柯山, Mount Lanke)			<i>Qiao Xiaoqing</i> (乔小青)

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 2012

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2012	<i>Ai wujiang</i> (爱无疆, Boundless love)	1. <i>Lankeshan</i> (烂柯山, Mount Lanke) 2. <i>Handan meng</i> (邯郸梦, Handan dream) 3. <i>Jingyang zhong bian</i> (景阳钟变, Changes with the Jingyang bell) 4. <i>Yan suo gong lou</i> (烟锁宫楼, Fog-blocked harem buildings)	1. <i>Nanke meng</i> (南柯梦, Dream under the southern branch) 2. <i>Chunjiang hua yueye</i> (春江花月夜, A moonlit spring night by the flower-shaded river)	1. <i>Xixiangji</i> (西厢记, Romance of west chamber) 2. <i>CSD</i> (长生殿, PEY) 3. <i>Man chuang hu</i> (满床笏, Glorious household)		<i>Jinyinji</i> (金印记, Gold seal)	1. <i>Wei sheng yuan</i> (未生怨, Inborn resentment) 2. <i>Huposhi</i> (琥珀匙, Fated love by music)

APPENDIX A (Continued)
Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
2013

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2013	<p>1. <i>Li Xiangjun</i> (李香君)</p> <p>2. <i>Xu Pipa</i> (续琵琶, Sequel to the Lute)</p> <p>3. <i>Ying Mei an yi yu</i> (影梅庵忆语, Memorial remarks at the plum shadow monastery)</p>	<p><i>Qiangtou mashang</i> (墙头马上, Over the wall and on horseback)</p>		<p>1. <i>Baishezhuang</i> (白蛇传, White snake)</p> <p>2. <i>Hongniang</i> (红娘)</p> <p>3. <i>Liu Rushi</i> (柳如是)</p>		<p>1. <i>Yi peng xue</i> (一捧雪, The jade cup)</p> <p>2. <i>Qingchun ban Zhang Xie zhuangyuan</i> (青春版张协状元, Youth version of Zhang Xie the Top Graduate)</p>	<p>1. <i>Naihe tian</i> (奈何天, You can't do anything about fate)</p> <p>2. <i>Fan Li yu Xi Shi</i> (范蠡与西施, Fan Li and Xi Shi)</p> <p>3. <i>Shimian maifu</i> (十面埋伏, Ambushes on all sides)</p> <p>4. <i>Jie yuan ji</i> (解怨记, Eliminating resentment)</p>

APPENDIX A (Continued)
Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
2014

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2014	<p>1. <i>Dong Xiaowan</i> (董小宛)</p> <p>2. <i>Wu ren yi</i> (五人义, Five martyrs)</p> <p>3. <i>Chuantong ban CSD</i> (传统版长生殿, Traditional version of PEY)</p> <p>4. <i>Baitu ji</i> (白兔记, White rabbit)</p> <p>5. <i>Dadu ban MDT</i> (大都版牡丹亭, Grand capital version of PP)</p> <p>6. <i>Kunqu jiaoxiang qingchang ju HLM</i> (昆曲交响清唱剧红楼梦, Kunqu symphonic oratorio DRC)</p>	<p>1. <i>Chuan shang yin</i> (川上吟, Poets on the river)</p> <p>2. <i>Leifeng ta</i> (雷峰塔, Tower Leifeng)</p>		<p><i>Bai luo shan</i> (白罗衫, White silk robe)</p>		<p>1. <i>MDT</i> (牡丹亭, PP)</p> <p>2. <i>Qiangtou mashang</i> (墙头马上, Over the wall and on horseback)</p>	<p>1. <i>Dajiangjun Han Xin</i> (大将军韩信, Great general Han Xin)</p> <p>2. <i>Hongmei ji</i> (红梅记, Red plum)</p> <p>3. <i>Wuyuan dao</i> (无怨道, A complaint-free path)</p>

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 2015

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun
2015	1. <i>Li Qingzhao</i> (李清照) 2. <i>Tuyaleima</i> (图雅雷玛) 3. <i>Kongzi</i> (孔子, Confucius)		<i>Qusheng Wei Liangfu</i> (曲圣魏良辅, Music sage Wei Liangfu)	<i>Mantingfang</i> (满庭芳, “Scent-filled courtyard”)	1. <i>Fanma ji</i> (贩马记, Horse trader) 2. <i>Xiangfei meng</i> (湘妃梦, Princess’s dream)	1. <i>Jingchaiji</i> (荆钗记, Thorn hairpin) 2. <i>Zengshu ji</i> (赠书记, Present of book)	1. <i>Shihouji</i> (狮吼记, Lioness’s roar) 2. <i>Zi chai ji</i> (紫钗记, Purple hairpin)

APPENDIX A (Continued)
 Kunqu Productions in Mainland China between 2001 and 2015
 TOTALS

Year	Beiku	Shangkun	Shengkun	Sukun	Xiangkun	Yongkun	Zhekun	Total
2001	2	2	0	0	0	1	0	5
2002	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	3
2003	1	9	0	0	1	1	0	12
2004	0	3	0	2	0	0	0	5
2005	0	1	2	0	0	1	0	4
2006	1	1	4	1	1	0	0	8
2007	2	2	2	0	1	1	2	10
2008	1	4	3	1	0	0	3	12
2009	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	3
2010	3	1	3	0	0	5	1	13
2011	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	3
2012	1	4	2	3	0	1	2	13
2013	3	0	0	3	0	2	4	12
2014	6	3	0	1	0	2	3	15
2015	3	0	1	1	2	2	2	11
Total	24	33	19	13	5	16	19	
TOTAL	129							

Note:

1. Information in this Appendix is based on the summary of Kunqu productions between 2001 and 2011 in “Shi nian lai quanguo qi da Kunqu yuan tuan bian gai jumu yilanbiao” [十年来全国七大昆曲院团编改剧目一览表, List of newly written and adapted plays by seven major Kunqu companies over the past ten years], in Huang Chun [黄纯], “Shi nian Kunqu yichan baohu yanjiu” [十年昆曲遗产保护研究, Research on the protection of Kunqu as Intangible Cultural Heritage in the past ten years], *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian* (hereafter *Nianjian*) 2012 [中国昆曲年鉴 2012, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China (hereafter Yearbook), 2012], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖] (Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2012), 22; and the annual reports between 2012 and 2015 by each of the seven companies as “Niandu Kunqu gongzuo zongshu” [年度昆曲工作综述, Overview of Kunqu activities], in *Nianjian 2013* (Yearbook, 2013) (Suzhou: 2013), 33-93; *Nianjian 2014* (Yearbook, 2014) (Suzhou: 2014), 9-64; *Nianjian 2015* (Yearbook, 2015) (Suzhou: 2015), 27-100; and *Nianjian 2016* (Yearbook, 2016) (Suzhou: 2016), 23-78. Yearbooks came out in the following year of the annual reports.
2. There are repeated information, confusion of categorization and mistakes in the list of Kunqu productions between 2001 and 2015 and the companies’ annual reports. For example, the Shangkun productions of *Bloodstained Hands* was debuted in 1986, *Sima Xiangru* in 1996, and *Song of the Lute* in 2000. As the reasons behind remain unknown, all the information will be kept as it is. However, in case of inconsistency with information in this research, the versions provided by this dissertation shall

prevail.

3. Additionally, Kunqu in the Yearbook series is translated as Kunqu Opera. As a rule, English scholarships and English translations that came out along with Chinese publications shall be kept unchanged in this dissertation, in spite of its author's disagreement.

APPENDIX B

Role Category in Kunqu

sheng

Role Type	Major Features	Subcategories	Specific Features of the Subcategories	Typical Roles and Characters
<i>sheng</i> (生)	principal, young male characters	<i>daguansheng</i> (大官生, senior official <i>sheng</i> , also spelled as 大冠生, senior “crown” <i>sheng</i>)	royal or noble; wearing artificial beard; features song, speech, and dance-acting; emphasizes the vocal delivery with a mixture of falsetto and natural voice and a presentation of grace and dignity	emperors, noblemen, immortals; Emperor Xuanzong in <i>PEY</i> , Chongzhen in <i>Tieguan tu</i>
		<i>xiaoguansheng</i> (小官生, junior official <i>sheng</i> , also spelled as 小冠生, junior “crown” <i>sheng</i>)	newcomers to the world of power, contented with recent success; features both song and dance-acting; performance style between that of <i>daguansheng</i> and <i>jinsheng</i>	young civil officials; Cai Bojie in <i>The Lute</i> , Zhao Chong in <i>Fanmaji</i> (The horse trader)
		<i>jinsheng</i> (巾生, [scholar] hat <i>sheng</i>) (“nickname”: <i>shanzisheng</i> , 扇子生, folding fan <i>sheng</i>)	young, handsome, elegant, talented and most of all, romantic; features song, speech, and dance-acting, specifically the skills to play with the folding fan	young scholars in the “gifted scholar and beautiful lady” romances; Liu Mengmei in <i>PP</i> , Pan Bizheng in <i>JHP</i>
		<i>qiongsheng</i> (穷生, poor <i>sheng</i>) (“nickname”: <i>xiepisheng</i> , 鞋皮生, “shoe skin” <i>sheng</i>)	financially frustrated, often laughed at, and sometimes troubled with self-doubt, but mostly confident, proud and optimistic; features song and speech with a “sad sound” and when walking, drags the feet along the floor, shoes half on, hence the nickname	poverty-stricken scholars before the advent of success; Lü Mengzheng in <i>Cailou ji</i>
		<i>zhiweisheng</i> (雉尾生, “pheasant tail” <i>sheng</i>) (“nickname”: <i>lingzizisheng</i> , 翎子生, “feather tail” <i>sheng</i>)	young, handsome, valiant and heroic; features a clear and strong voice in vocalization and a presentation of high spirit; emphasizes specifically the movement of feather tails attached to the headset in various patterns	young generals, or descendants of families with military exploits; Lü Bu in <i>Lianhuanji</i> (连环计, A set of interlocked stratagems)

APPENDIX B (Continued)
Role Category in Kunqu
dan

Role Type	Major Features	Subcategories	Specific Features of the Subcategories	Typical Roles and Characters
<i>dan</i> (旦)	female characters	<i>laodan</i> (老旦, older <i>dan</i>)	old; usually intrinsically dignified; features song and speech, the only one using “original” “large” voice	old mothers; Du Liniang’s mother in <i>PP</i>
		<i>zhengdan</i> (正旦, “upright” <i>dan</i>)	married; young to middle age; most with moral integrity and tough character in hardship; features song	loyal wives, usually of a poor household; Zhao Wuniang in <i>The Lute</i>
		<i>zuodan</i> (作旦, “acting” <i>dan</i>)	young girls and teenage males before 15; lively and naive; features acting	little girls and young boys; Wu Zixu’s (伍子胥) son in <i>Washing Gauze</i>
		<i>cishadan</i> (刺杀旦, “assassin-murder” <i>dan</i>)	young, usually married, with strong will and determination; features acting and high combat skills	vengeful female assassins (<i>cidan</i> , “assassin” <i>dan</i>) and women killed for cruelty and obscenity (<i>shadan</i> , “murder” <i>dan</i>); Fei Zhen’e in the scene <i>Ci hu</i> from <i>Tieguan tu</i> and Pan Jinlian in the scene “Killing sister-in-law” from <i>Yixiaji</i>
		<i>guimendan</i> (闺门旦, “boudoir” <i>dan</i>)	beautiful and elegant, either unmarried young ladies or newly married noblewomen; features song and dance-acting	unmarried elegant young ladies, or newly married imperial concubines and royal women; Du Liniang in <i>PP</i> and Yang Yuhuan in <i>PEY</i>
		<i>tiedan</i> (贴旦, “extra” <i>dan</i>)	vivacious and young; usually with low social status; features speech and dance-acting	maids, lady-in-waiting named or unnamed; Chunxiang in <i>PP</i> and Niannu in <i>PEY</i>

Note:

For more specific information including the “nicknames” for the *dan* subcategories, please see Chapter 3, Figure 7.

APPENDIX B (Continued)

Role Category in Kunqu

jing

Role Type	Major Features	Subcategories	Specific Features of the Subcategories	Typical Roles and Characters
<i>jing</i> (净)	often powerful, male characters; all wearing face charts	<i>damian</i> (大面, “big face); further divided into finer subcategories, including <i>hongmian</i> (红面, red face) and <i>heimian</i> (黑面, black face)	courageous, proficient in fighting skills, usually with a strong sense of loyalty and justice; features song in rich, resonant voice and big movements	loyal generals, kings, gods, spirits; Guan Yu (关羽) in <i>Dan dao hui</i> as the <i>hongmian</i> (红面, red face) “finer” subcategory; Judge Hu in <i>PP</i> as <i>heimian</i> (黑面, black face); deities as <i>jinmian</i> (金面, gold face) in <i>Antianhui</i> , a play featuring the Monkey King
		<i>baimian</i> (白面, “white face”)	negative characters, specifically evil prime ministers; features speech and dance-acting; emphasizes depicting the powerful presence with a hidden crafty nature	evil prime ministers; Dong Zhuo (董卓) in <i>Lianhuanji</i>
		<i>lata baimian</i> (邋遢白面, sloppy “white face”)	minor supportive roles of low social status; features humor in speech and acting	commoners; the butcher You Hulu in <i>Fifteen Strings of Cash</i>

Note:

1. *Jing* is also known as *Hualian*, (花脸, “painted face”).

2. *Damian* is also known as *zhengjing* (正净, primary *jing*); both *baimian* and *lata baimian* are *fujing* (副净, secondary *jing*). *Fujing* can also play female characters, like Mother Su in the Chuanqi version of *Gold Seal*.

APPENDIX B (Continued)

Role Category in Kunqu

mo

Role Type	Major Features	Subcategories	Specific Features of the Subcategories	Typical Roles and Characters
<i>mo</i> (末)	older male characters	<i>laosheng</i> (老生, older <i>sheng</i>)	usually wearing artificial beard, middle-aged or old age, high social status, often the lead characters in the play (or scenes); features song, speech, and dance-acting, emphasizes high-pitched, sonorous vocalization with natural voice	male characters of middle or old age; Li Guinian (李龟年) in <i>PEY</i> , Zhou Yuji in <i>Tieguan tu</i> , Zhu Maichen (朱买臣) in <i>Lankeshan</i> (烂柯山, Mount Lanke)
		<i>fumo</i> (副末, “secondary” <i>mo</i>)	middle-aged male characters, low social status, often supportive in the plays; features song	servants; Mo Cheng (莫诚) in <i>Yi peng xue</i> (一捧雪, The jade cup); specifically, <i>fumo</i> opens a Kunqu performance by introducing the theme and plot
		<i>laowai</i> (老外, old <i>wai</i> , also known as 外, <i>wai</i>)	often the elderly with life experiences; features song and acting	Important ministers at the court; Wu Zixu in <i>Washing Gauze</i>

APPENDIX B (Continued)
 Role Category in Kunqu
chou

Role Type	Major Features	Subcategories	Specific Features of the Subcategories	Typical Roles and Characters
<i>chou</i> (丑)	male characters with a white patch in the center of faces	<i>Fuchou</i> (副丑, “secondary” <i>chou</i> , also known as <i>fu</i> [副], “secondary”])	a unique Kunqu role subcategory between <i>baimian</i> and <i>xiaochou</i> ; negative characters that are tricky, sinister, and vicious, relatively high social status; features “static” acting such as depicting the character’s craftiness with a false smile	evil ministers, sly officials, vicious law practitioners; Prime Minister Bo Pi in <i>Washing Gauze</i> .
		<i>Xiaochou</i> (小丑, “small” <i>chou</i>)	simple and honest characters of low social status but with a sense of justice; occasionally, negative characters; emphasizes clear and resounding voice and humorous acting	characters of low social status, thieves, scouts,; the teahouse waiter in <i>Xunqin ji</i> , Lou Ashu (娄阿鼠) in <i>Fifteen Strings of Cash</i>

General note:

1. This Appendix is based on the Information summarized from the section on “Jiaose hangdang” (脚色行当, role category), in *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大词典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2002), 565-73; and from “Jiaose jiamen” (脚色家门, role category), in *Kunqu cidian* [昆曲辞典, Kunqu dictionary] ed. Hong Weizhu [洪惟助] (Yilan: Guoli chuantong yishu zhongxin, 2002), 558-66.
2. Specifically, five role categories of *sheng*, *dan*, *jing*, *mo*, and *chou* are included in Appendix B. Those five role categories are divided into a total of nineteen subcategories, some even with finer subdivisions. The categorizing system for the Appendix is modeled on Wang Zhenglai [王正来], “Jindai (Qing Tongzhi 1862 nian yihou) kun ban jiaose biao” [近代 (清同治1862 年以后) 昆班脚色表, List of role categories in recent (since the beginning of the Qing Emperor Tongzhi’s reign in 1862) Kunqu troupes], in *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大词典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2002), 566. Kunqu’s role categories “inherited” the role category system in Nanxi (Southern Play) which consisted seven categories of *sheng*, *dan*, *jing*, *mo*, *chou*, *wai*, and *tie* and developed into the present-day system which comprises twenty role subcategories. To see the course of development from Nanxi to the contemporary Kunqu role category system, please refer to Wang Zhenglai’s figures in *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian*, ed. Wu Xinlei (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2002), 565-6.

3. The 20th item on Wang's list is *za* (杂, variety). Compared to *za*, all other nineteen subcategories are “principal” either in a full play or in specific *zhezixi* programs. *Za* refers to the minor supporting characters in crowd scenes and are usually in groups made up of minimally four *za* players. The male is generally referred to as *longtao* (龙套, “dragon suit”), the female as *gongnu* (宫女, “palace maid”). The typical characters they play include soldiers, court runners, attendants, servants, divine warriors, demon followers, maids, courtesans, female servants and soldiers, to name a few.
4. *Wusheng* (武生, martial *sheng*), the role subcategory of Lin Weilin in *Gongsun Zidu* that was discussed in chapter 3, is not listed as a distinctive entry in Wang's list. It is specifically classified as *wuhang* (武行, martial category) by Yang Miao [洪淼], which also includes *wudan* (武旦, martial *dan*), *wujing* (武净, martial *jing*), and *wuchou* (武丑, martial *chou*). According to Yang Miao, there are no such specific *wu* subcategories. When a character is played by the actor with special skills and techniques for fighting and acrobatic, depending on the role subcategory, she or he automatically becomes a *wudan*, *wujing*, *wuchou*, *wu(xiao)sheng* or *wulaosheng*. See Yang Miao [洪淼], “Wuhang” [武行, martial category], in *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大词典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷] (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2002), 566.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

IN CHINESE

Sources in Print

“2012 Niandu Kunqu gongzuo zongshu” [2012 年度昆曲工作综述, Overview of Kunqu activities in 2012]. In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2013* [中国昆曲年鉴 2013, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2013], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 33-93.

Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2013.

“2013 Niandu Kunqu gongzuo zongshu” [2013 年度昆曲工作综述, Overview of Kunqu activities in 2013]. In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2014* [中国昆曲年鉴 2014, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2014], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 9-64.

Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2015.

“2014 Niandu Kunqu gongzuo zongshu” [2014 年度昆曲工作综述, Overview of Kunqu activities in 2014]. In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2015* [中国昆曲年鉴 2015, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2015], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 27-100.

Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2015.

“2015 Niandu Kunqu gongzuo zongshu” [2015 年度昆曲工作综述, Overview of Kunqu activities in 2015]. In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2016* [中国昆曲年鉴 2016, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2016], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 23-78.

Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2016.

An Kui [安葵]. “Chongzhen zhi si de beiju neihan—kan Shanghai Kunju Tuan yanchu de *Jingyang zhong*” [崇祯之死的悲剧内涵—看上海昆剧团演出的《景阳钟》],

The tragic connotation of Chongzhen's death—watching *Jingyang Bell* performed

- by Shanghai Kunju Troupe]. In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2014* [中国昆曲年鉴 2014, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2014], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 114-115. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2015.
- An Zhiqiang [安志强]. “Yichu ‘jimo’ de xi” [一出“寂寞”的戏, A “lonely” play]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 187-9. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- Ban Youshu [班友书]. “*Su Qin* xiwen yanbian yi zhi tan” [《苏秦》戏文演变一知谈, On evolution of the script for *Su Qin*], *Zhonghua Xiqu* [中华戏曲, Chinese Xiqu] 2 (1996): 252-270.
- Cai Xinxin [蔡欣欣]. “Lan yuan xin pa gu yun yang: guan yongjia Kunju Zhang Xie zhuangyuan” [兰苑新葩古韵扬: 观永嘉昆剧《张协状元》], *New flower in orchid garden with ancient charm: watching Yongjia Kunju Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*. *Xiwen* [戏文, Theatre literature] 3 (2001): 19-22.
- Cao Qijing [曹其敬]. “*Changshengdian* daoyan chanshu” [《长生殿》导演阐述, *The Palace of Eternal Youth* director’s exposition), in *Changshengdian: yanchu yu yanjiu* [长生殿: 演出与研究, A classic of traditional Chinese operas: the Palace of eternal youth (original English title)], eds. Zhou Huabin [周华斌] and Ye Changhai [叶长海], 16-7. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2009.
- Chen Duo [陈多]. “Li Yu ‘Li zhunao’ yi shi” [李渔《立主脑》译释, translation and interpretation of Li Yu’s “setting the center”]. *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai

- Theatre] 02 (1980): 55-57.
- . *Xiqu meixue* [戏曲美学, Aesthetics of Xiqu]. Chengdu: Sichuan renmin chubanshe, 2001.
- Cheng Lihui [程利辉]. “You xushu dao pipan: liang zhong shijiao xia de Zidu zhi si” [由叙述到批判: 两种视角下的子都之死, From narration to criticism: Zidu’s death in two perspectives]. *Sichuan xiju* [四川戏剧, Sichuan Drama] 01 (2010): 50-4.
- Cong Zhaohuan [丛兆桓]. “Kunqu zhong de gudian ming ju (xia)” [昆曲中的古典名剧 (下), Famous classic plays in Kunqu (second half)]. *Wenshi zhishi* [文史知识, Chinese Literature and History] 09 (2014): 92-94.
- Dai Ping [戴平]. “Jimo sh meili de” [寂寞是美丽的, Loneliness is beautiful]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 240-1. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- Dai Yun [戴云]. “Kan kunju *Ban Zhao* suixiang—jian tan ju zhong de jige renwu xingxiang. xiqu yishu” [看昆剧《班昭》随想——兼谈剧中的几个人物形象, Thoughts on watching *Ban Zhao*—and on the image of several characters in the play]. *Xiqu yishu* [戏曲艺术, Journal of Chinese Traditional Opera] 01 (2003): 81-83.
- Ding Sheng [丁盛]. *Lun Pai Hsien-yung de Kunqu xin meixue* (论白先勇的“昆曲新美学”, On Pai Hsien-yung's New Aesthetics of Kunqu Opera). *Wenyi lilun yanjiu* [文艺理论研究, Theoretical Studies in Literature and Art] 3 (2017): 37-43.

Dong Wei [董伟]. “Jiada qiangjiu baohu fuchi lidu, cujin Kunqu yishu kexue fazhan—zai Zhongguo Kunqu yishu lie ru lianheguo jiaokewenzuzhi ‘renlie koutou he feiwuzhi yichan daibiaozuo’ shi zhounian jinian dahui de jianghua” [加大抢救保护扶持力度, 促进昆曲艺术科学发展—在中国昆曲艺术列入联合国教科文组织“人类口头和非物质遗产代表作”十周年纪念大会的讲话, Enhance the efforts to rescue, protect and support, and facilitate the scientific development of Kunqu—talk at the meeting for the 10th anniversary of Kunqu’s designation as the “representative of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization]. In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2012* [中国昆曲年鉴 2012, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2012], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 3-5. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2012.

Fan Hongjuan [范红娟]. “*Chuanqi* gainian de jieding he *chuanqi* yu Nanxi de lishi fenjie wenti” [传奇概念的界定和传奇与南戏的历史分界问题, Definition of the concept of *chuanqi* and question on the historical demarcation between *chuanqi* and Nanxi]. *Liyun xuekan* [励耘学刊, Liyun Journal] (*wenxue juan*) ([文学卷, Volume of literature]) 01 (2005): 229-237.

Fu Jin [傅谨]. “Qingchunban *Mudan Ting* de chenggong zhi dao—zai “Bai Xianyong de wenxue chuanguo yu wenhua shijian” xueshu yantaohui shang de fayan” [青春版《牡丹亭》的成功之道—在“白先勇的文学创作与文化实践”学术研讨会上的发言, On the success of The Youth Version of *Peony Pavilion*—talk at the symposium on Pai Hsien-yung’s literary creation and cultural activities]. *Wenyi zhengming* [文艺争鸣, Literature and arts contention] 07 (2013): 110-13.

---. *Xiqu meixue* [Xiqu aesthetics]. Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1995.

Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], eds. *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju Ban Zhao anthology]. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.

Gong Hede [龚和德]. “Jingpin hai xu xi damo—Gongsun Zidu guan hou” [精品还需细打磨—《公孙子都》观后, Fine work needs fine polish—after watching *Gongsun Zidu*]. In *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德], 239-243. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010.

Gu Zhaolin [顾兆琳]. “Kunqu changqiang de yinyue tezheng—tan quanben *Changshengdian de qu*” [昆曲唱腔的音乐特征—谈全本《长生殿》的曲, The musical characteristics of Kunqu sung music—on the music in the complete version of *The Palace of Eternal Youth*]. *Xiju yishu* 150 [戏剧艺术, Theatre Arts] April (2009): 4-12.

Guo Hancheng [郭汉城]. “*Ban Zhao de de yu shi*” [《班昭》的得与失, Gains and losses of *Ban Zhao*]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 184-6. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.

Guo Liang [郭亮]. “Kunqu biao yan yishu de yidai fanben—*Shen yin jian gu lu*” [昆曲表

- 演艺术的一代范本--《审音鉴古录》, Model for a generation of the Kunqu performance art—*Record of inspecting sounds and learning from the past*]. *Xiju bao* [戏剧报, Chinese Theatre] Z7 (1961): 54-59.
- Guo Yingde [郭英德]. *Ming Qing chuanqi shi* [明清传奇史, History of *chuanqi* in the Ming and Qing dynasties]. Nanjing: Fenghuang chubanshe, 2001 (Formerly, Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1999).
- Hong Sheng [洪升]. *Changshengdian* [长生殿, *Palace of Eternal Youth*], translated by Yang Hsien-yi [杨宪益], and Gladys Yang [戴乃迭]. Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2004.
- Hong Weizhu [洪惟助], ed. *Kunqu cidian* [昆曲辞典, Kunqu dictionary]. Yilan: Guoli chuantong yishu zhongxin, 2002.
- Hu Xiaojun [胡晓军]. “Shenshen de miandui liangchong ‘lishi’—cong Kunju *Jingyang zhong bian* kan lishi ticali gudian Xiqu wenben de dangdai chuanguanbian” [审慎地面对两重“历史”——从昆剧《景阳钟变》看历史题材古典戏曲文本的当代创编, Prudently facing the two folds of “history”—on the contemporary creation of classic Xiqu texts with historical subjects through *Kunju Jingyang Bell change*]. *Yishu pinglun* [艺术评论, Arts Criticism] 03 (2013): 95.
- . “Xintai shenshen, zuowei wentuo—cong Kunju *Jingyang zhong bian* kan ‘gu’ xi ‘jin’ bian” [心态审慎 作为稳妥——从昆剧《景阳钟变》看“古”戏“今”编, Prudent in mind, stable in action—on “historical” plays’ “modern” adaptation through *Kunju Jingyang Bell change*]. *Wenxue bao* [文学报, Literature Press], 28 March 2013.
- Hua Wei [华玮]. “Shui shi zhujue? Shui zai guankan?—lun qingdai Xiqu zhong de

- Chongzhen zhi si” [谁是主角? 谁在观看?—论清代戏曲中的崇祯之死, Who is the Main Character? Who is the Viewer?—A Discussion of the Death of Chongzhen in Qing Dynasty Drama]. *Xiju yajiu* [戏剧研究, Theatre Research], 11 (2013): 23-60.
- . “Xin faxian de Tieguan tu-Baishi jin jie” [新发现的《铁冠图·白氏尽节》], The newly discovered *Iron-Crown Paintings: Ms Bai Dies for Chastity*. *Zhonghua Xiqu* [中华戏曲, Chinese Xiqu] 02 (2013): 249-64.
- Huang Chun [黄纯]. “Shi nian Kunqu yichan baohu yanjiu” [十年昆曲遗产保护研究, Research on the protection of Kunqu as Intangible Cultural Heritage in the past ten years]. In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2012* [中国昆曲年鉴 2012, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2012], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 21-29. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2012.
- Jiang Xingyu [蒋星煜]. *Zhongguo Xiqu shi gouchen* [中国戏曲史钩沉, An investigation of the Chinese Xiqu history]. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2010.
- Jin Renbiao [金仁燮]. *Kun chang “shi ju” yanjiu* [昆唱“时剧”探究, Research on “contemporary plays” in Kunqu] Diss. Suzhou: Soochow University, 2012.
- Jinyinji* [金印记, Gold Seal], ed. Sun Chongtao [孙崇涛]. Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1988.
- Li Dake [李大珂]. “Kuoda xilu yu huoyue pinglun—chuantong jumu zayi” [扩大戏路与活跃评论—传统剧目杂议, Broaden the play categories and make active the commentaries—discussion on the traditional plays]. *Zhongguo xiju* [中国戏剧, Chinese Theatre] 10 (1987): 46.
- Li Liang [李樑]. “Kunju *Ban Zhao* yinyue chuanguo suigan” [昆剧《班昭》音乐创作

- 随感, Random thoughts on the musical creation of *Ban Zhao*]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 111-5. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- Li Shiying [李世英]. “Zhongguo Xiqu yishu sixiang shi” [中国戏曲艺术思想史, *Zhongguo Xiqu yishu sixiangshi*, An intellectual history of Chinese Xiqu art]. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2015.
- Li Xiao [李晓]. *Zhongguo Kunqu* [中国昆曲, China Kunqu]. Shanghai: Baijia chubanshe, 2004.
- Li Yu [李渔]. *Xianqing ou ji* [闲情偶寄, Random thoughts on leisurely life], ed. Min Hui [民辉]. Changsha: Yuelu Press, 2000.
- Li Zhi [李贽], ed. “Jinyinji juan xia” [金印记卷下, *Gold Seal*, second volume]. In *San ke wu zhong chuanqi* [三刻五种传奇, Third print of five *chuanqi* plays], PDF, 5 March 2018. <<https://shuge.org/ebook/san-ke-wu-zhong-chuan-qi/>>.
- Li Ziguai [李紫贵]. “Kunju *Changshengdian* dao houji” [昆剧《长生殿》导后记, Director's post-production review of Kunju *Changshengdian*]. *Zhongguo xiju* [中国戏剧, Chinese theatre] 12 (1988): 26-7.
- Liao Ben [廖奔], and Liu Yanjun [刘彦君], eds. *Zhongguo Xiqu fanzhan shi (di san juan)* [中国戏曲发展史 (第三卷), The development of Chinese traditional opera, vol. 3]. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2013.
- Lin Weilin [林为林]. “Yi wen yi wu yan Zidu” [亦文亦武演子都, To play Zidu in both

civil and marital ways]. In *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德], 19-25. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010.

Liu Fusheng [刘福升]. “Chuangxin cai shi zhen” [创新才是真, Only innovation is real]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 125-7. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.

Liu Housheng [刘厚生]. “Si kan Ban Zhao” [四看班昭, Watching Ban Zhao four times]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 162-7. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.

---. “Zai *Ban Zhao* huo ‘zhongguo xiqu xuehui jiang’ banjiang yishi shang de zhici” [在《班昭》获“中国戏曲学会奖”颁奖仪式上的致辞, Speech on the awarding ceremony for *Ban Zhao* winning Chinese Xiqu Academy Awards]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 3-4. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.

Liu Zhen [刘祯]. “Ershi yi shiji kunqu yanjiu gailun” [21 世纪昆曲研究概论, An overview of research on Kunqu in the twenty-first century]. *Yishu baijia* [艺术百

- 家, *A hundred schools of arts*] 112.1 (2010): 137-142.
- . “Jian zoupianfeng jiu mao xin yan— Shanghai Kunju Tuan Kunju *Jingyang zhong gaibian chuyi*” [剑走偏锋 旧貌新颜—上海昆剧团昆剧《景阳钟》改编刍议, Sword deflects the front and new look of an old face—my humble opinion of Shanghai Kunju Troupe’s *Kunju Jingyang Bell*]. *Zhongguo wenhua bao* [中国文化报, *China Culture Daily*], 17 July 2014.
- Lou Baitong [娄佰彤]. “Ming Qing fengci xiju de jingpin: yi *Jinyinji* he *Huangjinyin weili*” [明清讽刺喜剧的精品: 以《金印记》和《黄金印》为例, Masterpiece of satirical comedies in the Ming and Qing—take *Gold Seal* and *Yellow Gold Seal* for example]. *Xiju wenxue* [戏剧文学, *Theatre literature*] 5 (2015): 108-111.
- Lu Eting [陆萼庭]. *Kunju yanchu shigao* [昆剧演出史稿, *A draft history of Kunju performance*]. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1980.
- Lü Jun [吕俊]. “Wo shi yi zhi ‘kunchong’” [我是一只“昆虫”, I am a “Kunqu worm”]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, *Watchers’ words—Kunju Ban Zhao anthology*], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 296-300. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- Lü Tiancheng [吕天成]. *Qupin* [曲品, *Ranking of plays*]. Beijing: Lantian chubanshe, 1999.
- Luo Huaizhen [罗怀臻]. “Kunju *Ban Zhao* wenxue chuangyi shu” [昆剧《班昭》文学创意书, *Introduction to the literary originality of Kunju Ban Zhao*]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, *Watchers’*

- words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 54-61. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- . “Xinbian Kunju *Ban Zhao* chuanguo tan” [新编昆剧《班昭》创作谈, Talks on creation of the newly written Kunju *Ban Zhao*]. *Jiefang ribao* [解放日报, Jiefang Daily], 19 May 2002.
- Mao Shi'an [毛时安]. “Jinye de jimo shi ruci dongren—kan Kunju *Ban Zhao*” [今夜的寂寞是如此动人—看昆剧《班昭》], Tonight's loneliness is so moving—on Kunju *Ban Zhao*. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 190-4. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- Men Kui [门崑]. *Xiqu wenxue—Yuyan tuoqi de zonghe yishu* [戏曲文学—语言托起的综合艺术, Xiqu literature: An integrated art based on language]. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2000.
- Niu Biao [钮骠], et al. *Zhongguo de Kunqu yishu* [中国的昆曲艺术, Kunqu art of China] Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe, 1996.
- Pai Hsien-yung [白先勇]. “Kunqu xin meixue: cong qingchun ban *Mudan ting* dao xinban *Yuzan ji*” [昆曲新美学: 从青春版《牡丹亭》到新版《玉簪记》], The new aesthetics of Kunqu: from the youth version of *The Peony Pavilion* to the new edition *Jade Hairpin*. *Yishu pinglun* [艺术评论, Arts Criticism] 03 (2010): 5-9.
- . *Pai Hsien-yung shuo Kunqu* [白先勇说昆曲, Pai Hsien-yung talks about Kunqu].

- Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004.
- . *Sedanbaotian Yuzan ji: Qin qu shu hua Kunqu xin meixue* [色胆包天玉簪记: 琴曲书画昆曲新美学, The story of Jade Hairpin (original English title)]. Taipei: Tianxia yuanjian chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 2009.
- Ping Guo [平国]. “Yaozi fanshen” [鹞子翻身, “sparrow-hawk-flip”]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 590. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- Qu Runhai [曲润海]. “Kunju shi yi men wenya yishu” [昆剧是一门文雅艺术, Kunju is an elegant art]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju Ban Zhao anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 205-7. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- . “Nairen xunsi de Gongsun Zidu” [耐人寻思的《公孙子都》], The thought-provoking *Gongsun Zidu*. In *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德], 139-143. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010.
- Sang Yuxi [桑毓喜]. *Kunju chuan zi bei* [昆剧传字辈, the “Transmission (Chuan) generation” of Kunju]. Nanjing: Jiangsu wenshi ziliao bianjibu, 2000.
- Shanghai Kunju tuan* [上海昆剧团, Shanghai Kunju Troupe]. “‘Jian gu rong jin—tuichen chuxin’: Kunju Jingyang zhong xueshu yantaohui zai hu yuxing” [鉴古融

- 今推陈出新”昆剧《景阳钟》学术研讨会在沪举行,“Learning from the past and integrating the present—weeding through the old to bring forth the new”: symposium on Kunju *Jingyang Bell* was convened in Shanghai]. *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai Theatre] 06 (2014): 2.
- Shen Bin [沈斌]. “kunju *Changshengdian* daoyan zhaji—jian lun Xiqu daoyan de jiben guilü (xia)” [昆剧《长生殿》导演札记—兼论戏曲导演的基本规律(下), Director’s note Kunju *Changshengdian*—a talk on the basic rules of Xiqu director]. *Xiqu yishu* [戏曲艺术, Xiqu arts] 02 (1988): 65-72.
- Shen Chongsui [沈宠绥]. “Duqu xuzhi: xu yun long shuai” [度曲须知: 曲运隆衰, Guidance to singing: Prosperity and decline in Xiqu forms]. In *Zhongguo gudian Xiqu lunzhu jicheng (di wu ji)* [中国古典戏曲论著集成(第五集), Collection of Chinese classical Xiqu treatises, vol.5], ed. *Zhongguo Xiqu Yanjiuyuan* [中国戏曲研究院, Chinese Academy of Xiqu Research], 197-199. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1959.
- Shi Chenlu [施晨露]. “Nan ken de yinggutou jin cheng “na jiang zhuan yehu”—Shangkun xinbian lishiju jingyang zhong wu yi qi gao bian yan bian gai, jihu na bian zhuan ye lingyu suoyou zhongyao jiangxiang” [难啃的硬骨头今成“拿奖专业户”—上昆新编历史剧《景阳钟》五易其稿边演边改, 几乎拿遍专业领域所有重要奖项, The hard bone becomes serial winner of awards—Shangkun’s new historical play *Jingyang Bell* goes through five revisions with its script and makes changes along performances, sweeping almost all the major awards in the field]. *Jiefang ribao* [解放日报, Jiefang Daily], 20 May 2014.

Shi Shanwei [石善伟]. “*Liuxuesheng huiguo ge gan jiu mu—cheng muqin sheng wo yang wo jiu gai baoda*” [留学生回国割肝救母—称母亲生我养我就该报答, Chinese overseas student returns to sever his liver to save his mother—says mother gave birth to me and raised me so I should repay her]. *Guangzhou ribao* [广州日报, Guangzhou daily], 8 September 2011.

Shi Yukun [石玉昆]. “Huhuan renxing huigui, chongzhen wuxi xiongfeng—Kunju *Gongsun Zidu* daoyan suixiang” [呼唤人性回归, 重振武戏雄风—昆剧《公孙子都》导演随想, Calling for the return of human nature, reinvigorating the masculinity of martial plays—the director’s random thoughts on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*]. In *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德], 31-37. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010.

Ssu-ma Ch’ien [司马迁]. *The Grand Scribe's Records* [史记, *Shiji*], vol.7, eds. & tr. William H. Nienhauser, Jr. et al. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Su Guorong [苏国荣]. *Xiqu meixue* (戏曲美学, Aesthetics of Xiqu). Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 1999.

Su Zhong [苏中]. “De xi guilai—chong jie ‘gaotaijiaohua’” [德兮归来—重解“高台教化”, Morality, come back!—reinterpreting “high stage enlightenment”], *Qingming* [清明] 04 (2002): 186-7.

Sun Chongtao [孙崇涛]. “*Jinyinji de yanhua*” [《金印记》的演化, Evolution of *Gold*

- Seal*]. *Wenxue yichan* [文学遗产, literature heritage] 3 (1984): 45-56.
- Sun Mei [孙玫]. “Guanyu Nanxi he *chuanqi* de lishi duan xian wenti de zai renshi” [关于南戏和传奇的历史断限问题的再认识, Re-understanding of the historical division between Nanxi and *chuanqi*]. In *Ming Qing Xiqu guoji yantaohui lunwenji* [明清戏曲国际研讨会论文集, Anthology of international symposium on Xiqu in the Ming and Qing dynasties], eds. Hua Wei [华玮] and Wang Ailing [王瑗玲], 287-303. Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan Zhongguo wen zhe yanjiusuo chouben, 1998.
- . “Lishixing de zhuanbian: cong jinxi, gai xi dao baohu feiwuzhi wenhua yichan” [历史性的转变: 从禁戏、改戏到保护非物质文化遗产, The Historical Transformation from Xiqu Prohibition and Xiqu Adaptation to Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection]. *Wenhua yichan* [文化遗产, Cultural heritage] 01 (2010): 17-20, 108, 157.
- Sun, Congyin [孙从音]. *Zhongguo Kunqu qiangci gelühe yingyong* [中国昆曲腔词格律和应用 Words, tunes, rules and forms of Chinese Kunqu and other applications]. Shanghai: Shanghai Yinyue Chubanshe, 2003.
- Tang Baoxiang [唐葆祥]. “Jiashen ji” [甲申记, Record of (the year) Jiashen]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 187-8. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- Tang Sifu [唐斯复]. “Quanben *Changshengdian* zhengli yanchu juben chutan” [全本《长生殿》整理演出剧本初探, Tentative thoughts on rearrangement of

- playscript for performance of the full play *Palace of Eternal Youth*]. In *Changshengdian: yanchu yu yanjiu* [长生殿: 演出与研究, A classic of traditional Chinese operas: the Palace of eternal youth (original English title)], eds. Zhou Huabin [周华斌] and Ye Changhai [叶长海], 8-11. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2009.
- Tian Shaodong [田韶东]. “Kunqu danjue yanchang de yong sang tedian” [昆曲旦角演唱的用嗓特点, Singing Characteristics of Female Roles in Kunqu Opera (original title)]. *Nanchang gao zhuan xuebao* [南昌高专学报, Journal of Nanchang College] 5 (2008): 68-71.
- Wang An-Ch'i [王安祈]. “‘Yanyuan juchang’ xiang ‘bianju zhongxin’ de guodu—dalu ‘xiqu gaige’ xiaoying yu dangdai xiqu zhi xing zhuanbian zhi guancha” [「演员剧场」向「编剧中心」的过渡—大陆「戏曲改革」效应与当代戏曲质性转变之观察, The transition from actor-centered to playwright-centered drama: an investigation of mainland drama reform and the transformation of the nature of contemporary theater]. *Zhongguo wenzhe yanjiu jikan* [中国文哲研究集刊, Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy] vol.19 (2001): 251-316.
- . “Chuangzuo yu pingjiang: yi ‘guojia wutai yishu jingpin gongcheng’ san bu ruxuan juzuo wei li” [创作与评奖: 以“国家舞台艺术精品工程”三部入选剧作为例, Creative Writing and Awards-Granting: Case Studies of the Three Plays Elected in the “National Project of Excellent Stage Art”]. *Minsu quyiyi* [民俗曲艺, Journal of Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore] 164.6 (2009): 191-227.

- . “Kunju biao yan chuan cheng zhong Jingju yinzi de shen ru” [昆剧表演传承中京剧因子的渗入, The influence of Peking Opera on Kunqu in the twentieth century]. *Xiju yanjiu* [戏剧研究, Journal of Theater Studies] 10 (2012): 109-138.
- . “Xilihutu xiao kan renjian—xie zai Zhang Xie zhuangyuan lai tai yanchu zhiqian” [稀里糊涂笑看人间—写在《张协状元》来台演出之前, Casually look at the world with a laugh—notes before the tour performance of *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate* in Taiwan]. *Xiwen* [戏文, Theatre literature] 3 (2001): 18.
- Wang Kui [王馥]. “‘Zhaohun’ ‘quguo’ liang guan qing—cong Tieguan tu dao Jingyang zhong de ‘tuotaihuangu’” [“招魂” “去国”两关情—从《铁冠图》到《景阳钟》的“脱胎换骨”, “Calling ghost” and “leaving homeland” are both connected with feelings—the fundamental change from *Tieguan tu* to *Jingyang Bell*]. *Yingshi yu xiju pinglun* [影视与戏剧评论, Film, TV and drama review] 0 (2014): 184-9.
- Wang Limei [王丽梅]. “Yi zhe dai quan hua ya wei su: lun Jinyinji taiben de chuan cheng” [以折带全 化雅为俗: 论《金印记》台本的传承, With the act as the full play, transform the elegant to popular: on the inheritance of the script for *Gold seal*]. *Dongnan daxue xuebao (zhexue shehui kexueban)* [东南大学学报 (哲学社会科学版)] 6 (2010): 108-112.
- Wang Ning [王宁]. *Kunju zhezixi yanjiu* [昆剧折子戏研究, On Kunju zhezixi]. Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2013.
- Wang Run [王润]. “Jing kun yishujia lianmei chengxian Tieguan tu” [京昆艺术家联袂呈现《铁冠图》, Jingju and Kunqu artists are in collaboration to present *Tieguan*

- tu]. Beijing wanbao [北京晚报, Beijing evening], 19 Sept., 2018.
- Wang Wei [王薇]. “Bai shan xiao wei xian—guan xinbian Kunju *Ai wujiang*” [百善孝为先 观新编昆剧《爱无疆》, Filial piety is the foremost of all virtues—watching new Kunju *Boundless Love*]. *Zhongguo yanyuan* [中国演员, China actor] 04 (2012): 17.
- Wang Xiaoying [王小鹰]. “Zhang Jingxian jiqing su Ban Zhao—kan Kunju *Ban Zhao* yougan” [张静娴激情塑班昭——看昆剧《班昭》有感, Zhang Jingxian passionately creates Ban Zhao—observations on Kunju *Ban Zhao*]. *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai Drama] 06 (2001): 19.
- Wang Yan [王焱]. “Beifang Kunqu Juyuan 2012 Niandu Kunqu gongzuo zongshu” [北方昆曲剧院 2012 年度昆曲工作综述, Overview of Kunqu activities]. In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2013* [中国昆曲年鉴 2013, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2013], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 33. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2013.
- . “Muai zi xiao chuan wandai—xie zai Kunqu dangdai ju *Ai wujiang* shouyan zhiqian” [母爱子孝传万代—写在昆曲当代剧《爱无疆》首演之前, Mother’s love and son’s filial piety pass on for thousands of generations—written before the premiere of the contemporary Kunqu play *Boundless Love*]. Unpublished work, personal collection.
- . “Su Qin reng shi jiu Su Qin: tan Yongjia Kunju tuan *Jinyinji* de chuanguo” [苏秦仍是旧苏秦: 谈永嘉昆剧团《金印记》的创作, Su Qin is still the old Su Qin: on the creation of Yongjia Kunju Troupe’s *Gold Seal*]. *Shanghai xiju* [上海戏剧, Shanghai theatre] 8 (2012): 8-9.

---. *Jinyinji qianyan* [《金印记》前言, Foreword to *Gold Seal*], dated May 31, 2012.

Unpublished work, personal collection.

Wang Yongjian [王永健]. “Ping Changshengdian jixuan ben” [评《长生殿》节选本, A critique on the abridged version of *The Palace of Eternal Youth*], in *Qiangu qingyuan Changshengdian guoji xueshu yantaohui lunwenji* [千古情缘《长生殿》国际学术研讨会论文集, Lasting love—anthology of *Palace of Eternal Youth* international symposium], eds Xie Boliang [谢柏梁], and Gao Fumin [高福民], 521-537. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2006.

Wang Yueyang [王悦阳]. “Tieguan tu: chongxian liyuan jueban jingdian” [《铁冠图》: 重现梨园绝版经典, *Tieguan tu: representing the “out-of-print” theatrical classic*]. *Xinmin zhoukan* [新民周刊, *Xinmin weekly*] 36 (2018): 94.

Wang Yunming [王蕴明]. “Kunju *Ban Zhao* de shi yu xi yu wenren qinghuai” [昆剧《班昭》的史与戏与文人情怀, History, play, and literati feelings of *Kunju Ban Zhao*]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—*Kunju Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 219-229. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.

Wang Zhenglai [王正来]. “Bietui cuobu” [别腿搓步, “cross-leg slipping steps”]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 583. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.

---. “Guibu” [跪步, lit., kneeling steps]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典,

- Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 582-3. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- . “Huabu tuidie” [滑步后跌, “slippery-step backward fall”]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 584. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- . “Jindai (Qing Tongzhi 1862 nian yihou) kun ban jiaose biao” [近代 (清同治 1862 年以后) 昆班脚色表, List of role categories in recent (since the beginning of the Qing Emperor Tongzhi’s reign in 1862) Kunqu troupes]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大词典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 566. Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2002.
- . “Nianbai” [念白, speech]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 518-9. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- . “Xibu” [膝步, lit., knee steps]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 582. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- . “Yuanchang” [圆场, “round circles”]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 581. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- Wang Zisong [汪子嵩]. *Xila zhexue shi* [希腊哲学史, History of Greek philosophy]. Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1997.
- Wu Mei [吴梅]. *Gu qu zhu tan* [顾曲麈谈, To glance at the music and chat informally].

- Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2000.
- Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], ed. *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera]. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- . “Dangjin Kunqu yishu de chuancheng yu fazhan—cong Sukun qingchun ban *Mudan ting* dao Shangkun quanjing shi *Changshengdian*” [当今昆曲艺术的传承与发展——从“苏昆”青春版《牡丹亭》到“上昆”全景式《长生殿》], *The inheritance and development of Kunqu today—from the SuKun youth version of *The peony pavilion* to the Shangkun panoramic *Palace of eternal youth**. *Wenyi yanjiu* [文艺研究, Literature & Art Studies] (June 2009): 71-77.
- Wu Yuhua [吴毓华]. *Xiqu meixue lun* [戏曲美学论 A Study on the *xiqu* aesthetics]. Taipei: Guojia chubanshe, 2005.
- Xi Yan [希砚]. “Guogao” [过高, lit., passing the height]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 591. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- . “Shuai fa shi” [甩发式, swing hair style]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 589. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- Xiao Lihe [萧丽河], “Kunju 1699·Taohuashan de yanchu kongjian ji wutai sheji shuoming” [昆剧《1699·桃花扇》的演出空间及舞台设计说明, Exposition on the performance space and stage design in Kunju *The Peach Blossom Fan (1699)*], in *1699 Taohuashan: zhongguo chuanqi dianfeng* [1699 桃花扇: 中国传奇巅峰, *The Peach Blossom Fan (1699): the Pinnacle of Classical Chinese Theatre*

- (original title)], ed. Jiangsusheng *yanyi jituan* [江苏省演艺集团昆剧院, Jiangsu Performing Arts Group Co., LTD], 85-91. Nanjing: Jiangsu meishu chubanshe, 2007.
- Xu Dajun [徐大军]. “Tan Kunju *Zhang Xie zhuangyuan de xi le jingshen*” [谈昆剧《张协状元》的戏乐精神, On the theatrical entertainment spirit of Kunju *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*]. *Xiwen* [戏文, Theatre literature] 1 (2002): 18-9.
- Xu Jianzhong [许建中]. “Chuanqi yu chuanqi fazhan de san ge lishi jieduan” [传奇与传奇发展的三个历史阶段, *Chuanqi* and the three historical stages in the development of *chuanqi*]. *Wenshizhe* [文史哲, Literature, history and philosophy] 04 (1998): 90-93.
- Xu Shuofang [徐朔方]. *Zhongguo si da gudian mingju* [中国古典四大名剧, China's four great classical plays]. Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1958.
- Xu Wei [徐渭]. “Nan ci xu lu” [南词叙录, Records of Southern Play]. In *Zhongguo gudian Xiqu lunzhu jicheng* [中国古典戏曲论著集成, Collection of Chinese classical Xiqu treatises], vol.3, ed. *Zhongguo Xiqu Yanjiuyuan* [中国戏曲研究院, Chinese Academy of Xiqu Research], 233-256. Beijing: Zhongguo xiqu chubanshe, 1959.
- Yang Fan [杨帆]. “Paiyan Kunqu dangda xixi *Ai wujiang de tihui*” [排演昆曲当代戏《爱无疆》的体会, Experience of rehearsals and performances of Kunqu modern play *Boundless Love*]. *Zhongguo yanyuan* [中国演员, Chinese actors] 28.4 (2012): 19-20.
- Yang Jianxin [杨建新]. “Shu fengliu renwu hai kan jinzhao” [数风流人物还看今朝, To

- count the talented, it is to look to this age]. In *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德], 9-11. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010.
- Yang Miao [泱淼]. “Wuhang” [武行, martial category]. In *Zhongguo Kunju da cidian* [中国昆剧大辞典, Dictionary of Chinese Kunqu Opera], ed. Wu Xinlei [吴新雷], 566. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2002.
- Yang Xiaoqing [杨小青]. “Yi renwu dadong guanzhong—*Ban Zhao* daoyan chanshu” [以人物打动观众—《班昭》导演阐述, Move the audience with the characters—*Ban Zhao* director’s statement]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 62-66. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- Yi Yan [艺言]. “Kunqu zhe shi nian” [昆曲这十年, Kunqu in the 10 Years]. *People’s Daily (Hawai ban* [海外版, Overseas version]), 19 May 2011.
- Yu Qiuyu [余秋雨]. *Di sheng he chu* [笛声何处, Where is the sound of the flute(?)]. Suzhou: Guwuxuan chubanshe, 2004.
- Yu Weimian [俞为民]. “Nanxi *Jinyinji* de banben ji qi liubian” [南戏《金印记》的版本及其流变, Versions and evolution of Nanxi *Gold Seal*]. *Wenxian* [文献, Documents] 4 (1993): 13-32.
- Yu Weimin [俞为民], and Sun Rongrong [孙蓉蓉], eds. “Lidai quhua huibian qingdai

- bian” [历代曲话汇编清代编, Anthology of Xiqu works from different dynasties, the Qing dynasty volume], vol. 3. Anhui: Huangshan shushe, 2008.
- Yue Meiti [岳美缙]. *Jin sheng jinshi* [巾生今世, This life as a *jin sheng* actor]. Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2008.
- . *Lin feng du qu Yue Meiti* [临风度曲 岳美缙, Singing against the wind—Yue Meiti]. Taipei: Shitou chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 2006.
- Zhang Geng [张庚]. “Guweijinyong—lishiju de linghun” [古为今用—历史剧的灵魂, Let the past serve the present—the soul of historical plays]. In *Zhang Geng wenlu (di wu juan)* [张庚文录 (第五卷), Catalog of Zhang Geng’s works, vol. 5]. Changsha: Hunan wenyi chubanshe, 2003.
- . *Xiqu meixue lun* [戏曲美学论 A Study on the *xiqu* aesthetics]. Shanghai: Shanghai shuhua chubanshe, 2004.
- Zhang Jingxian [张静娴]. “Dao qingnian ren zhong qu zhao pengyou” [到青年人中去交朋友, Go looking for friends among the young people]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju Ban Zhao anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 288-291. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- . “Huifang Ban Zhao” [回访《班昭》, Revisit *Ban Zhao*]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju Ban Zhao anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 67-89. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- Zhang Li’e [张丽娥]. *Ming chuanqi jiaohua gongneng yanjiu* [明传奇教化功能研究,

- Research on the enlightenment function of the Ming *chuanqi*. Diss. Shaanxi Normal University, 2016.
- Zhang Lie [张烈]. “Kunju *Gongsun Zidu* bianju gan tan” [昆剧《公孙子都》编剧感谈, Reflections on the playwriting of Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*]. In *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德], 26-30. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010.
- Zhang Mingrong [张铭荣]. “*Ban Zhao* jin xiaoyuan, hao xi yao chang yan” [《班昭》进校园, 好戏要常演]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers’ words—Kunju *Ban Zhao* anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 292-295. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- Zhang Yue [张悦]. “Lao xi xin tan—cong Kunju *Tieguan tu* dao *Jingyang zhong*” [老戏新探“禁戏”新生—从昆剧《铁冠图》到《景阳钟》, Old play’s new exploration and “banned play”’s new life—from Kunju *Tieguan tu* to *Jingyang Bell*]. *Zhongguo yishu bao* [中国艺术报, China arts daily], 26 May 2014.
- Zhao Heping [赵和平], and Zhou Yude [周育德]. *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju *Gongsun Zidu*]. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010.
- Zhao Lihong [赵丽宏]. “Xin deng” [心灯, Heart lamp]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju*

- Ban Zhao *wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, Watchers' words—Kunju Ban Zhao anthology], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 242. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- Zheng Lei [郑雷]. *Kunqu* [昆曲]. Beijing: Wenhua yishu chubanshe, 2012.
- Zhongguo Xiqu xuehui [中国戏曲学会, Chinese Xiqu Academy], et al., eds. *Kunju Zhang Xie zhuangyuan pinglunji* [昆剧《张协状元》评论集, Anthology of Kunqu Zhang Xie the Top Graduate]. Beijing: Zhongguo xiqu chubanshe, 2004.
- Zhongguo Xiqu xuehui [中国戏曲学会, Chinese Xiqu Academy]. “Wei Kunju Gongsun Zidu banjiang han” [为昆剧《公孙子都》颁奖函, Letter on granting the award to Kunju Gongsun Zidu]. In *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju Gongsun Zidu], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德], 4-5. Beijing: Zhongguo xiqu chubanshe, 2010.
- Zhongguo Xiqu zhi bianji weiyuanhui [《中国戏曲志》编辑委员会, Annals of Chinese Xiqu Editorial Committee], and *Zhongguo Xiqu zhi—Liaoning juan bianji weiyuanhui* [《中国戏曲志·辽宁卷》编辑委员会, Annals of Chinese Xiqu—Liaoning volume Editorial Committee], eds. *Zhongguo Xiqu zhi—Liaoning juan* [《中国戏曲志·辽宁卷》, Zhongguo Xiqu zhi—Liaoning volume]. Beijing: Zhongguo ISBN zhongxin, 1994.
- Zhou Chuanying [周传瑛], *Kunju shengya liu shi nian* [昆剧生涯六十年, Sixty years of Kunju career]. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 1988.

Zhou Enlai [周恩来]. “Guanyu Kunqu *Shi wu guan de liang ci jianghua*” [关于昆曲《十五贯》的两次讲话, Two talks on the Kunqu play *Fifteen Strings of Coins*]. *Wenyi yanjiu* [文艺研究, Literature and Art Studies] 1 (1980): 4–7.

Zhou Huabin [周华斌], and Ye Changhai [叶长海], eds. *Changshengdian: yanchu yu yanjiu* [长生殿: 演出与研究, A classic of traditional Chinese operas: the Palace of eternal youth (original English title)]. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2009.

Zhou Qin [周秦]. “Kunqu de yichan jiazhi ji baohu chuancheng” [昆曲的遗产价值及保护传承, Kunqu’s value as heritage and its protection and transmission]. *Minzu yishu yanjiu* [民族艺术研究, Ethnic arts study] 5 (2017): 11-26.

Zhou Xiangyu [周祥钰], et al. *Jiugong dacheng nanbei ci gongpu* [九宫大成南北词宫谱, Complete collection of *qupai* in Northern and Southern styles]. Reprint. Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1987.

Zhou Yude [周育德]. “Fugu hu? Chuangxin hu? — *Zhang Xie zhuangyuan suixiang*” [复古乎?创新乎?—《张协状元》随想, Restoration of the ancient? Innovation?—random notes on *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*]. In *Kunju Zhang Xie zhuangyuan pinglunji* [昆剧《张协状元》评论集, Anthology of Kunqu *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*], eds. *Zhongguo Xiqu xuehui* [中国戏曲学会, Chinese Xiqu Academy] et al, 77-83. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2004.

---. “*Tieguan tu de tuichenchuxin—shuo Kunju Jingyang zhong*” [《铁冠图》的推陈出新—说昆剧《景阳钟》], Weeding through the old to bring forth the new out of

- Tieguan tu*—on *Kunju Jingyang Bell*). In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2014* [中国昆曲年鉴 2014, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2014], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 111-114. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2015.
- Zhu Chengpu [朱承朴], and Zeng Qingquan [曾庆权]. *Ming Qing chuanqi gaishuo* [明清传奇概说, An introduction to Ming-Qing *Chuanqi*]. Hong Kong: Hong Kong sanlian shuju, 1985.
- Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], ed. *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2012* [中国昆曲年鉴 2012, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2012]. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2012.
- . *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2013* [中国昆曲年鉴 2013, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2013]. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2013.
- . *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2014* [中国昆曲年鉴 2014, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2014]. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2015.
- . *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2015* [中国昆曲年鉴 2015, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2015]. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2015.
- . *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2016* [中国昆曲年鉴 2016, The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2016]. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2016.
- Zhu Hengfu [朱恒夫]. *Kunqu meixue gangyao* [昆曲美学纲要, An outline of Kunqu aesthetics]. Shanghai: Shanghai wenhua chubanshe, 2014.
- . *Zhongguo Xiqu meixue* [中国戏曲美学, Chinese Xiqu aesthetics]. Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 2008.
- Zhu Jinhua [朱锦华]. “*Changshengdian yanchu jianshi*” [《长生殿》演出简史, A brief history of the performance of *Palace of Eternal Youth*]. In *Changshengdian*:

- yanchu yu yanjiu* [长生殿: 演出与研究, A classic of traditional Chinese operas: the Palace of eternal youth (original English title)], eds. Zhou Huabin [周华斌] and Ye Changhai [叶长海], 326-45. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2009.
- . *Changshengdian yanchu shi yanjiu* (《长生殿》演出史研究, A study on the production history of *The Palace of Eternal Youth*). Diss. Shanghai Theatre Academy, 2007.
- Zhu Wenwu [朱闻武]. “Cong baofu dao ganen—kunju *Jinyinji* de renxing zhi shan” [从报复到感恩---昆剧《金印记》的人性之善, From revenge to gratitude—kindness of humanity in Kunju *Gold Seal*]. *Wenzhou ribao* [温州日报, Wenzhou daily], 9 April 2012.
- . “Weimei lizhi pian gandong Zhongguo Kunju jie—Yongkun *Jinyinji* ronghuo youxiu jumu jiang” [“唯美励志片”感动中国昆剧节--永昆《金印记》荣获优秀剧目奖, “Aesthetic inspirational play” moves China Kunju Festival—Yongkun *Gold Seal* won the Excellent Production Award]. *Wenzhou ribao* [温州日报, Wenzhou daily], 9 July 2012.
- . “Yongkun *Jinyinji* jin Hangzhou” [永昆《金印记》进杭州, “Yongkun *Gold Seal* comes to Hangzhou]. *Wenzhou ribao* [温州日报, Wenzhou daily], 9 July 2012.
- Zuo Xiaoyan [左小燕]. “You zheme yi chu xi: guanyu Yueju *Liuguo feng xiang*” [有这么一出戏: 关于粤剧《六国封相》, There is such a play: on the Cantonese Opera *Appointed as prime minister by the Six States*]. *Xiqu yishu* [戏曲艺术, Xiqu art] 01 (2002): 97-100.

(In order of appearance in production analysis)

- Qingchunban Mudan ting* [青春版《牡丹亭》, The Youth Version of *The Peony Pavilion*]. In *Chaziyanhong Mudan ting: si bai nian qingchun zhi meng* [姹紫嫣红《牡丹亭》: 四百年青春之梦, Brilliant purples and reds of *The Peony Pavilion: a dream of youth for four hundred years*], Pai Hsien-yung [白先勇], 131-265. Guilin: Guangxi shifan daxue chubanshe, 2004.
- Xinban Yuzanji* [新版《玉簪记》, the New Version of *Jade Hairpin*]. In *Sedanbaotian Yuzan ji: Qin qu shu hua Kunqu xin meixue* [色胆包天玉簪记: 琴曲书画昆曲新美学, The story of Jade Hairpin (original English title)], Pai Hsien-yung [白先勇], 53-89. Taipei: Tianxia yuanjian chuban gufen youxian gongsi, 2009.
- 1699 Taohuashan* [1699·桃花扇, *The Peach Blossom Fan (1699)*]. In *1699 Taohuashan: zhongguo chuanqi dianfeng* [1699 桃花扇: 中国传奇巅峰, *The Peach Blossom Fan (1699): the Pinnacle of Classical Chinese Theatre* (original title)], ed. Jiangsusheng yanyi jituan [江苏省演艺集团昆剧院, Jiangsu Performing Arts Group Co., LTD], 120-151. Nanjing: Jiangsu meishu chubanshe, 2007.
- “Xiongmao ban” *Changshengdian* [“熊猫版”《长生殿》, “Panda version” of *Palace of Eternal Youth*]. In *Changshengdian: zhongyingwen yanchu juben* [长生殿: 中英文演出剧本, A Classic of Traditional Chinese Operas: *The Palace of Eternal Youth* (original English title)], ed. Tang Sifu [唐斯复], translated by Yang Hsien-yi [杨宪益], and Gladys Yang [戴乃迭], 23-259. Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2008.
- Luo Huaizhen [罗怀臻]. *Ban Zhao* [班昭]. *Juben* [剧本, Play] 10 (1998): 34-48.

- . “*Ban Zhao juben*” [《班昭》剧本, *Ban Zhao play script*]. In *Shouwang zhe shuo—Kunju Ban Zhao wenji* [守望者说—昆剧《班昭》文集, *Watchers’ words—Kunju Ban Zhao anthology*], eds. Gong Hede [龚和德] and Mao Shian [毛时安], 7-44. Shanghai: Shanghai cishu chubanshe, 2003.
- Zhang Lie [张烈]. “*Gongsun Zidu*” [《公孙子都》]. In *Linghun de jiushu—Kunju Gongsun Zidu chuanguo pinglun ji* [灵魂的救赎—昆剧《公孙子都》创作评论集, *Redemption of the soul—anthology of creation and critiques on Kunju Gongsun Zidu*], eds. Zhao Heping [赵和平] and Zhou Yude [周育德], 353-370. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2010.
- . “*Zhang Xie zhuangyuan*” [《张协状元》, *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*]. In *Kunju Zhang Xie zhuangyuan pinglunji* [昆剧《张协状元》评论集, *Anthology of Kunqu Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*], eds. *Zhongguo Xiqu xuehui* [中国戏曲学会, Chinese Xiqu Academy] et al, 231-269. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2004.
- Jinyinji* [《金印记》, *Gold Seal*]. In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2013* [中国昆曲年鉴 2013, *The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2013*], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 207-19. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2013.
- Wang Yan [王焱]. *Jinyinji* [《金印记》, *Gold Seal*], dated April, 2012. Unpublished work, personal collection.
- Zhou Changfu [周长赋]. *Jingyang zhong* [景阳钟, *Jingyang Bell*]. *Yi hai* [艺海, *Sea of arts*], 4 (2017): 2-15.
- Zhou Changfu [周长赋]. *Jingyang zhong* [景阳钟, *Jingyang Bell*]. In *Zhou Changfu juzuo xuan* [周长赋剧作选, *Selected works of Zhou Changfu’s play scripts*], vol.

- 2, Zhou Changfu [周长赋], 81-112. 北京: 中国戏剧出版社, 2018.
- Wang Yan [王焱]. “*Ai wujiang*” [《爱无疆》, *Boundless Love*], dated 29 Jan., 2012.
- Unpublished work, personal collection.
- . “*Ai wujiang*” [《爱无疆》, *Boundless Love*]. In *Zhongguo Kunqu nianjian 2013* [中国昆曲年鉴 2013, *The Yearbook of Kunqu Opera-China, 2013*], ed. Zhu Donglin [朱栋霖], 115-128. Suzhou: Suzhou daxue chubanshe, 2013.

Sources in Other Formats

(In order of appearance in production analysis)

- Qingchunban Mudan ting* [青春版《牡丹亭》, *The Youth Version of The Peony Pavilion*]. DVD. Dir. Wang Shi-yu [汪世瑜], Pai Hsien-yung [白先勇]. Perf. Shen Fengying [沈丰英], Yu Jiulin [俞玖林]. Hangzhou: Zhejiang yinxiang chubanshe, 2007.
- “Chen Shizheng” [陈士争]. In *Yi wen Zhongguo* [艺文中国, *Arts China*]. Haikou: *Liyou weishi* [旅游卫视, *Tourism Television*], 10 April, 2010. Television.
- Xinban Yuzanji* [新版《玉簪记》, *the New Edition Jade Haipin* (original title)]. DVD. Dir. Wang Shi-yu [汪世瑜], Pai Hsien-yung [白先勇]. Perf. Shen Fengying [沈丰英], Yu Jiulin [俞玖林]. Hangzhou: Zhejiang yinxiang chubanshe.
- 1699-Taohuashan : zhongguo chuanqi dianfeng* [1699 桃花扇: 中国传奇巅峰, *The Peach Blossom Fan (1699): the Pinnacle of Classical Chinese Theatre* (original title)]. DVD. Dir. Tian Qinxin [田沁鑫]. Perf. Shan Wen [单雯], Luo Chenxue [罗晨雪], Shi Xiaming [施夏明]. Nanjing: Jiangsu wenhua yinxiang chubanshe,

- 2007.
- “Xiongmao ban” *Changshengdian* [“熊猫版”《长生殿》, “Panda version” of *Palace of Eternal Youth*]. DVD. Guangzhou: Guangzhou Qiao jiaren wenhua chuanbo youxian gongsi, 2008.
- Ban Zhao* [班昭]. DVD. Beijing: *Zhong ying yinxiang chubanshe* [中影音像出版社], 2008.
- Gongsun Zidu* [公孙子都]. DVD. Guilin: Guangxi wenhua yinxiang chubanshe. Year unknown.
- Zhang Xie zhuangyuan* [张协状元, *Zhang Xie the Top Graduate*]. VCD. Taipei: Guoli chuantong yishu zhongxin choubai chu, 2001.
- “*Jinyinji*” [《金印记》, *Gold Seal*]. *Kunju dianshi zhuanchang* [昆剧电视专场, Kunju Television Special], episodes 653-656. Suzhou: Suzhou Network Television, 24-27 March 2013. Television.
- Kunju xuanji di er ji: Jinyinji—Budi toujing* [昆剧选辑第二辑: 金印记—不第投井, Kunju collection 2: “Failed in the exam and throwing oneself to well,” *Gold Seal*]. Perf. *Zhejiang Kunju tuan* [浙江昆剧团, Zhejiang Kunju Troupe]. Nanjing: *Nanjing Longhu chuanbo gongsi* [南京龙辉传播公司, Nanjing Longhui communication company], 1996.
- Liangguo qingge: Yuan Guoliang zhuanji* [良国清歌:袁国良专辑, Clear songs in good nation: Yuan Guoliang special issue]. Perf. Shanghai Kunju tuan [上海昆剧团, Shanghai Kunju Troupe]. Jiangsu wenhua yinxiang chubanshe [江苏文化音像出版社, Jiangsu cultural audio-visual publishing house], 2011.

1981 nian Sheng Gang hong ling da hui chuan Bi tian heshou + liuguo da fengxiang
[1981 年省港红伶大会串《碧天贺寿+六国大封相》, Year 1981 Guangdong
(Canton) Province and Hong Kong star actors' collaborative performance of
*Offering congratulations on longevity and Appointment as Prime Minister by Six
States*]. Bilibili, uploaded by Yunzaishuangtian [云在霜天, Cloud in frosty sky],
19 Oct. 2018. <www.bilibili.com/video/av34123837>.

Jingyang zhong [景阳钟, *Jingyang Bell*]. Recording of live performance on 20 Oct.,
2013. Jinan: Shandong Network Television, 23 Oct., 2013. Television.

Ai wujiang [爱无疆, *Boundless Love*]. Digital recording of live performance on 30 May,
2012. Beijing: Beifang Kunqu juyuan, 2012.

Bai Haitang ge gan jiu mu [白海棠割肝救母, Bai Haitang severs liver to save mother],
Anhui wenhua yinxiang chubanshe [安徽文化音像出版社, Anhui culture
Audiovisual Publishing House], 2002.

Personal Interviews

Gao Jun [高均], interview, Shanghai, July 30, 2013.

Wang Dayuan [王大元], interview, Beijing, Nov. 1, 2013.

Wang Yan [王焱], interviews, Beijing, Oct. 19 and Oct. 28, 2013; Suzhou, Oct. 30, 2013.

Yue Meiti (岳美缙), interview, Shanghai, July 15, 2013

Zhou Youliang [周友良], interview, Suzhou, Nov. 12, 2013.

Telephone Interviews

Pai Hsien-yung [白先勇], telephone interview, Santa Barbara, California, May 12, 2012

Wang Yan [王焱], phone interview, Beijing, Beijing, June 30, 2018 and July 18, 2018.

IN ENGLISH

“Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Quotes.” Quotes.net. STANDS4 LLC, 2018. Web. 12

Aug. 2018. <<https://www.quotes.net/quote/3187>> .

Dale, Corinne H. *Chinese Aesthetics and Literature: a Reader*. Albany: State University of New York, 2004.

Fan, Xing. *Staging Revolution: Artistry and Aesthetics in Model Beijing Opera during the Cultural Revolution*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2018.

---. *Tradition and Innovation: The Artistry in Jingju Yangban Xi*. Diss. Ann Arbor: UMI, 2010.

Hu, John. “Ming Dynasty Drama.” In *Chinese Theater: from Its Origins to the Present Day*, ed. Colin Mackerras, 60-91. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983.

Lam, Joseph, S. C. “A Kunqu Masterpiece and Its Interpretations: *Tanci* (The Ballad) from Hong Sheng’s *Changsheng dian* (*Palace of Lasting Life*).” *CHINOPERL* 33:2 (2014): 97-120.

Li, Ruru. *The Soul of Beijing Opera: Theatrical Creativity and Continuity in the Changing World*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010.

Li, Xiao. *Chinese Kunqu Opera (Cultural China)*. San Francisco: Long River Press, 2005.

Liu, Marjory Bong-Ray. *Tradition and change in Kunqu opera*. Ann Arbor: UMI, 1976.

Mackerras, Colin. *The Chinese Theatre in Modern Times, from 1840 to the Present Day*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1975.

---. *Chinese Theatre: From Its Origins to the Present Day*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1983.

Owen, Stephen. *Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*. New York: W. W.

- Norton, 1996.
- Shen, Guangren Grant. *Elite Theatre in Ming China, 1368-1644*. London and New York: Routledge, 2005.
- . *Theatre Performance during the Ming Dynasty*. Diss. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1994.
- Sun, Mei. *Nanxi: The Earliest Form of Xiqu (Traditional Chinese Theatre)*. Diss. University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, 1995.
- UNESCO. *Proclamation of the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity*. Paris: 2001.
- Wei, Zhou. *A Peony Transplanted: Pai Hsien-yung and the Preservation of Chinese Kunqu*. Diss. University of Edinburgh, 2011.
- Wichmann, Elizabeth. *Listening to Theatre: the Aural Dimension of Beijing Opera*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991.
- . "Tradition and Innovation in Contemporary Beijing Opera Performance." *The Drama Review* 34. 1 (Spring 1990): 146-178.
- Wichmann-Walczak, Elizabeth. "'Reform' at the Shanghai Jingju Company and Its Impact on Creative Authority and Repertory." *TDR: The Drama Review* 44, no. 4 (winter, 2000): 96-119.
- . "Beijing Opera Plays and Performance." In *Chinese Aesthetics and Literature: a Reader*, ed. Corinne H. Dale, 129-152. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.
- Willett, John , ed. and trans. *Brecht on Theatre*. New York: Hill and Wang, 1964.
- Xu Peng. *Lost Sound: Singing, Theater, and Aesthetics in Late Ming China, 1547-1644*.

Ann Arbor: UMI, 2014.