This electronic thesis or dissertation has been downloaded from Explore Bristol Research, http://research-information.bristol.ac.uk

Author:
Zhao, Xiaohang

Title:
The influence of male dan on female performers in jingju

General rights
Access to the thesis is subject to the Creative Commons Attribution - NonCommercial-No Derivatives 4.0 International Public License. A copy of this may be found at https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/legalcode This license sets out your rights and the restrictions that apply to your access to the thesis so it is important you read this before proceeding.

Take down policy
Some pages of this thesis may have been removed for copyright restrictions prior to having it been deposited in Explore Bristol Research. However, if you have discovered material within the thesis that you consider to be unlawful e.g. breaches of copyright (either yours or that of a third party) or any other law, including but not limited to those relating to patent, trademark, confidentiality, data protection, obscenity, defamation, libel, then please contact collections-metadata@bristol.ac.uk and include the following information in your message:

•Your contact details
•Bibliographic details for the item, including a URL
•An outline nature of the complaint

Your claim will be investigated and, where appropriate, the item in question will be removed from public view as soon as possible.

The Influence of Male *Dan* on Female Performers in *Jingju*

Xiaohang Zhao

21/10/2022

Abstract

This thesis analyzes the influence of male cross-dressing performance on female performers when the cultural policy prevented female actors from the stage during Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1912) dynasties in China. *Jingju* was born under such circumstances, whose female characters were shaped by male performers. Men invented a series of external elements to perform femininity on stage, including *qiao*, wigs, make-up, and costumes. Since *jingju* was a conventionalized art form, it highly valued tradition and discipline, which resulted in the inheritance of the female performance style created by male performers. When women returned to the stage, they had to follow the rules established by male performers and put on external decorations to their bodies. Male performers were embodying a generalized female image but rather created a particular character. The generalization in portraying female characters instead of a particular woman caused more difficulty for women since they had to erase themselves and perform the ideal female image created by men. Male cross-dressing performers received warm welcomes and appreciation from audiences. In the thesis, I studied Li Yuru, a female *jingju* performer, for her performance style. She attempted to change her performance style so that she could win some attention under the popularity of Mei Lanfang. Instead of inventing her own portrayal of the character, she returned to applying earlier male *dan* performance style, which suggested the deep influence of male dan on female performers.

This thesis is dedicated to

Zhao Wenchen, my grandfather,

who understands me

and supports all my decisions.

Acknowledgements

I have had a really difficult time putting my thesis together. I had to make a decision which affected at least five years of my life. Also, I experienced some depression and anxiety due to isolation and other stress. I am pleased to see the finished thesis in the end. Congratulations to myself.

Please allow me to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Professor Elaine McGirr and Dr Eleanor Rycroft, who helped me not only in my study but also in my life. Their valuable suggestions are life-time benefits for me. Thanks again for understanding my situation and sending encouragement to me.

I would like to dedicate my appreciation to my grandpa, grandma, and my parents, who, in their way, supported me in finishing my program.

Last but not least, special thanks to my friends, Yaofu Zhang, Elaine Zhan, Zoe Zhao, Valerie Zhang, Archie, and Tutu, who accompany me, listen to me and generously support me when I am down. Without your encouragement and compliment, I could never finish this thesis.

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Research Degree Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, the work is the candidate's own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, is indicated as such. Any views expressed in the dissertation are those of the author.

SIGNED: ......Xiaohang Zhao... DATE:.......21/10/2022....

Contents

Abstract i

Acknowledgements iii

List of Figures 1

Introduction 2

Chapter 1 *Qiao:* Materialized Representation of Femaleness 19

Chapter 2 Costumes, Make-up and Wigs to Shape Male Body 41

Chapter 3 Case Study: *Guifei Zuijiu* between Mei Lanfang and Li Yuru 58

Conclusion 75

Bibliography 80

List of Figures

Figure 1 A picture of *yingqiao*. (Wang Aiqun) 22

Figure 2 A picture of a performer wearing *yingqiao*. (Wang Aiqun) 23

Figure 3 Zhang Meijuan with full costume of Bai Suzhen in *Stealing Immortal Grass*, provided by Qiao Yingcai 24

Figure 4 Mei Qiaoling in painting *Tongguangshisanjue* by Shen Rongpu 47

Figure 5 Xun Huisheng as Lv Shaohua in *Yuanxiaomi* (Lantern Riddle). Picture from Jingju Lao Zhaopian (Old Photos of Jingju) 48

Figure 6 A picture of Mei Lanfang’s wig and makeup 49

Figure 7 Full costume of Mei Lanfang in *Guifei Zuijiu* (The Drunken Concubine) 50

Figure 8 Mei Lanfang as Meng Suqing in *Waves of the Sinful Sea* (Niehai Bolan) 54

Figure 9 Mei Lanfang as Chang’e in *Chang’e benyue* (Chang’e Rushes to the Moon) 55

Introduction

My passion for Chinese theatre emerged at an early age. Being brought up in a family with a musical atmosphere, I was exposed to musical instruments at the age of four. In my childhood, my grandfather, a big fan of *jingju*, often played the tape of *The Taking of Tiger Mountain* at home and sang along, which fueled my enthusiasm for *jingju*. Later on, I spent three years learning *jinghu*, the main accompany musical instrument for *jingju.* My personal connection with *jingju* inspired me to dig into this research topic.

Female actors were banned from the theatre stage by the government during the Ming (1368-1644) and the Qing (1644-1912) dynasties of feudal China. These periods witnessed the dominance of male actors cross-dressed as women in the traditional Chinese theatre. The male cross-dressing performance reached its peak after the birth of *jingju* (Beijing Opera). As a unique group of performers, male dan (a category of actors/actresses who perform female roles in Chinese theatre) played an essential role in the development of *jingju*. They dominated the stage until the end of the Qing dynasty. In order to make conventions in imitating women on stage, male performers developed a set of performance skills in cross-dressing performances, which gradually became the common understanding of the female characters in *jingju*. When females returned to the stage, they followed the performance style created by men to act as women on stage. This thesis will focus on this phenomenon and discuss the influence male dan made on female performers through analyzing different external theatrical devices men used to imitate women on stage. It will also include a case study of two versions of *Guifei Zuijiu* (*The Drunken Concubine*) to discourse the difference between male dan Mei Lanfang and female performer Li Yuru.

Traditional Chinese theatre has a long history of cross-dressing performances. Professional singing and dancing performers emerged during the Xianqin era (- B. C. 221). Female impersonation can be traced back to the Han dynasty (B. C. 202-220). Male impersonation appeared hundreds of years later. According to historical records,

women warrior performance in the Tang dynasty (618-907) was the earliest female cross-dressing performance. Female cross-dressing performances became common during the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368). After *jingju* was born, lots of all-male and all-female troupes appeared, which made cross-dressing performance become a requirement (Zeng 31-47).

In ancient China, the categories of female theatre performers and prostitutes could not be separated, which led to the official forbidding of female performers on stage. When traditional Chinese theatre was developing, it was female prostitutes took the job of singing and dancing as performers. People who entered the business as prostitutes were required to be equipped with some performance skills to entertain people. Likewise, people who started as theatre performers might be purchased by the rich (Zhang 5). During the Wei, Jin and North-South dynasties (220-589), prostitutes and performers belonged to the same category in the household registration system. In the Tang dynasty, the 'official prostitutes' and the 'private prostitutes' grew simultaneously. *Washe*, *goulan* were new brothels that appeared in the Song dynasty (960-1279), where there were also performances going on (Zhang 10-20). In 1428, the third year of Xuande, the Ming dynasty, one officer proposed to prohibit singing and dancing prostitutes since the officers' indulgence in prostitution affected their work. This proposal eventually led to the official restriction on female performers (Shen 900-901). Because of this, male cross-dressing performance was greatly developed in the theatre while female performance dropped away. The professional *Kunju* troupes in the Ming dynasty were mainly made up of male actors. Although restrictions could be loosened or tightened with the change of emperors, the tendency to prevent female performers from the stage remained the same (Wang 3).

The overlap between prostitutes and theatre performers also affected the theatre performance contents and style. As an entertainment enjoyed by audiences from the royal court to the civilians, the theatre had stock stories that changed accordingly. In order to attract the audience (mostly men) and increase excitement, some performers would be sexually suggestive, which tradition was also absorbed in early *jingju*.

After the restriction on female performers was published, traditional Chinese theatre continued developing without official recognition of them. *Jingju* was born under such cultural policies. During the region of Qianlong (1735-1796) in the Qing dynasty, several local theatre troupes were called to the capital to celebrate the birthday of the emperor, which was named *Huibanjinjing* (*Hui* troupes entering Beijing). To satisfy royalty and win the market, those troupes learned performance strategies from each other. The fondness of the royal family toward *jingju* led to the increased demand for actors and the reduction of discrimination in theatre business. After ten years' innovation and development, *jingju* came into being integrated *qinqiang* (a genre of traditional Chinese theatre which originated in Shanxi Province), *kunqu* (a genre of traditional Chinese theatre which originated in the Kunshan region), *huidiao* (a genre of traditional Chinese theatre which originated in Anhui Province) and *handiao* (a genre of traditional Chinese theatre which originated in Hubei Province) (*Zhongguo Jingju Shi (History of Chinese Jingju)* 7). Traditional Chinese theatre was usually named after its place of origin. *Jingju* got its name since it was born in Beijing.

Jingju is a highly conventionalized (*chengshihua*, 程式化) performance form. All the performances strictly followed a set of strategies, which contains four elements; *chang*, *nian*, *zuo*, and *da* 唱念做打, which refer to singing, speaking, moving, and fighting. There are two primary singing tones in *jingju*, *erhuang* 二黄 and *xipi* 西皮, which are absorbed from *huidiao* and *handiao* (*Zhongguo Jingju Shi (History of Chinese Jingju)* 78). The speaking in *jingju* has musical tones, which are based on accents in Beijing, Hubei, and Hunan. There are also characters who speak with other accents, mainly from the northern area (*Zhongguo Jingju Shi (History of Chinese Jingju)* 79). The moving element contains the gesture and movement of the body. Fighting involves choreographed dramatic martial arts movements. The presentation of these four elements varied with the character types. Whatever the character changes, the four elements remain as the fundamental components of *jingju* performance (*Zhongguo Jingju Shi (History of Chinese Jingju)* 107-109).

Another significant concept in *jingju* performance is *hangdang* 行当, which is the category of characters. Each *hangdang* (category) in *jingju* has its specific set of performance rules. There are four main *hangdang* in *jingju*: *sheng* 生, *dan* 旦, *jing* 净, *chou* 丑 (*Zhongguo Jingju Shi (History of Chinese Jingju)* 107). *Shen*g category included the male characters in *jingju*. Dan is the category that contains all the female characters. *Jing* refers to the male characters that wear oil paint make-up (*lianpu*). *Chou* category includes the clown characters in *jingju*. Each category could be further divided into more specific and detailed subcategories, and their performance styles also have differences. This thesis will focus on the dan category's performance style. Dan category can be further divided into *huadan* (lit: flower dan), *qingyi* (lit: black clothes), *wudan* (lit: martial dan), *laodan* (lit: elder dan), and *huashan* (lit: flower shirt) (*Zhongguo Jingju Shi (History of Chinese Jingju)* 106-107). The classification notified another important feature of *jingju*. The characters are largely generalized and stylized. Also, the performance style emphasized the aesthetics of symbolization. Performers often use simple or no props to present movements in real life (*Zhongguo Jingju Shi (History of Chinese Jingju)* 12).

This thesis's timeline begins when female performers were officially allowed to return to stages, which happened around 1911. This year witnessed the establishment of the Republic of China. But before that, there were female performers who appeared on *jingju* stages since the end of the Tongzhi era (around the 1870s) (Wang 30). Bothered by the low income of Shanghai theatre performers, actor Li Maoer organized a small troupe with dozens of rural girls. He taught them performance skills himself and led them to perform in the teahouse. This profit-aimed, undertrained private theatre troupe became the first example of female performers entering into Shanghai *jingju* stage (Wang 31). Some female performers worked in *jiaban* (lit: home business), namely, privately owned theatrical troupes by the rich. They were the private property of rich people and mainly performed for them in their houses. Another area for female performers during the late Qing dynasty was the Concession in Shanghai. It did not

follow the control of the Qing government, which became a relatively secure place for females to perform. As the Republic of China was established, the restriction was abolished in Beijing as well. In 1911, female performers in Beijing officially returned to the stage. In the beginning, the policy required the performance stage to be single-sexed, which meant male and female performers could not simultaneously appear. The cross-dressing performance continued under such conditions (Zhang 43).

The political situation was unstable in modern China. In 1937, the Marco Polo Bridge Incident marked the beginning of the War of Resistance against Japan (1937-1945). When it finished, the Chinese Civil War broke out in 1945. Until 1949, when the People's Republic of China was established, the political situation in the country was stabilized. The political events, wars, and policies greatly affected the entertainment business. During the war, the performance venue could not operate normally. The theatre schools were also shut down. Since the War of Resistance against Japan started in northeast China, a number of northeast residents fled to other parts of China, which also caused a migration of people working in the entertainment industry.

In the ideological perspective, the western ideas of "democracy" and "science" were introduced into China during the May-forth Movement (1919). Intellectuals promoted western realist drama and criticized Chinese traditional *xiqu* (43). After the CCP (Chinese Communist Party) came to power, the ideology of cultural works was greatly influenced. During 1950-1960, CCP (Chinese Communist Party) conducted Drama Reform Movement, intending to discard the feudal remnant contents in Chinese theatre and correct the performers' ideology, improving political awareness and literacy. In 1966-1976, the leader conducted the Cultural Revolution, which caused huge damage to the cultural development. There were only certain "model play", which reflected proletarian revolutionary ideology, were allowed to be performed during that time.

The revolutionary changes in modern China had led to women gradually gaining more social rights, which shifted the gender relations. Influenced by the western ideas, during the Hundred Days Reform period, a boom in the establishment of school for girls emerged (Lv, Zheng 262). Women's right to education further developed after the

Xinhai Revolution, which challenged the feudal customs for women to be tamed and illiterate (*Nvzi wucai bian shi de* 女子无才便是德). During May-forth Movement, the women's economic independence was valued. Thus, women's professional rights were developed (Lv, Zheng 263). The progression of the right to education and the right to a profession took women from the home to society. During the social revolutions, women's suffrage also gradually developed. In the 1930s and 1940s, the second Communist Party cooperation gave a push to the women's constitutional movement (Lv, Zheng 264). Women were active in the fight for the right to vote through persistent social movements. In 1946, women's political participation was legally guaranteed and, although not ideal, was a sign of women's empowerment.

After the establishment of the People's Republic of China, the Communist Party needed to unite all the forces of the people. They promoted the concepts of "gender equality" and "women's liberation" through a series of ideological propaganda and political campaigns (Gao 259). There were some of the famous quotes from Mao Zedong including "Women hold up half of the sky" (*Funv neng ding banbiantian* 妇女能顶半边天), "What a man can do, a woman can do too" (*Nan tongzhi neng bandedao de shi, nv tongzhi ye neng bandedao* 男同志能办到的事，女同志也能办得到) (Han, 284). These guidelines had indeed changed the gender division of labor to some extent, providing more work opportunities for women and the possibility of challenging gender norms. But they still used men as discipline to encourage women, which could not lead to gender quality.

In the context of theatre, the female performer was not the only group being oppressed under feudal rule. When the public theatre was first built, the female audience was not allowed to enter (Wang 67), which obeyed the ancient Chinese moral discipline for women to stay in their houses. Only some women from wealthy families could see theatre performances at home. This phenomenon meant that the entertainment was fully dominated by men from onstage to offstage. The creation of the script and characters were aimed to appeal to the male audience and fulfil their appreciation. As the Qing

dynasty fell, the tendency of the female audience entering theatre became unstoppable. In Shanghai, there were female audiences who entered the theatre venue during Guangxu (1875-1908). Firstly, some theatres made special boxes for women audiences. According to Lanyuan Xu, the *qinshi* (main accompany instrument player) of Lanfang Mei, the appearance of female audiences in Beijing happened after 1900, when the Boxer Incident happened. It became the turning point for women entering theatre in Beijing. After the 1911 Revolution, the requirements on separate sex seating were broken. Women could freely buy tickets and go to the theatre (Xu and Tang 103). However, the participation of women audience in theatre did not affect the performance itself. Theatre business was still dominated by men.

Male dan (a category of actors/actresses who perform female roles in Chinese theatre) dominated the stage when female actors were banned by the policy. They absorbed the cross-dressing performance style from local theatre and continuously developed it. Aimed to disguise their own characteristics and convince the audience of their stage identity, male performers invented and developed unique ways of make-up, costumes, and performance styles to better imitate women (Wang 8). In early *jingju*, male dan's disguise technique was relatively unsophisticated. They first utilized wigs that were close to women's hair in real life, which had limited use in shaping faces. Later, male dan performers reformed the make-up and wigs style to create an ideal woman image. For example, male actors would put on a pair of long sideburns, which had an inverted triangle shape to slim their faces, called *tiepianzi*.

In ancient China, women were required to bind their feet when they were young, which limited their movement. A pair of short stilts were applied by male performers to simulate the way women walk, which performance style was called *caiqiao* (stepping on *qiao*). Changes also had been made to costumes. In order to shape men's bodies, male dan wore long wigs, called *xianyizi,* which could reach their ankles. Since the audience welcomed male dan performances, those changes were primarily preserved after female performers returned to the stage, even though they were not applicable to female performers (Wang 64).

Male dan performers make great contributions to the development of *dan* performance. They refined and invented different dan performance styles. The most famous and representative male dan were the Four Great dan (*Sida mingdan* 四大名旦), Mei Lanfang, Xun Huisheng, Cheng Yanxiu, and Shang Xiaoyun. Each of them was famous for creating a specific type of performance style. They were successful and received much appreciation, making them celebrities with many followers. Among them, Mei Lanfang's performance is analyzed in this thesis. He refined dan performance in aspects including wigs, costumes, scripts, and discarded the erotic elements in his performance. He successfully changed *jingju* from *laosheng* (a category of actors/actresses who perform old male roles in Chinese theatre) -centred to dan-centred performance (Wang 2). Mei Lanfang was also invited to perform in western countries and made achievements in spreading *jingju* performances around the world.

Another aspect of male dominance in *jingju* performance was its pedagogy. Since *jingju* was developed without the participation of female performers, when women returned to the stage, they needed to learn from males about the conventions of performing female on *jingju* stage. The dominant dan performance styles were all invented by male performers. Some male dan actors pioneered their own performance genre and recruited apprentices by themselves after fading from the stage. Through this process, the male dan performance styles were continued and inherited in the business, which made it difficult for female performers to make revolutions.

Under the influence of western democratic thoughts and with the collapse of the Qing dynasty, women were able to return to the stage. As the mainstream on *jingju*'s stage for hundreds of years, male dan produced an influence that cannot be overlooked: they not only directly affected the way dan performed but also changed the actor-training system in the long run.

The core of this project is to study the influence of male dan on female performers since *jingju* came into being. How did the prevalence of male dan affect female actors in performance? Various perspectives will be involved to address different dimensions germane to the topic, including performance characteristics, audience's reaction, and

pedagogy. The research concentrates on performance. Chapter one will study the phenomenon that male dan wear *qiao* to imitate females on stage. It was a prop introduced to Beijing by Wei Changsheng (1744-1802) during 1779-1780 and was absorbed into *jingju* performance and gradually became a requirement for performers to play most female characters on stage. During the early *jingju*, the disguise techniques of cross-dress performers were inadequate, which made the *qiao* became a significant gender representation. The word "qiao" was taken from traditional Chinese acrobatics *gaoqiao* (stilts). The *qiao* had a similar principle to the ballet shoes. One of the differences was that *qiao* exposed a pair of small shoes in front of the audience. In actual performance, performers utilized *qiao* to perform acrobatic gestures in their movements. *Qiao* was officially forbidden by CCP during Drama Reform Movement since its cultural implication was regarded as feudal remnants. Before that, *qiao* acted as an important prop in dan performances and became a required skill for performers to learn from a young age. This chapter will examine how *qiao* shape femaleness on *jingju* stage through analyzing the components, classification, and function of *qiao*. The argument will depend on different categories of the female characters and dig into the various functions they had in portraying the femininity of characters. A case study of *qiao* in performance will also be included in this chapter.

The other external elements male performers put on themselves to disguise as a female on stage will be discussed in Chapter two, including costumes, wigs, and make-up. In early *jingju*, male cross-dressing performers referred more to real-life women's hairstyles, which had less effect on reshaping men's face shape. Mei Lanfang absorbed southern performers' hairstyles and make-up techniques and made important improvements. He invented *tiepianzi* and *xianyizi*, which were two wigs that were used to shape the face and body line so that the performer would visually disguise themselves as a woman. These disguise techniques shaped the male performers' bodies so that they could gain extra visual femininity on stage. Similar to *qiao*, the make-up, wig, and costume also became a part of the performance style and were followed by later performers, both male and female. The difference is that these techniques continue

being used until today since they do not contain any feudal cultural implications. After analyzing these skills that groom the body, this chapter will analyze what influence the disguise techniques made to the shape of the female characters on stage and the aim of these improvements in make-up, wig, and costume. The aesthetic taste that guided the generation of *tiepianzi*, *xianyizi*, and the make-up style will also be deconstructed in this chapter.

Chapter three will contain a case study of comparing a male dan and a female actor's performance style. The example character selected is Yang Yuhuan in *Guifei Zuijiu* (*The Drunken Concubine*), performed by Mei Lanfang (1984-1961) and Li Yuru (1924-2008). Their performance style for this play both generated before 1949 and had left video recordings after the establishment of PRC. Another commonality was that they both had written materials explaining their understanding of this performance, which was very rare, since performers must survive through Cultural Revolution and embrace the Communist Party so that they could have chance to write autobiography. Mei Lanfang was one of the most famous male dan in *jingju*. He made great contributions to *jingju,* especially dan performance. Besides improving the wigs, make-up, and costumes, he also modified old scripts and characters and participated in creating new scripts. One of his representative characters was Yang Yuhuan in *Guifei Zuijiu*. The performance style he produced was called *Mei Pai*. Li Yuru was a female dan performer. She was born in Beijing and entered the Chinese Theatre School to learn performance in 1932. She got the chance to learn from Wang Yaoqing, Cheng Yanqiu, Mei Lanfang, Xun Huisheng and other male dan masters. When Li Yuru first entered the school, she was assigned to learn *qingyi* (lit: black cloth, a category of dan). Later, the headmaster Jin Zhongsun noticed she had big eyes and thought she would be more appropriate to learn *huadan* (lit: flower "dan", a category of dan character). Thus, she became the only female student in the Chinese Theatre School who studied both *qingyi* and *huadan* (Li 264). Both actors had unique performance styles in portraying the character of Yang Yuhuan. Mei Lanfang refined the early performance version of *Guifei Zuijiu* and portrayed the character with his personal characteristics. Li Yuru absorbed

the early version as well as Mei Lanfang's version and created her performance taking her own features into consideration. This chapter will observe the influence male dan had on female performers by comparing the similarities and differences in Mei Lanfang and Li Yuru's performances. Since Li Yuru's performance was generated under the influence of two different performance styles both created by male performers, the deconstruction of her performance style will provide a clearer understanding of the female performer's attitude towards the conventionalized performance style and portraying of the characters.

Literature review

In terms of gender study, this thesis will mainly refer to Judith Butler's theory of performativity. Butler points out that "'sex' is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place (or fails to take place) through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, 'sex' is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time." (xii) They suggests that " 'sex' not only function as a norm, but is part of a regulatory practice that produces the bodies it governs" (xi). The process of "construction" is "a temporal process which operates through the reiteration of norms" and "sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of this reiteration" (xix). In this way sex is "performed" and becomes dependent upon such a performance. These concepts will be used in analyzing the shaping of the stage gender in cross-dressing performance in *jingju*. The very demanding training phase of *jingju* could be seen as the reiteration section of "constructing sex". Also, the concept of "materialization" theory explains the materialization activities male dan undertook when using external props to disguise themselves as female on stage.

Butler argues that gender is a performance, "because there is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalizes nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires; because gender is not a fact, the various actors of gender create the idea of gender, and without those acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis" (522). Butler puts forward the term of the performativity

of gender and indicates that it was the social actors' behaviors that constructed the idea of gender. Butler argues that "acts, gestures, and desire produce the effect of an internal core or substance, but produce this on the surface of the body" (173). In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler further considers the relation between body, gender, and sex. Butler indicates that "bodies only appear, only endure, only live within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory schemas" (x). These theories will be referred in the discussion of the presentation of the body in dan performance.

Central to this thesis is the idea that theatrical portrayals of gender are constrained by patriarchal concerns and tropes. Sophie Volpp's study of the male queen boy actors indicates that "the cross-dressed actor unmasked the fact that men are the authors of the feminine. The actor's control over representation revealed that social position and gender are not natural but in fact, constructed" (3). Since male performers were portraying the socially constructed female gender on stage, some reviews suggested that men had a deeper understanding of female characters. It was one argument in the debate about the abolishment of male dan in China. Tian Min mentions this assumption in his writing, "underlying this aesthetic rationale is the assumption that male artists are superior in understanding the true essence of women and that female impersonation is a genuine art because male artists are considered capable of presenting women in a more idealized and artistic manner while actresses tend to exploit their natural properties and appear to be too realistic and without aesthetic value" (86). The aesthetic value meant exaggerated and denaturalized standards on female body. As dan performance developed, male dan performers created idealized female images on stage, which reinforced the social image of women shaped by society. Since the way of characterization catered for the expectation of male audience, it became dominant in *jingju* performance. Performers themselves also emphasized these aesthetic characteristics of *jingju* performance. Tian Min quotes Mei Lanfang's saying in his article that "the realistic depiction of woman is not part of the Chinese actor's art. Instead, the audience is treated to an idealized, generalized female image" (87). What *jingju* embodied was a generalized idea of women, instead of a particular woman. The

aesthetic expectation of female characters in *jingju* resulted in the continuous success of male cross-dressing performance style.

There is existing research focused on female performers in the late Qing dynasty and modern China. Jin Jiang provided supporting evidence that women were excluded from performance activities. She writes, "in the countryside, female performers were prohibited from participating in religious and lineage ceremonies, the most popular occasions for staging opera" (28). Zhang Yuan studies the origin, the learning process, living situation, social status, media image, and the role of the star-making process. He introduces several reasons that females chose to become *jingju* actors. A large part of the performers entered the business under pressure to earn a living. There were also a few people who entered the business out of personal interest. Some females born in a family that engaged in the theatre business or had relatives who worked in the business also tend to inherit the tradition. The last origin of female performers he mentions is via sex work (15-19). He also studies the training process for female performers. Some families paid the teacher monthly to invite them to teach in the house. There was an apprenticeship training system which was commonly enrolled by students born from low-income families. He indicates that "compared with the indenture system, female trainees were mostly sold to the masters, which mode was similar with the selling of prostitutes" (22-23). There were also larger theatre schools. Zhang Yuan pointed out that "female performers were more difficult to find a teacher compared with male performers. Especially in the early days, some famous performers would not take female trainees" (23). His research confirms the main reason for women to enter the theatre business was for money, and he also presents the hardship of female *jingju* performers participating in and receiving recognition in theatre performances.

Li Ruru also mentions the bias towards female performers in *jingju* performances. *Beiyang Pictorial Newspaper* once published an article called *A Visit to the Beiping Theatre School*. The writer wrote that "Juyin (the headmaster of the theatre school) told me that many teachers thought male performers sang better than female performers as *qingyi* characters" (22). This article was published in 1932 when female performers

were officially allowed to perform on stage. But many audiences and critics still embraced the male cross-dressing performance as canon in portraying female characters. From the perspective of the character category, female performers were judged to be inferior to male cross-dressing performers. At the level of the role's gender, performers who acted as female characters also received prejudice. Jin Jiang indicates that "the bias against female roles was closely related to local superstitions but had little to do with actual professional ranks. A popular actor specializing in female roles, for example, was often the leading actor in the company and earned the highest salary, but he was still not allowed to sit on the dressing boxes backstage or walk in front of actors playing male roles when the troupe hiked to the next site" (31). It suggests that the *jingju* developed under the great influence of the traditional feudal rites. Jin Jiang also mentions the impact of more women becoming theatregoers. "The increasing numbers of women operagoers brought about a shift in emphasis from male to female roles in Beijing Opera in the early Republican period, as is evident in the emergence of the 'four great female impersonators'" (33). This statement has two implications; one is that the women operagoers did have an effect in participating in theatre; the other is that this influence did not include any rise in female awareness of the characteristics. Although there were more female audience engaged in theatre, the artistic discourse was still controlled by men.

As a unique way of performance, cross-dressing is a topic that attracted the attention of many scholars in the field of gender and performance studies. Since English Renaissance theatrical stages witnessed the prevalence of cross-dressing performance, existing research has already discussed topics such as relations between cross-dressing and the patriarchal society, gender performance, and the sex-gender system in general (Howard 419). According to Straub, the gradual acceptance of female actors in the seventeenth century in Western theatre, especially England, was driven by the desire for the pleasure of the male audience. The reason for putting women on stage was simply "conventionally attractive female bodies sell tickets" (128). Dolan suggests from a material feminist perspective that women in Europe never had an active role in

theatrical representation, their roles were created to serve the male ideology cultural practices (96). There are also publications that consider the different performance styles between male and female impersonation (Ferris 9). They are useful for this project in terms of scope, methodology, and rationale. The situation between western and Chinese female performers had commonalities. It explains the reason why females failed to produce transformative innovation in performance styles.

As for Chinese theatre, this topic has also been studied by some scholars. An-ch'i Wang devotes one chapter in her book *Gender, Politics, and Performance Culture* to discussing female actors in traditional Chinese theatre. The section "Kundan: Female Protagonist Who Imitates Qiandan (same with male dan)" introduces four aspects of *qiandan* (male dan) that affected *kunling*'s (female performers) performance: makeup, costume, singing, and the understanding of the character (Wang 61). According to Wang, the popularization of male dan did not lead female actors to reflect and reestablish their characteristics during the Qing dynasty, which was one of the influences male dan on female performers. Taught by male performers, some female actors emphasized erotic elements on stage. Xing Fan's paper "Stars on The Rise: the Jingju Actresses in Republican China" examines how female performers struggle to find their own voices in male-dominated area. She takes famous *huadan* (usually means female roles such as unmarried ladies) performer Li Yuru who learnt from male masters as an example to discuss the phenomenon of male dan masters teaching female students. Her performance style was affected by a number of leading male dan performers.

In Siu Leung Li's book *Cross-Dressing in Chinese Opera*, he discusses the queer world and gender performances of Chinese theatre. There is one chapter in his book that concentrates on woman warriors, which is an example of male impersonation performance in Chinese theatre history. He points out that one common behaviour of women warriors was that they acted in defiance of their assigned gender role (83), which was different from the intention of male cross-dressing performance. Siu Leung Li also discourses the concept of "real" and "false" in Chinese theatre (7). He emphasized the essentialism in presenting gender and sexuality in Chinese theatre. He

argued that Judith Butler echoed with some Chinese opera practitioners since they all disbelieved "gender were clothes, or that clothes make the woman" (231). He suggested that "the Chinese female impersonator's role is his transformed gendered self which is not his own, nor is it any longer the same sex" (166). By examining gender and sexuality theories, he emphasized the "possibility of transforming into another gender" and the "transferable and reiterative" of "femininity and masculinity" (166). The concept of "essence" was also highlighted in his analysis as opposed to "construct". He believed that the "essence can be performed", which made it possible for men to perform the feminine and women to perform masculine (166). In the "Body" section, Siu Leung Li also discussed the representation figure the performer created on stage, which pointed to the "constructedness of the 'woman' on stage" (181).

Hui-ling Chou also studies the topic of cross-dressing, only from a more femalized perspective. In her paper "Striking Their Own Poses: The History of Cross-Dressing on the Chinese Theatre," she traces the history of cross-dressing in Chinese theatre and analyzes the social environment respectively. This article also contains an analysis of the relation between cross-dressing on stage and in daily life and public opinion toward these phenomena. It explains the audience's acceptance of cross-dressing in performance.

However, there is still much to be discovered. Existing research mainly concentrates on modern and contemporary history, the detailed research regarding the performance aspect remains vacant. The question about how male dan actors impacted female performers as they came into being, has been neglected.

Generally, this research project follows the path of historical studies and performance analysis. Sociological research methods, especially gender theory, and feminist theory, will be utilized in each chapter to analyze specific questions. The research materials of chapter one will include first-hand historical materials (historical records, biographies), interview records, existing research accomplishments about *qiao* in *jingju*, and performance videos. Chapter two will analyze the costume, wig, and make-up of actors, which will refer to first-hand historical material (photos, newspaper,

biography) and existing research on famous male dan performance styles. The content of Chapter three is a case study, which mainly depends on the performance footage and the performers' biographies. Accomplished male and female performers' memoirs and biography are significant first-hand material in this thesis. Existing research about Theatre Schools (such as Fuliancheng) can also serve as a significant resource. Historical facts will be collected from first-hand material mentioned above under the guidance of sociological and performance-based research methods.

Chapter 1 *Qiao:* Materialized Representation of Femaleness

First used as a prop to indicate specific female character types, *hudan* and *wudan,* when played by cross-dressed male performers, *qiao* then became so closely associated with these characters and stage femininity that female actors had to acquire the skills to manipulate *qiao* and could not embody these female character types without them. This chapter will discuss how *qiao* shaped a specific aesthetic, dexterous and eroticized performance of female identity on the *jingju* stage by analyzing the performance style of certain types of women characters.

A Short History of *Qiao*

Qiao was a tool used in *jingju* by cross-dressing performers to imitate the bound feet of female (Huang 17). It was inspired by female foot binding, a social custom in feudal China. When performing certain types of female characters, male actors wore *qiao* shoes which extended the leg and made their feet look smaller, like western ballet pointe shoes. *Qiao* was utilized by the cross-dressing performers as the signification of the femaleness in their performance. It was introduced to Beijing by Wei Changsheng (1744-1802) during 1779-1780 and was integrated into *jingju* performance (Huang 38). *Qiao* continued to signify femaleness even after female performers were officially allowed on the *jingju* stage. It was not until the early 20th century that Wang Yaoqing (1881-1954) initiated the reformation of not wearing *qiao*. It marked the performers spontaneously took actions against the use of *qiao*. After the People's Republic of China was established, *qiao* was officially forbidden by the government during 1950-1960 since its cultural context was regarded as a feudal remnant (Guo 180).

Foot-binding and *qiao*

Female foot-binding has a long history in feudal China. It was a reshaping process of the social image of women, which also affected the portrayal of female characters

on the stage. There are various stories about the origin of female foot binding in China. One rumor is that a concubine bound her feet and danced on the golden lotus-like petals to appeal to Li Yu (937-978), the emperor of the South Tang dynasty, which indicated its aesthetic value. Since then, foot binding had evolved into a social custom that lasted for thousands of years (Chen 232). Historical records suggested that female foot binding was encouraged among royal families during the Song dynasty (960-1279) (Gao 18). This phenomenon added the ability of revealing women's social status to foot-binding. In some regions, people believed that the smaller the feet were, the higher the social status it suggested (Gao 22-23). The official promotion of feudal rites and rituals contributed to the development of foot binding culture, which entered its prime during the Ming dynasty (1368-1644). The Manchurian government in the Qing dynasty (1636-1912) once tried to ban the foot binding tradition, but the action failed since this custom was well established in society. Soon the government realized foot-binding would strengthen their control over women and then stopped taking measures against it (Gao 153). The foot-binding culture had several influences on female. Physically, it disabled women's body and trapped them within their houses. Socially, it restrained women with feudal rituals and reconstructed the female beauty as well as the images of "ideal women".

The foot-binding tradition was reflected on theatre stage. *Qiao* was invented by cross-dressed male performers to imitate the small bound feet of women. Wei Changsheng, a former *bangzi xi* performer, is commonly known as the first person who introduced *qiao* into Beijing during 1779-1780. His performance achieved tremendous success and greatly influenced performers and the audience in Beijing city (Huang 38). He obtained the skill of *qiao* performance from *bangzi xi*, a genre of local theatre performance that originated in middle China, where the feudal rites were promoted. According to famous male *huadan* master Xun Huisheng (1900-1968), "foot-binding was such a central signifier of femininity that all actors playing female characters were required to wear *qiao* on stage to convince the audience who were deeply influenced by the social custom" (320). Even though wearing wigs and heavy make-up, actors

playing female roles, especially those who played the young female characters, would be judged, and even laughed at by the audience for his "large" feet (Xun 320). In both *qiao* and ballet pointe shoe's cases, feet and shoes contained a sense of fertility (Carter 84). They were signified as the primary materialization of desirable femininity, which explained the certainty of the appearance and prevalence of *qiao* in Chinese theatre performances. The small feet appealed to the society's aesthetic for women in traditional foot-binding culture.

Different types of *qiao*

To narrow it down, *qiao* can be divided into three categories according to its structure: *yingqiao* (lit: hard "qiao"), *ruanqiao* (lit: soft "qiao"), and *gailiang qiao* (lit: modified "qiao"). *Yingqiao* was the one first used in *jingju* performance, which can be subdivided into *wenqiao* (lit: civil "qiao") and *wuqiao* (lit: military "qiao") by roles (Huang 17). *Ruanqiao* and *gailiangqiao* were both generated on the basis of *yingqiao.* Since the modifications reduced the difficulty of wearing and the threshold of use *ruanqiao* and *gailiang qiao*, their visual effect on performance was also greatly diminished. Thus, they were not widely promoted on stage. Generally, when people mention *qiao*, it usually means *yingqiao*.

Yingqiao were about 30cm long, 6cm wide, and 1cm deep (depending on the user's foot size) and were mainly made of wood (Guo 181)

Figure 1 A picture of *yingqiao* (Wang Aiqun)

. (Figure 1) The part *yingqiao* left outside the trousers looked like the women's bound feet. The soles of *yingqiao* were relatively small; only the wearer's two big toes could fit in. Therefore, all the performer's weight fell on the two big toes, which required considerable skill to balance and move with them (Guo 181). This feature is similar to ballet pointe shoes. The difference is that ballet dancers can land on their full feet from time to time while *qiao* users could barely do this, not to mention walking with their full feet. The soles of *yingqiao* were about 10cm long with a brass hoop in the heel. There was a board from the heel upwards, which should be slightly shorter than the actor's feet. Also, it had a 70°-75° angle to the ground (Huang 19). Actors would wear socks made of double-layer natural white cloth and use two 3m long, 9cm wide single-layer straps to tie their feet to the board. (Figure 2)

Figure 2 A picture of a performer wearing *yingqiao* (Wang Aiqun)

After this, the actor would wear special-made small shoes to the bottom part of *qiao* to make it colorful and eye-catching on stage. The last step was to wear a pair of short white trousers to cover the board and straps. Then the performer was able to put on wide costume trousers. If the trousers were made of silk, actors usually tied the end of the trousers to *qiao* so that it could look like a lantern. When the trousers were velvet-made, performers would choose to loosen the end of the trousers. Under both conditions, the trouser length should be able to cover performers' natural feet while at the same time leave the "bound feet" outside. (Figure 3) *Qiao* extended the leg length, increasing the height of the performer. This made the performer wearing *qiao* a focal point on stage due to their height. In order to maintain balance on *qiao*, the performer would

make adjustment movements, which added to the feature of *qiao* performance.

Figure 3 Zhang Meijuan with full costume of Bai Suzhen in *Stealing Immortal Grass*, provided by Qiao Yingcai

Ruanqiao and *gailiang qiao* was invented during the Republican period. Chinese theatre theorist Qi Rushan (1875-1962) recalled that "*ruanqiao* was developed by some amateur performers who did not obtain the skills to wear *yingqiao"* (Huang 30). Unlike wooden-made *yingqiao*, *ruanqiao* was made of cloth. It was a pair of cloth shoes with cork insoles inside. Its shape also looked like bound feet. The main difference other than the materials used was in their length. *Ruanqiao*'s sole was around 17cm, longer than *yingqiao*. According to *wudan* performer Zhang Meijuan (1929-1995), "wearing a pair of *ruanqiao* was similar to wearing high heels. The only step performers needed to

take was to tie some shoelace-type ropes when wearing them" (Huang 29). Their weight no longer fell solely on toes. Since *ruanqiao* was larger than *yingqiao* and did not have a wooden board, the heel of the feet would stick out. In this situation, the short trousers leg would not be functional. Instead, performers opted for wearing trousers with loose ends to cover their natural feet. All those changes vastly improved the wearing comfort. The refined design and simplification of processes essentially reduced the requirements of wearing *qiao*, which satisfied theatre enthusiasts who were eager to try on *qiao* but did not have the skills demanded for *yingqiao*. With the same reasons, *ruanqiao* was not broadly applied in professional performances and even despised by some actors. In an interview, Zhao Dexun, a former *wujing* (a category of male warrior characters in *jingju*) performer, suggested that "*ruanqiao* was not pretty and perfomers might as well not wear it on stage" (Huang 177).

Gailiang qiao (lit: modified "qiao") was invented by male *huadan* performer Xun Huisheng, who put on weight in his forties and found it difficult to control the *yingqiao* (Guo 181). Xun Huisheng modified into *gailiangqiao* on the basis of *ruanqiao*. The soles of *gailiangqiao* were shorter than *ruanqiao* while longer than *yingqiao,* and it was only 50°-60° to the ground. Since those two types of *qiao* were bigger and not as tightly tied as *yingqiao*, it was challenging to wear them to perform acrobatic movements. Thus, they were not warmly welcomed by the audience. Only some *huadan* actors would use it when performing non-action scenes on stage (Huang 30).

The function of *qiao* in performance

Since *qiao* mimicked bound feet, and bound feet were so strongly associated with ideal femininity, character types needing to signal their femininity on stage wore *qiao.* The main character categories who wore *qiao* were *huadan* (lit: flower dan, unmarried young ladies or flirtatious female characters in *jingju*) and *wudan* (lit: military dan, women warriors in *jingju*). *Huadan* utilized *qiao* to perform eroticized sexuality and deliver sexual suggestion. *Wudan* used *qiao* as a more general gender signifier, but performers also used *qiao* to develop spectacular acrobatics and showcase their physical

skills.

Although *huadan* and *wudan* both performed with *yingqiao*, there were still slight differences between the *qiao* they used. To further divide, the type of *qiao* that *huadan* used was called *wenqiao*, which were 75° to the ground. *Wuqiao*, with 70° angle to the ground, were used by *wudan*. The angle of *wuqiao* was less extreme due to the requirement of acrobatic fighting (Guo 181). Analogous to high heels, it would be easier for the wearer to keep balance if the heel's angle with the ground were smaller. Another difference between *wenqiao* and *wuqiao* was that the sole of *wuqiao* was even shorter, about 9cm long. The change in length made it closer to the type of *qiao* used in pure acrobatic performances.

Qiao contained multiple functions in the performance aspect. From the visual perspective, the most obvious effect was to present a pair of "small bound feet" to appeal the audiences' aesthetic. Besides this, *qiao* also lengthened the leg line of performers and added extra height to them, which function was similar to ballet pointe shoes. Generally, the female characters are usually shorter than male characters in jingju in order to form contrast. Dan characters needed to match with male characters, including *xiaosheng* (lit: young "sheng", young male characters), *laosheng* (lit: old "sheng", senior male characters), *wusheng* (lit: martial dan, male warriors), and *jing* (painted-face role in Chinese theatre, also known as *hualian*). These male roles wore thick-soled shoes, increasing their height from 1.5cm to 13cm. If the female characters were too short, they would be visually mismatched when standing next to these male actors (Huang 51). The using of *qiao* increased the average height of dan characters on stage, making short performers more dependent on this prop, which was the reason why Qin Xueling (1948-) overcame much trouble in learning *qiao* during the 1970s after it was abolished. The lack of height made it difficult for her to match with other performers or to attract the audience, which, according to herself, "decreased her opportunities to be the main character" (Huang 180). She claimed in an interview that "she would look like a child next to the male performers on stage" (Huang 180). It suggested the influence of the performance rules set up by male actors on female

performers. Women had to seek assistance from props to achieve the image of ideal female characters on stage.

However, lengthening the leg line could not always create a satisfactory effect. In some circumstances, the extended leg length could cause visual disproportion. Since performers had to keep their knees slightly bent for smooth movement with *qiao*, their knees tended to stick out if they wore thin silk trousers. So did the board of *qiao*. Since *qiao* increased the leg length of the performers, the protruding knee made the body out of natural proportion. The shape of the wooden board loomed over the Achilles tendon also added to the sense of body alienation. To decrease the body proportion's weirdness and convince the audience, actors had to have a strong control over the waist and leg muscles. Li Jinhong mentioned the physical oddities that *qiao* performers might cause. He said, "the 'fake' feet must not face toward the sky; the 'real' feet must not touch the ground; otherwise, it would look like calf fracture" (Li 57). The props produced an unachievable embodiment of femininity. It restrained female's movement and created an unnatural image instead.

The other function of *qiao* in visual aspect was that it created quick, small steps and frequent movements. Performers developed various steps with *qiao* to present its features. Zhao Dexun indicated that "performers with *qiao* had to keep moving since they were incapable of standing still, which added beauty to their performance" (Huang 177). When Li Jinhong (1923-2010), a male *wudan* performer, talked about the transferring process after abolishing *qiao* in an interview, he mentioned that "actors could move faster with small paces on *qiao*, which was hard to achieve with regular shoes" (Huang 177). This movement was another exaggerated presentation of female characters, which led to the tendency to neglect the portrayal of female characters. In some cases, playwriters designed dan performers to act with *qiao* without considering whether the character had a pair of bound feet under specific historical background. It was difficult to balance the weight between showing acrobatic techniques or a detailed portrayal of personality since the former would receive direct feedback (applause or boos) from the audience.

The emphasis on *qiao* increased the tendency to stereotype female images in *jingju*. Performers designed the movement of deliberately displaying *qiao* to the audience in some *huadan* scenes to attract their attention and inspire the novelty and excitement feelings from them. With *qiao*, a set of conventionalized female images were created in *jingju*.

There were several types of characters who were exempted from wearing *qiao* on stage, which included *qingyi* (lit: black clothes, dignified and virtuous female roles in *jingju*, i.e., faithful wives), *laodan* (lit: old "dan", elderly woman roles in *jingju*), and *caidan* (lit: colorful dan, female comedians in *jingju*). The reasons were primarily related to the portrayal of their characteristics. *Qingyi* usually represented young women who observed the rules of propriety. They were required to present subtle and dignified behavior on stage. According to the feudal rites, their feet were not allowed to be seen by people aside from their husbands, which indicated the requirement for marital fidelity of women. Thus, there was no need for them to show off "bound feet" with the prop *qiao*. In order to portray the meek characteristic, *qingyi* did not have any intense movements on stage. The concentration of their performance was on singing. Since wearing *qiao* made it impossible for actors to stand still, this prop was not applied to *qingyi* characters.

Most of the time, the elderly characters in *jingju* were performed by younger actors. A walking cane was one prop often seen in *laodan* performances to convince the audience and represent their characters. This category of characters includes old women from a wide range of social classes. Performers usually used stumbling steps to portray characters from the poverty class to indicate their poor living and health conditions. As for those characters from the upper class or the royal family, their behavior would be calm and collected. *Qiao* would cause trouble in portraying characters under both conditions.

The last category which did not perform with *qiao* was *caidan*, a type of clown in *jingju*. *Caidan*'s comical performance and unique characterization created a different choreography aside from other female characters. Some characters were funny and

exciting women; some were treacherous and spiteful; some had cheerful and unrestricted personalities. With their own performance style, *caidan* was exceptional from the traditional women's images, which could not cope with *qiao*.

Case study: *Huadan* and *wudan*

Huadan was a category whose characteristics and performance style were greatly influenced by *qiao*. *Huadan* characters usually act lively on stage and is less restricted by the rule of decency and propriety compared to *qingyi*. Representative characters include Sun Yujiao in *Shi Yuzhuo* (*Pick up A Jade Bracelet*), who is an unmarried young girl experiencing a budding love affair; Matchmaker in *Hongniang* (*The Matchmaker*), who is a maid arranging the marriage of her mistress; and Yan Xijiao in *Zuoloushaxi* (*Sit Upstairs and Kill Xi*), who is a prostitute involving in love affairs with two men and ends up being killed by one of them. The primary function of *qiao* in character building also varied between these sub-categories. Since *huadan* performance was movement-based, the significance of *qiao* in performance was highly valued for its visual beauty.

The overall aesthetic of dan body and movements followed the "standard of class Chinese female beauty" (Li 15). As Xun Huisheng (1900-1968), one of the Four Famous Dan indicated, the essential point in performing *huadan* characters was to be subtle (54). "Actors should chase for maximum subtleness in their performance. It was better to be insufficient, rather than be excessive" (54). Li Yuru once discussed her understanding of the performance style of Xiao Cuihua (1900-1967), a famous male *huadan* performer. She admired his *qiao* skill and described his steps as "the breeze blowing on a lotus leaf" (Li 15). The aesthetics of female beauty required women to "straighten the back and slightly bring the chest inwards" when standing, which had the purpose of making women look taller," Li Yuru indicated, "and the softness of women was expressed through the slightly inward chest" (15). As Xiao Cuihua demonstrated in his book, *huadan* characters usually stood with their legs slightly crossed, with one

foot in front and the other behind (Appendix), which was also the result of following the "classic Chinese female beauty" (15). Li Yuru admitted the relevance of this aesthetic standard towards women with the cross-dressing performance phenomenon. Since only male performers were allowed in early jingju, they established the stage tradition. All characters, including female ones, were embodied by male actors. These actors created female characters more indebted to cultural ideals of femininity than to actual female bodies. These female characters were admired by the male audience. In this sense, men completed a loop about creating ideal female images without the participation of the subject themselves.

Chen Yongling (1929-2006) is one of a few male *huadan* performers who left video recordings of *qiao* performances. One of the recordings is *Xiaoshangfen* (*A Visit to the Grave*), a story about a woman who was faithful to her husband while he left home for the government official entrance examination. Several years later, the husband returned home and reunited with the wife when she visited her mother-in-law and father-in-law's grave. In the recording, Chen Yongling played the leading female role Xiao Suzhen with *qiao*. He presented several *huadan* footsteps and various *qiao* techniques, especially in his first song, which contained the character's introduction and the story's background. After his entrance, he walked slowly with small steps from the stage right to the center so that the audience would notice the existence of *qiao*. In the video footage, the camera even zoomed in on the "bound feet" when he walked, which indicated the importance of this movement. In *huadan* performance, there was a special term for the movement of deliberately showing *qiao* to the audience, which was called *liangqiao* (lit: show "qiao"). Actors would lift their trousers or dresses and raise their feet so that the audience could see the tiny shoes of *qiao*. They usually did this in slow motion and held the position for a few seconds to win the notice and the applause. Performers used exaggerated movement when presenting their *qiao* to ensure the audience sitting in the back would be able to see it.

The footwork with *qiao* was one of the attractions of *huadan* performance. Chen Yongling presented several typical steps in the performance recording. The first one

was being used during *paoyuanchang* (run around the stage). In *jingju*, performers make a quick circle walk around the stage center to indicate they are traveling a long distance, called *paoyuanchang* (run around the stage). This particular step was presented in the character's first song in *Xiaoshangfen* (*A Visit to the Grave*) to suggest Xiao Suzhen was on her way to the grave. The *huadan* version of *paoyuanchang* requires the performer to take small and rapid steps with the upper body remaining relatively still. Even though it contains the word "run" in its name, the movement is closer to race walking. The small *qiao* shoes and the brass hoop on the heel largely reduced friction to the ground, which made these movements possible (Huang 173).

Another typical *huadan* step that Chen Yongling showed was a combination of upper and lower body movements. As he walked straight from upstage to stage, he took a slow step with simultaneous small swings from his upper body and arms. The movement of the whole body matched with the tempo, which produced an introspective rhythmic beauty. This movement intended to construct the softness and subtleness of the female character. The aesthetics of the "ideal" female image in *jingju* performance echoed the socially constructed femininities.

Besides steps, Chen Yongling also presented other *qiao* techniques in *Xiaoshangfen* (*A Visit to the Grave*). He made light jumps to indicate he was crossing the threshold. When picking up things on the ground, he made a sudden squat down with one foot flattened to the ground behind the body. These quick and flexible movement changes added extra beauty to the visual aspect and attracted the audience's attention with their dexterity and physical prowess. Chen Yongling's skillfulness seemed to merge his feet with *qiao*, which allowed the audience to appreciate the performance with comfort since they would not need to worry about whether the performer would fall for the complicated acrobatic movements. His general movement was so smooth that he could make the audience believe he was performing with his own feet.

The performers on *qiao* were not aimed at establishing a sense of "naturalness". The aestheticized and to some extent exaggerated femininity was created by male actors based on their understanding and expectation of femaleness. Regarding steps, *qiao*

limited the actor's pace length, which was parallel to the effect of feet-binding on females. On top of that, the small and frequent steps performers presented was an unrealistically idealized reflection. Also, the flexible and abrupt movement changes were drawn from life but were dramatically processed to illustrate the vibrant and cheerful personality of the *huadan* characters. The gesture that deliberately show off the performer's *qiao* shoes was a skill to remind and impress the audience with their technique. In this sense, the aesthetics of *qiao* performance had similar implications to the aesthetics of acrobatics, which provided visual beauty and mental excitement to the audience.

The other important function *qiao* contained was to convey eroticism on stage. Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China (1949), there were lots of explicit erotic scenes in *jingju*, which was called *fenxi* (lit: pink theatre) (Huang 65). Most of them were played by *huadan*. Actors would utilize their "bound feet" to express sexually suggestive content. One example was the *Sichun* (lit: thinking of spring, referring to women's lovesickness) section in *Zhanwancheng* (*A Fight in Wancheng*). The story was about a famous military called Cao Cao, conquered Wancheng City during the Three Kingdoms Period (220-265). The leading female character of the *Sichun* section was Ms. Zou, the widow of the former governor of Wancheng City. According to the background story, she was a beautiful woman who lost her husband in middle age. Cao Cao misheard his nephew's encouragement and took Ms. Zou into his captivity, which infuriated Zhang Xiu, the nephew of Ms. Zou's husband. It became the excuse for Zhang Xiu to attack Cao Cao. With the help of military schemes, he managed to defeat Cao Cao. After that, he killed Ms. Zou for not being faithful to her dead husband. The *Sichun* section appeared before Cao Cao took Ms. Zou. It depicted the loneliness and boredom of the widow and her feeling of lovesickness. Li Jinhong remembered in the earlier version of Xiao Cuihua's *Sichun*, "Two stage assistants hid behind the desk and used two mice props to represent mating. When she (the character) saw it, she at first lunged forward toward the mouses. Then she stood on one leg and slowly lifted the other to present her 'bound feet', which was the technique of *liangqiao*"

(Huang 65). In erotic or sexually suggestive scenes, the gesture of *liangqiao* delivered extra layer of implications. It was not only used to enhance the audience's appreciation of the technique but also to tease the audience sexually. Male cross-dressing performers relied on the "small bound feet" to convince their stage identity and to attract the male audience. The relation between female bound feet and the sexual desire of men was implied.

Chen Yongling had two versions of video recordings of the *Sichun* section in *Zhan Wancheng* (*A Fight in Wancheng*). One was shot in the 1980s by Shanghai Art Institute. The other was the recording of his performance in Taiwan in 1996, which he performed with *qiao*. The mice props were moved in both recordings. The *Sichun* (lit: thinking of spring, referring to women's lovesickness) section was a more than ten minutes mine style performance with only movements and no speaking. When Chen Yongling sat in the room, he first twisted his handkerchief into a rope by turning it around repeatedly. Meanwhile, his legs swayed slightly back and forth, signaling the character's boredom. Then he slightly loosened the handkerchief, bit the middle part with his mouth, and continued twisting it from slow to fast. This movement contained a sense of sexual suggestion. After several actions further expressing his boredom, he lifted both of his feet so that the sole of the *qiao* shoes would face the audience. The intention was to attract the audience with the small feet. Then Chen Yongling crossed his leg and squeezed the tip of his shoe slightly. Each squeeze was accompanied by a slight twist from his upper body to embody the sensitivity of the female body in erotic terms. Since Chen Yongling was wearing a dress, the whole *qiao* shoe and the black *qiao* straps on his heels were on display for the audience to notice during this movement, but he didn't try to cover up a bit. After a while, he changed for another leg and used his handkerchief to dust the other shoe. The next movement of Chen Yongling was to lift his feet together lightly and swing them back and forth while putting his hands on his waist. Once again, the tiny soles of the *qiao* shoes faced straight at the audience. In this section, there were about 5 minutes when the character did all the performances on a chair, where Ms. Zou expressed various emotions ranging from boredom to distractedness, thoughtfulness,

and lovesickness. Chen Yongling emphasized on the leg and feet movement and made foot play an essential role in expressing these feelings.

In the video footage of the Shanghai performance, Chen Yongling acted without *qiao*. The movements which Chen Yongling presented and interacted with the "bound feet" were eliminated. After yawning and stretching on the chair, he nodded off with one hand resting on the back of the chair. Here, he crossed his legs and made his foot slightly tipped out of the dress. The audience could only see the toe of his shoe in this version. Without *qiao*, Chen Yongling used this as an alternate, which still obeyed the aesthetic of women's small feet in feudal Chinese culture. Once he woke up from the nod, he stood up and finished the scene involving the chair. This performance version contained fewer upper body twists, which decreased the sexual suggestiveness. In this version, the range of his leg movement was greatly reduced since he delivered the character in a more subtle way. When performed with *qiao*, he exaggerated the movements on legs and feet to showed off his "bound feet" and delivered the character's feeling through it. While in this version, he had to hide most of the feet under the dress and avoid them from exposing to the audience. When performed without *qiao*, the aesthetic of female character's beauty became more subtle and less erotic.

To conclude, *qiao* carried out two main functions in *huadan* performance; one was to create a lively, naive or vivacious character trait with acrobatic-like movements; the other was to express eroticism and convey a sexually suggestive meaning. The former function not only contributed to the portray of the character, but also influenced the build-up of the general performance atmosphere. The latter feature was aimed solely at appealing to and teasing the male audience. The use of *qiao* made feet became a body part that the performers purposely showed in *huadan* performances. Considering *huadan* was first performed by male performers, they corresponded and made use of the social conventions and aesthetics to highlight *qiao* as a symbol of women's attractiveness as sex objects. *Qiao* became a materialized representation of the femaleness in male actors' performance.

Wudan was another category that utilized *qiao* in their performances. Its common feature is that characters are all equipped with martial arts. Some of the characters are female warriors, others are heroines or fairies and charmers. This category could be further divided into two types: *duanda wudan* (lit: short fight martial dan) and *changkao wudan* (*changkao* refers to the costume that has military flags on the back). The latter one is also known as *daomadan* (lit: knife and horse dan). *Duanda wudan* wears short clothes. The representative characters include *Shisanmei* in *Shisanmei* (*Sister Thirteen*), who revenges for her father and acts bravely against the injustice; *Sun Erniang* in *Shizipo* (*Cross Hill*), who owns a shady shop selling human meat buns and tries to kill customers at night; *Xiaoqing* in *Daokuyin* (*Steal Silver from the Treasury*), who is a snake charmer and steals treasures to assist the poor. The costume of *daomadan* is similar to male martial character's wearing in the corresponding position, which contains amour and military flag on their back. The symbolic characters in this category are female warriors and female generals, such as Zhang Xiulian in *Duo Taicang* (*The Rivalry for Taicang*), who substituted for her father to protect Taicang but is defeated by the army sent by Zhu Yuanzhang; Liu Jinding in *Zhulinji* (*A Scheme in Bamboo Grove*), who fought for rescuing the emperor Zhao Kuangyin in the Song dynasty; Mu Guiying in *Mu Guiying Guashuai* (*Mu Guiying Command*), who took the responsibility as a general to fight for the invasion during the North Song dynasty. Similar to *huadan*, the focus of *wudan* performance is also about the movement. But the intensity and difficulty of these two categories vary considerably. The memoirs and interviews of *jingju* performers indicated that *wudan* (referred to *duanda wudan*) was required to perform with *qiao.* But there were different opinions about whether *daomadan* was also performed with *qiao*. Li Jinhong once defined that "*qiao* used by *huadan* and *daomadan* was called *wenqiao*, and *qiao* used by *wudan* was called *wuqiao*" (58). But he also listed several *daomadan* sections performed without *qiao* (58). Cheng Yujing suggested that male *dan* master Wang Yaoqing performed *daomadan* without wearing *qiao*. As the apprentice of Wang Yaoqing, he followed his master and acted with boots (Huang 155). As the name indicated, *daomadan* (lit: knife and horse dan) characters usually

needed to ride horses according to the plot, which was one of the reasons *qiao* was excluded in its performance. In this chapter, the focus of the discussion about *wudan* is *duanda wudan*.

Dachushou (lit: hit out) is a symbolic movement in *duanda wudan* performance. According to Li Jinhong, "this movement was mainly used in the performance of fairies and charmers in mythological stories" (58). When performing this, the *wudan* character stands in the middle. Other characters who fight against her stand in a circle surround her. They match up with each other to throw, toss, kick and catch their weapons, which usually is the spear. Several performers throw their colorful, decorated spears into the air, dazzling the audience's eye and creating an excellent visual effect. There are no fixed requirements for the number of outside performers. Usually, its number would range from 3, 5, 7, and 9. It could be adjusted according to the need of the plot and the ability of the *wudan* performer. Nowadays, as the performance difficulty decreased, there are also two performers' version of *dachushou*, which contains one *wudan* and one male character. In the two-performer version of *Daokuyin* (*Steal Silver from the Treasury*), the *wudan* character Xiaoqing presents *dachushou* with four spears in total. She holds two spears in hand, one being kicked in the air, and the male character has the last one. *Wudan* performers have to avoid the spears from falling on the ground and to kick or throw them in a beautiful art in the air. They also must keep an eye on all directions while in the middle and make quick reactions toward the props. The typical movements are catch-and-throw, kick with the front of the feet, turn around and kick with the back of the feet. The function of *dachushou* movement is to suggest the power and highly skilled martial arts that the female character equipped. The colorful and dynamic scene it created could also win the applause from the audience.

Besides *dachushou*, there are many quick turn and flip movements in *wudan* performance. Li Jinhong explained that "the speed of the turning is very fast" and "a twist in feet could make a fast turn on the body" (58). He also pointed out that the difference between *wudan*'s turning and the flat turn in dance, "*wudan* performer cannot spin their heads, or else their heavy wigs would fall apart" (58). From this perspective,

he pointed out the value of *qiao* since it contributed to reducing friction between shoes and the ground when turning.

The function of *qiao* in portraying *wudan* characters was different from its effect on *huadan* characters. There were no slight twists nor erotic suggestions in *wudan* performance. *Qiao* was used to increase the visual effect of the action scenes. As a token of the character's identity, *qiao* visually and perceptually widen the power gap between male and female characters, because "women's small *qiao* shoes made a dramatical contrast with men's thick-soled shoes" (Huang 67). This characteristic added "more thrill to the performance" (Zhuang 58). Huang Yubi indicated that "*qiao* played a supporting role in fighting scenes" (67). "*Qiao* presented 'bound feet' of the female characters, which reflected the excellence of their martial artistry" (Huang 67). Some theatre critics once suggested that "there were not much to see for a woman who had regular feet to fight with a man" (Zhuang 58). However, "female with *qiao* contained a sense of fragility, which could amplify the power difference between male and female so that it could. The socially constructed custom was again strengthened for being used to symbolize one's gender in *wudan* performance.

Unlike *huadan*, *wudan* characters were still mainly played by male performers after women reentered theatre stage until *qiao* was officially banned by the government. The primary obstacle was the difficulty of training. Li Yuru remembered that in Chinese Theatre School, "male students were assigned male characters and female students were assigned female characters. Although *wudan* belongs to female characters, it was still performed by men because of the hardship in the training and performing. They (the school) were afraid that "women could not bear with the pain" (250). The hardship of training with *qiao* was mentioned by plenty of dan performers, regardless of sex, in their memoirs. The training usually began at the age of nine or ten. Xiao Cuihua (1990-1967), a male *huadan* master, suggested in his memoir that "no training is more painful than that of *qiao*" (145). Li Yuru (1924-2008) took down the experience she trained with *qiao* in Chinese Theatre School. The trainees had to get up at five o'clock in the morning to start practice. Li Yuru constantly felt numbness and swelling in her feet

since straps disturbed the blood flow during long-time training (105). However, wearing *qiao* was not the only cause of trainees' pain. If they failed to meet the masters' standards or tried to challenge the discipline, they would face physical punishment, which was a common phenomenon in the early *jingju* training period. One male *huadan* master Xun Huisheng's (1900-1968) recalled the painful memory in his essay collections about standing on *qiao* as a child and the cruel penalty he would face if he fell to the ground (322-323). The first training phase was called *haoqiao*, which means spending time standing on *qiao*. During this phase, Xun Huisheng's master let him stand on the narrow side of the brick and tied a thorny wooden stick to his legs to avoid knee bending (323). These teaching methods with strong feudal undertones were carried on in Chinese Theatre School. According to Li Yuru, the teacher would ask them to stand in groups of three on a narrow bench. If one of them fell, they would all fall. Students standing on *qiao* were not allowed to sit down while eating breakfast (270). Teachers usually stood by with a whip in their hands to supervise.

After spending enough time standing on *qiao*, students started to move around with *qiao*, which included *zouqiao* (lit: walk "qiao"), *paoqiao* (lit: run "qiao"), and *huabangzi* (lit: flower "bangzi"). *Zouqiao* meant to practice the gait and gesture of dan on stage. *Paoqiao* referred to the running technique used in action scenes. *Huabangzi* was a combination of overall performance characteristics with *qiao*, including gait, full-body movements, and facial expressions (Xun 325). The training system was such a torture that even Xun Huisheng compared this process to jail. He indicated that the only difference between trainees and prisoners was that trainees could take off the "feet chains" before going to sleep while the prisoners had to wear them all the time. And prisoners were not forced to stand on narrow bricks and do all the tricks with torture equipment (325). The long-time training prepared their bodies for spectacular performance. It enabled them to show unique techniques and acrobatic movements on stage, which could meet the audience's preference.

On top of training for the basic *qiao* skills, *wudan* had to practice acrobatic movements such as flips and handstands. The requirement of performing with swords,

spears, and other weapons placed higher demand on the performer's basic skills, which raised the bar for the female to perform in this category. Since the *wudan* characters referred to women with martial skills, it only represented a limited number of women compared with the *huadan* category. The *wudan* performers did not have much flexibility in their performance, which led to the reformation of *daomadan*.

According to Judith Butler's performativity theory, " 'sex' is an ideal construct that is forcibly materialized through time. It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize 'sex' and achieve this materialization through a forcible reiteration of those norms" (2). The phenomenon of performing with *qiao* in *jingju* illustrates this argument. *Qiao* corresponded with the bound feet, which was a token of feudal China's structuralized and materialized female images. It was used in cross-dressing performances to fulfill the fantasized, idealized images of women created by the patriarchal society. By performing with *qiao*, male dan reinforced the socially constructed feminine image, which required the same time and effort for female performers to learn: to embody a *huadan* or *wudan* character on stage, female performers also needed to adopt *qiao*. The hardship of the long-time repetitive training process was the "forcible reiteration" to attain the social norms. Since *qiao* reformed the body, an unobtainable female image was created on stage with extra height and physicality. The constructed female image catered to society's expectation of idealized women, which made *qiao* received warmly welcome from the audience. The regulation of both female and male dan performers indicated that "bodies only appear, only endure, only live within the productive constraints of certain highly gendered regulatory schemas" (Butler x).

Qiao was officially abolished by the Chinese government during the Drama Reform Movement (1950-1960) for its feudal culture implication. After that, dan performers who utilized *qiao* on stage made efforts to reform their step movements since they had to follow the party's leadership. According to Li Yuru, she added extra height to the costume shoes, hoping to present some of the movement that realized by *qiao* (272). "Although lots of people adopted this method," Li Yuru wrote, "it did not

have the effect I expected" (272). Gradually, there were no longer strict prohibitions about performing with *qiao*. But the heavy collective training of *qiao* was gone. Only a few performers who fancied about *qiao* proactively learnt it. Nowadays, there are still female actors who learnt dan performance from male masters. Zhang Jiachun (1983-), who learnt Xun Pai performance style from Song Changrong (1935-2022), has indicated in interviews that she not only learnt Xun Pai performance style, but also made changes according to her body and understanding of the characters.

Performing with *qiao* was a way for male dan to perform idealized femininity on stage. It hid the man's feet and replaced them with socially constructed feminized ones in a drag performance with strong visual associations. Also, the requirement of wearing *qiao* created a female image that was denaturalized for both female and male bodies. Male dan performers set up a series of disciplines according to their perception of women and promoted them as the industry standard, which erased distinctions between male and female performers and was able to maintain consistency until *qiao* was abolished. Portraying female characters with *qiao* was a process of constructing stereotypical female images. Since the images had been artistically and exaggeratedly processed, they were closer to a semiotic sketch than a reflection of women in real life. Being excluded from the process of formation of women characters, female performers had to follow and be criticized for the norm created and recognized by men when they came back to the stage.

Chapter 2 Costumes, Make-up and Wigs to Shape Male Body.

Male dan performers put on external disguises to construct their stage identity, which included costumes, wigs, and make-up. These props were unsophisticated in the early days of *jingju*. Male dan performers made refinements during practice to increase the feminized beauty, including *tiepianzi* and heavy make-up to reshape actor's face and *xianyizi* to create a curved bodyline. Later on, these disguise techniques invented by cross-dressing performers became the conventions of dan performance style. All these elements reflected the female images under men's aesthetic standards. Wang An-ch'i suggested that "make-up and costume including '*tiepianzi*', '*qiao*' and '*xianyizi*' were all designed with the premise of grooming the male face and body" (8). As we have seen in Chapter 1, *qiao* was banned by the government after the Cultural Revolution for its close association with feudal practices of feudal traditions. Unlike *qiao*, the other costume elements used by male cross-dressing performers were received and followed by female performers till now. This chapter will analyze how the design of costumes, make-up, and wigs shaped female characters and the idealized female images they produced.

Wigs and make-up

Male dan performers used wigs and make-up to disguise their own identities and gender on stage. Dan performance highly valued facial expressions and expressive eyes, which emphasizes the importance of wigs and make-up. The refined make-up and wigs furthermore emphasized eyes and lips, which benefits the facial expression. The wig and make-up worked together to slim the shape of the male face, making it more feminine in appearance, and convince the audience of their stage identities including gender and character type. The make-up technique of dan characters also experienced development and refinement. As with the dan performance style, wigs and make-up echoed the aesthetic of classic Chinese female beauty. Those elements included white skin, blushed cheek, black hair, red lips, thin eyebrows, and *fengyan* (lit: Phoenix eye).

The make-up and wig in the dan category include facial make-up, wig, and accessories. In early *jingju*, the make-up technique of female characters was simple. Male cross-dressing performers only put on light make-up to shape their facial traits. The current dan make-up procedure follows the result of Mei Lanfang's reform, which is much heavier and more meticulous compared with the make-up procedure in early *jingju*. Mei Lanfang improved his make-up technique after visiting Shanghai, where he learned from *jingju* performers Feng Zihe and Mao Yunke. He suggested that "their make-up seemed more beautiful than us (refers to northern *jingju* performers)" (224). As *jingju* developed, the cosmetics and make-up technique improved, catering to the aesthetic of the classical female image. These make-up and wig techniques, described in detail below, became industry regulations and are still followed by current performers.

The make-up process of dan performers was detailed and complicated. The first step was to put on a honey-and-water mixture to prepare the face (Bond 205). Now actors mainly use make-up oil or Vaseline to protect their skin (Ma 6). Then the performers would wear base make-up to cover their original facial colour. The base make-up was pink-white, close to newborn skin colour. It was made mainly with white oil paint and with little red oil paint. This design corresponded with the traditional aesthetic of women in Chinese society, which regarded white skin as one element of beauty. Many classic Chinese poems and novels admired pretty women for their white skin. The extra white skin colour was an exaggerated representation of the female body. As Butler indicates, "in other words, 'sex' is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time" (xii). The aesthetic feature was amplified and became a materialized representation of young female characters in *jingju*. It was also influenced by the oil-based make-up style in *jingju*. In daily life, ancient Chinese women mainly used powder-based cosmetics. The stage cosmetics was an exaggeration of cultural ideals that were more visible but less natural. It echoed Mei Lanfang's saying, "instead, the audience is treated to an idealized, generalized female image" (Min 87). It created female characters following the aesthetic value over realism.

The next step was to put on pink blush, made mainly with red oil paint with a little

white oil paint. The blush area was from below the eyebrow down to the cheek (Ma 7). Usually, the colour on the eye part was more profound than that on the cheek. Performers would use rouge to colour the eye area and naturally blend it into the cheek area. The shade of blush also varied depending on the role. Compared to other female characters, the blush of *qingyi* often had a smaller size and lighter colour to portray a dignified and decent image who was restricted by ritual principles. The same as the white skin colour, the pink cheek was also a representation of classical Chinese female beauty. Cui Hu, a poet in the Tang dynasty, once wrote that "*Renmian taohua xiangying hong*" 人面桃花相映红 (*Quan Tangshi (Full Poem from Tang Dynasty)*), which means the female's face and peach blossoms looked extra red when they reflected with each other. From the performance perspective, the red colour on the eye area could catch the audience's attention so that it could enlarge the function of the eye in performance. The blush could also shape the performer's nose since it had a clear dividing line from the bridge of the nose to the nostrils. Sometimes performers would put on extra blush to make their noses look smaller or more defined on stage. When finishing wearing blush, performers would put on a pale powder to set the colour. And then, they would put another layer of rouge on their face to emphasize the colour. The outstanding red colour on the female characters' faces was a direct representation of femininity in ancient China.

Following this, the next procedure was to put on make-up for the eyes (Ma 8). The earlier performers used dark colours to draw the eye line, which was called *guoyanzi*, the black ash at the bottom of the pot. The eye line entirely covered the performer's eye. The upper line had an elongated "S"-shape with the end slightly turned up. The lower eye line was lighter, connecting two ends of the eye. This shape was called *fengyan* (lit: Phoenix eye), which was also an element of beauty in ancient China. The black eye line collaborated with the rouge on the eye area to further emphasis the eyes. The next procedure was to draw the eyebrow. The material used on the eyebrow was the same as the eye line. The eyebrow shape was slightly angled upwards and paralleled with the eye line and the blush. The middle of the eyebrow was the thickest (Ma 9). Since dan

performers used the eye to express feelings and shape characters, the eye make-up was subtly different between characters. The shape of eyebrow slightly differed between character categories; the eyebrow of *huadan* and *qingyi* shaped like willow leaves, *wudan*'s eyebrow shaped like swords, *caidan*'s eyebrow shaped like Chinese character "eight" (八) to add comedic effect.

The last step of make-up was to draw lips with red oil paint (Ma 9). The lip was shaped like *yuanbao* (shoe-shaped gold ingot). In general, these make-up steps were the same as those of ancient women, but with a staged exaggeration of the colour. The oil paint make-up material was strong coloured, which could cover the original face of male performers and recontour them according to the classical aesthetics of female beauty. It also increased the recognition of the young female character category in *jingju* and had eye-catching stage effects. Red lips were seen as a signature of femininity in many cultures. The usage of it in cross-dressing performance was a way to indicate the idealized femininity on stage.

After wearing make-up, the performers would put on wigs and accessories (Ma 9). The first and most important step was to tie a strap on the actor's heads to lift the end of their eyes and eyebrows so that they would look more energized. The strap was called *leitoudai* (headband). The performer first placed the strap on the forehead, crossed it behind the head, and then returned to the forehead, finally tied it up behind the head. This strap also separated the actor's natural hair and wigs. The height of the strap on the forehead varied depending on the width of the actor's forehead (Ma 9-10). Some male performers used it to cover and modify their face shape so that their faces could look smaller and more feminized. In order to lift and hold the eye and eyebrow in place during performances, the strap must be tightly tied. Pressure should be put evenly on two eyes so that it could keep the sense of balance in general. Tying the strap required technique from dressers or the performers themselves. If tied too loose, it might fall off during the performance. However, if tied too tight, it might result in insufficient blood applied to the head, which would also cause trouble to the performance and actors (Ma 9-10). Through applying the strap on the head, the actor's eye and eyebrow were

reshaped to match a feminine aesthetic. The audience appreciated the reshaped angle of the eye and eyebrow, which reflected the female image in ancient Chinese artworks. Thus, when women returned to the stage, they still needed to use the strap to lift their eyes and eyebrows according to the exaggerated stage aesthetics. Male dan performers produced the idealized femininity with exaggerated external elements, which became performance traditions followed by later male and female performers. The make-up and wigs invented by male dan included all beauty elements appreciated by the society and was utilized as signifiers of femininity.

The next step was called *tiepianzi*, which meant sticking wigs to the actor's side face and forehead (Ma 11-12). It was first introduced to Beijing by Wei Changsheng, who brought *qiao* into *jingju*. The material and the style of *tiepianzi* were modified as *jingju* developed. In early *jingju*, a pair of rough black-coated paper was once used as sideburns, which was later replaced by human hair. The wig on the side face was called *daliu* (lit: big willow leaf). It intended to imitate the temple with ancient women's hairstyles. The fake sideburn was usually 3-5 cm wide, and its length could reach above the chin (Ma 12). The shape was similar to a willow leaf, which was wide near the ear and narrowed down to a sharp angle as it followed the shape of the face (Ma 12). Through a dramatized visual treatment, it was made much wider than the actual temple of a female and became a make-up method to modify the male performer's face shape. It had a similar function as the trimming powder in modern cosmetics. With the fake sideburn, male performers would have a smaller face and a pointed chin, which made them close to the ideal women images. These wigs were also preserved when female performers returned to stage. They would adjust the sideburn wig according to their original face shape but the wigs themselves are still in use (Ma 13).

Several commonly used forehead hairstyles were inspired by ancient Chinese women's looks. One representative hairstyle was called *dakailian* (lit: carved face), which was mostly seen on stage in the late Qing dynasty when there was no heavy make-up on male dan performers' faces (Guo 140). This hairstyle referred to the married women's hairstyle in history since there was a tradition for females to remove

the fine hair on their faces before they got married (Guo 143). In this painting (Figure 1), the male dan performer Mei Qiaoling had the *dakailian* hairstyle. His face was not much ornamented except for a short wig on his forehead. This hairstyle was closest to real-life women's hairstyles. Since it exposed the actor's whole face to the audience, it was only used in the late Qing dynasty and was soon reformed by later male performers to imitate the female face better.

Huadan performers would use more wigs to cover their forehead to indicate the unmarried status of characters. Xun Huisheng once used *liuxiangtou* (lit: save fragrance hairstyle) in his performance (Fu 35). He used two pieces of the wig to cover the left and right corners of the forehead (Figure 2) intended to represent the female who did not have the pre-marriage head cleaning procedure. One of the most important changes in the female hairstyle was made by Mei Lanfang. He designed and promoted the oval face shape, which required the sideburn wig to become wider. Also, he invented *xiaowan* (lit: small curl) on the forehead (Fu 35). In total, this hairstyle had seven *xiaowan*, and they were symmetrically distributed. The one in the center was the biggest. The curl's size decreased to the side. With seven *xiaowan* (small curl) and two *daliu* (lit: big willow leaf, the sideburn), the performer's face was reshaped to be rounded on the forehead and pointed in the chin, which was close to the shape of a sunflower seed. This hairstyle was also the result of following ancient Chinese beauty images (Qi 113). This hairstyle covered most of the spaces on the forehead and side face, considerably narrowing the men's faces. Instead of strictly regulating the specific size of sideburn wigs, he suggested that performers should adjust themselves according to their own face shape. The more complicated combination of large and small curves on the forehead and side face could enrich the line variations on the face, which added extra visual beauty. It took around twenty years for the wig to develop from *kailian* to *xiaowan,* which reflected the social trending of the hairstyle (Guo 157). By the time of 1930s, *xiaowan*, Mei Lanfang's reformation of the hairstyle was largely followed by other dan performers both male and female (Guo 157). It is still used in nowadays performances for its visual beauty.

After sticking wigs on the face, the performers would wear wigs on their heads. There were various female hairstyle based on the character and story background. One of the frequently used wigs by female characters was called *xianyizi* (lit: threads tail, long wig) (Wang 8). It was a long wig that could reach the performer's ankle. *Xianyizi* was made of thick black thread. The main part of *xianyizi* hung at the back of the actor's head. Two strands would be split and hung on the chest. It was an exaggerated version of the female's draped hair. From the aesthetic perspective, the long black hair was one element of the female body admired by men. In terms of visual aspects, the black *xianyizi* and the floral outfit complement each other and slim down the performer's body line (Figure 5). The long wig swayed with the dress as the performer moved, which amplified the presence of the elements representing women on stage. The ankle-length wigs indicated the class and social status of female characters, which reflected the emphasis on idealized women images since long hair was seen as a symbol of women's beauty.

Figure 4 Mei Qiaoling in painting *Tongguangshisanjue* by Shen Rongpu

Figure 5 Xun Huisheng as Lv Shaohua in *Yuanxiaomi (Lantern Riddle)* Picture from *Jingju Lao Zhaopian (Old Photos of Jingju)*

Male dan performers, to some extent, made innovations to the female characters' make-up and hairstyles to modify their faces and bodies. The changes also varied based on the character and performance style requirements. Mei Lanfang was the male dan master whose innovations were primarily accepted and admired by fellow performers and audiences. Inspired by Shanghai performers, Mei Lanfang made several changes to make-up technique, which included eye line drawing and the position of *tie pianzi*. According to him, early northern dan performers would "shape their face into a square" through *tiepianzi* because the position of their wigs was "too high and wide" (224). Another make-up technique he learned from Shanghai performers was eye-line drawing. "Northern dan performers did not care much about the eye line. The Shanghai performers wore quite black eye line, which made their eye beautiful and charming (224)." The innovation of make-up and hairstyles catered for the aesthetics of ideal femininity. It enabled the performance of young female characters in *jingju* so perfectly

that it received huge success and was adoped by female actors.

Figure 6 A picture of Mei Lanfang's wig and makeup

Figure 7 Full costume of Mei Lanfang in *Guifei Zuijiu* (*The Drunken Concubine*)

As Wang An-ch'i indicated, "*tie pianzi* (stick wigs to actor's face), *bang qiao* (lit: tie "qiao", wear *qiao*), and *xianyizi* (lit: threads tail, long wig) were all predicated on grooming the male face and body" (8). In the beginning, the way performers stuck wigs was to emulate women's hairstyles in real life. Soon male performers modified their faces by putting on more wigs on the forehead and the side face, which enhanced their intimation of females. They were moving from copying popular hairstyles to reshaping their profiles to better perform femininity. The refined hairstyles were also drawn from ancient women's hairstyles, which were being mediated through art. Meanwhile, the women hairstyles were inherently performative. It revealed the nature of gender performativity. But with the dramatized and exaggerated procession, the stage

hairstyles were more and more distant from women's hairstyles in real life. When women returned to the stage, they had to follow these conventions and stick sideburn and forehead wigs, resulting in a more denaturalized effect. The feature of male-established female performance was representing generalized women, instead of a particular woman, which meant female performers had to make more effort to erase themselves to embody this ideal image.

Costume

Similar to wigs and make-up, costumes played a significant role in cross-dressing performances. Costume is a direct representation of an actor's identity on stage. It follows the social custom of gender identification. Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass analyzed the different function of clothes and its representation. They indicated that "clothes give a nature to what previously had no nature; they take an existing nature and transnature it, turning the virtuous into the vicious, the strong into the weak, the male into the female, the godly into the satanic" (4). Costume assigned multiple stage identities to the performers. It also represented the social class, family background, occupation, and other identities of the character. In the case of *jingju*, since this performance genre is highly conventionalized, the costumes vary among different categories of characters to emphasize the characterization. In terms of dan's costumes, they were deeply affected by the traditional principles of decency and propriety. The dan costume design reflected the characters' social class, occupation, and marital status. Male dan master Mei Lanfang made reformations to the costume, which was the most known refinement of the clothes. His changes toward ancient costumes were well received by the audience and the business. Later, female performers also followed Mei Lanfang's reformation in costumes, make-up, and wigs.

The costume of dan characters reflected their characteristics. The costumes of *huadan* and *qingyi* would be taken as examples to discuss. As Chapter 1 indicated, *huadan* (flower dan) categories mostly referred to unmarried young ladies and flirtations female characters in *jingju*. Except for certain introverted *guimen dan*

(unmarried young women) characters, most *huadan* roles wore tops and trousers or tops and dresses with bright colours. Both sets of costumes were of a length that allowed performers to show their hands and feet to the audience (Huang 65). As many of the characters in *huadan* category were maids, or from lower-class backgrounds, this costume design was suitable for their requirement of doing domestic chores. The choice of colour usually includes light pink, yellow, and green, indicating the young age and unmarried status of the characters. Their accessories also reflected their social background; for example, the maid of wealthy families would wear more ornate jewellery than the daughter of a small family to demonstrate their social status. As indicated in Chapter 1, in early *jingju*, *huadan* were mostly played with *qiao*. The costume design of *huadan* facilitated the need for frequent movements and enabled performers to present their "bound feet" to the audience.

Compared with *huadan*, *qingyi* was a category of characters who had dignified, serious, and positive personalities. They mostly played good wives and mothers or chaste and virtuous women. This category of characters was the portrayal of the ideal women image. They were deeply affected by the feudal rites, which not only reflected in the characteristics but also presented through costumes. In *qingyi* performances, actors wear floor-length dresses and *shuixiu* (lit: water sleeve, sleeves up to 1 meter long, used for dancing) that could cover their feet and hand. According to the feudal moral restriction for women, their hands and feet should not be seen by men aside from their husbands. Performers utilized this rule from another perspective and presented the hands and feet of *huadan* characters to seduce or tease men.

Mei Lanfang made contributions to the reformation of the clothes of dan. He developed two types of costumes; one was to wear up-to-date clothes, and the other was to put on ancient-style costumes. During 1914-1918, Mei Lanfang arranged and performed several *shizhuangxinxi*, which was *jingju* with new-style costumes that people wore during the Republic of China in daily life. It included newly refined cheongsams, more close-fitting tops, and black skirts (Figure 5). Besides, the hairstyle was also upgraded to modern type. The choice of costume echoed the aim of Mei

Lanfang to present realistic content to the audience with *jingju*. The stories of these shows were the reflection of real social problems. His first *shizhuangxinxi* was *Niehai Bolan* (*Waves of the Sinful Sea*), in which he designed several different costumes for the main character Meng Suqing to indicate the change in her occupation and status. At first, this new type of *jingju* also won the attraction of the audience since Mei Lanfang made his name and had a large number of followers then. But this innovation did not last for a long time as it challenged the conventionalized core of *jingju*. According to Tingxin Wang, "due to the problems of the new fashion theatre (*shizhuangxinxi*) itself and the influence of Mei Lanfang's own *jingju* quality, these new theatres did not persist for a long time" (80). Mei Lanfang's attempt to introduce up-to-date fashion into *jingju* did not receive a satisfying result. The reason the *shidaixinxi* received audience during then was largely dependent on Mei Lanfang's personal influence. This failure explained part of the reason why there were no successful women performers who made a revolution to the dan performance style. During then, the dan performance was controlled by male performers. There were few female performers could compete with them.

Figure 8 Mei Lanfang as Meng Suqing in *Waves of the Sinful Sea* (*Niehai Bolan*)

Together with hair and make-up, Mei Lanfang also reformed the general ancient costumes of female characters in *jingju*. "The traditional dan's costume had a wide top, and the skirt was tied inside it", Yue Jiang indicated, "it covered the body beauty of women" (60). Mei Lanfang refined the design of the costume, "the characteristic of the newly refined costume was opposite with the former style. The top was shorter, and the longer dress was tied to the outside of the top. It emphasized the line of the chest and waist area" (60-61). In early *jingju*, the costumes were designed mainly to cover and hide the male body rather than curve their body line. Mei Lanfang reformed the costume on the basis of his own body. The success of this reformation had an impact on the performers who have followed Mei Lanfang.

Besides *shizhuangxinxi*, Mei Lanfang also rehearsed several new plays with ancient costumes designed himself, which were called *guzhuangxinxi* (new plays with ancient costumes). The stories included ancient Chinese mythology, a section in the

novel *The Story of a Stone*, and episodes in Chinese history. According to Qi Rushan, who worked together with Mei Lanfang on developing new plays, they sought references for costumes from ancient paintings, and several changes were made on top of that. “The waist line of the beauty in the paintings were high, which made the lower body longer and the upper body shorter” (113), Qi Yushan indicated. The aesthetic of lengthening the lower body was echoed with the use of *qiao*, which also extended the leg length. In Mei Lanfang’s reformation version, “the waist band tied around the actual waist position of the actor and the waist of the dress was close to the top so that it could make the body looked longer and thinner” (Qi 113). There was also an extra short skirt designed to be worn outside of the dress. Qi Rushan indicated that “the later ancient costumes in *jingju* were all learned from Mei Lanfang, but none of them was beautiful because they did not understand the principle of the ancient clothes” (113). The first *guzhuangxinxi* Mei Lanfang performed was *Chang’e benyue (Chang’e Rushes to the Moon),* in which the new design of costume was applied (Figure 6). “Since then, plays Mei Lanfang performed gradually distanced from traditional *jingju* and he formed his own performance style” (Wang 81). Mei’s performance style was appreciated by huge amount of audiences and followed by both male and female dan performers. The new ideal young female images was created by a man on a male body and it was extended and reshaped with *qiao* and wigs. Then it became a model of *jingju* female character.

Figure 9 Mei Lanfang as Chang’e in *Chang’e benyue* (*Chang’e Rushes to the Moon*)

Mei Lanfang put his first *shizhuangxinxi* (new plays with fashion costumes), *Niehai Bolan*, on stage in 1914. The next year, 1915, he performed his first *guzhuangxinxi* (new plays with ancient costumes), *Chang'e Benyue.* The idea of putting up-to-date clothes on *jingju* stage was born under the effect of republican thoughts trending at the time. Mei Lanfang tended to merge more realistic elements into *jingju,* but he gave it up in the end. His shows with new-fashion clothes were be able to sold tickets because of his celebrity effect, and he had no female performers at the same level to compete with.

Male dan performers made changes to costumes, wigs, and make-up on the basis of their own body conditions so that they could serve themselves better on stage. When Mei Lanfang reformed to the costumes, female performers were allowed to return to the stage. But it was still male dan performers who controlled the market and the voice, were made famous and became celebrities. The phenomenon explained why the remarkable changes in costumes, make-up and hair were made by male performers rather than female performers. The male dan were still favoured by the audience. Once male performers reached success, they were eager to seek artistic pursuits. Male dan performers did not make changes to the performance so that it could be more suitable for women, but rather to perform a more naturalistic or contemporary femininity. They changed the costumes, wigs, make-up, and props could assist them to better shape their body and disguise them as idealized females on stage. The refinement of the costumes also reflected the influence of social changes. But the general aesthetic of female costumes still followed the standard of ancient beauty. When female performers returned to the stage, they had to put on the same wigs, make-up, and costumes as male cross-dressing performers to perform women characters. As Butler suggests, "gender is neither essential nor biologically determined, but rather it is created by its own performance and hence it is performative" (522). The external elements contained the performativity of gender, which were designed and refined to shape men's bodies and create ideal classic Chinese beauty images. When put on women's bodies, they became

exaggerated decorations.

Considering that *jingju* is a highly conventionalized performance genre, the characters it conceived were generalized and stylized (*Zhongguo Jingju Shi (History of Chinese Jingju)* 107). The categories are utilized to classify the characters. In this case, the characters in jingju are largely idealized instead of realized. But as a popular and accessible art form that is easy for people to understand, *jingju* still rely on the real life. As Xun Huisheng indicated, the performance on stage is precisely the transformation of real life into artistic reality (Xun 42). When male dan creating female characters in *jingju*, they portrayed the idealized, typical female images. In the term of character portraying, the return of female performers did not make much difference in this performance genre.

After 1949, the male dan popularity gradually waned under the influence of political situation as well as the new social ideology in China. Female performers did make some changes on costumes, wigs, and make-ups. But as *jingju* has matured during that time, their changes did not make revolutionary effects. Since *jingju* is an exceptionally conventionalized performance genre, the new changes hardly can be recognized by audience as well as the business. Till now, creators are still working on new *jingju* contents. But most of the new works do not have the quality nor the popularity to challenge the “authority”.

Chapter 3 Case Study: *Guifei Zuijiu* between Mei Lanfang and Li Yuru

Female performers were excluded from *jingju* stages until the late Tongzhi (1861-1875), when *chou* (lit: ugly, refer to the clowns in *jingju*) performer Li Maoer established an all-female theatre troupe in Shanghai. This all-female troupe became "the pioneers of women entering Shanghai *jingju* stage" (Wang 31). After that, the Xinhai Revolution broke out, and the Republic of China was founded; the new government allowed women to return to the stage in Beijing (Wang 36). Since *jingju* business was dominated by males for a long time, female performers did not receive much welcome from audiences when they came back to the stage. An-ch'i Wang commented that "*kundan* (坤旦, refers to female dan performers) completely followed male dan performance style… In the *jingju* performance system created by men, there was no female-consciousness in the appearance of *kundan*" (64). The female actors portrayed their characters in compliance with the former male performers. This phenomenon intensified with the appearance of the Four Great Dan ("sidamingdan", refers to the four great male dan actors), who created four main styles of *dan* performance. Since the audience welcomed their performances, later performers rarely departed from these frameworks. This chapter will investigate the performance style of dan and compare the differences and similarities with male dan's style with a case study of *Guifei Zuijiu* (*The Drunken Concubine*) performed by male dan master Mei Lanfang (1894-1961) and female dan performer Li Yuru (1924-2008). Through comparing the different interpretations of the same role, this chapter will analyse the influence male actors had on female performers.

Introduction of *Guifei Zuijiu* (*The Drunken Concubine*)

The main character in *Guifei Zuijiu* was Yang Yuhuan (719-756), a favoured

concubine of Tangxuanzong (685-762) (the ninth emperor in the Tang dynasty). In history, she was famous for her beauty as she was one of the Four Great Beauties ("sidameinv"). Folklore used the expression that her beauty made the flower shy to describe her looks. At the story's beginning, Tangxuanzong asked Yang Yuhuan to set up a banquet at the Flower Pavilion and wait for him, instead, he decided to visit the residence of other concubines. Yang Yuhuan was so ashamed and angry at the news that she ordered two eunuchs, Gao Lishi and Pei Lishi, to serve wine to drown her sorrows. One highlight of the performance was Yang Yuhuan's drunkenness and drunken interactions with Gao Lishi.

There were two versions of the origin of *jingju Guifei Zuijiu*. Wang Zhizhang indicated that it was introduced into Beijing by *hanju* (one genre of the local theatre originated in Hubei) performer (551). Other critics believed that it originated from *kunqu* (one genre of the local theatre originated in Jiangsu). In the early *jingju*, *Guifei Zuijiu* was played with *qiao* by Xiao Cuihua. The character Yang Yuhuan was once categorised as *daomadan* (lit: knife and horse dan). According to Mei Lanfang, "this play was a complicated song and dance piece. Several specific movements, including *woyu* (lit: lying fish), required performers to be trained with martial arts to perform well. Thus, this character was usually played by *daomadan* performers" (38). He learned how to perform *Guifei Zuijiu* from male dan Lu Sanbao. Mei Lanfang spent about ten years continuously improving the performance of Yang Yuhuan. *Guifei Zuijiu* also became one of his representative works. Li Yuru first learnt *Guifei Zuijin* in China Theatre School by male dan Guo Xiangji (191). Later, she studied under Mei Lanfang for his performance style of Yang Yuhuan. She suggested that "Guo Xiangji's performance style contained more daomadan's elements. I did not see Lu Sanbao's (the teacher of Mei Lanfang) performance. Judging from Mei Lanfang's movement and performance, it leaned towards *huashan* (lit: flower clothes; a category invented by Wang Yaoqing; it merged characteristics from *qingyi*, *huadan*, and *daomadan*, enriching the diversity of performances) category. Of course, it was closely related to Mei Lanfang's performance style and personalities" (192).

In the autobiography of Li Yuru, she explained her performance style and understanding of *Guifei Zuijiu*. She wrote, "although generally, I followed the way Mei Lanfang performed *Guifei Zuijiu* in 1953. I also reserved some movements and techniques from other former performers that I preferred" (192). The reason was that "I was younger then and lacked the elegance and experience of Mei Lanfang. If I completely followed Mei Lanfang's performance style, I would not reach the same effect as Mei Lanfang" (192). She first learnt the early version of Yang Yuhuan from male dan performers, which had features of huadan categories and heavily focused on technique movements. Instead of inventing new performance style, she combined the technique movements as well as Mei Lanfang's refined performance style together, which came into being before 1949. Male dan performers who had a dominant role in the theatre business influenced how others performed. The detailed crafted character became an icon in the industry, which was both difficult to imitate and almost impossible to surpass. However, she mainly deconstructed this character from the perspective of performance technique and did not mention the female performativity in portraying the character.

Both Mei Lanfang and Li Yuru left video footage of their performance of *Guifei Zuijiu*. In this chapter, the referred-to video material of Mei Lanfang's performance was the film version shot by Beijing Film Studio in 1955 when he was 61. References to the work of Li Yuru concern her performance on the Shanghai Gong Stage in 1987, and her age was 63 years old then.

Yang Yuhuan's state in *Guifei Zuijiu* (*The Drunken Concubine*) could be divided into two parts; before and after drunkenness. In the character's appearance, she is excited about the upcoming banquet with the emperor and showed off her pleasure on the way to the appointed location. She cannot help but indulge in her beauty. However, when she reaches the pavilion, she is told that the emperor had gone for other concubine. She is furious and humiliated by the news, which leads to the drunken scene. In the early version of the drunk scene, Yang Guifei has no outlet for her lust and flirted with eunuchs. She asks the eunuch to sleep with her with some movement implications on

stage. Mei Lanfang modified the characterisation of Yang Guifei and removed the erotic scene. The focus of the drunken scene was changed into the beautified intoxicated movements and the expression of Yang Yuhuan resentment and upset emotions. Later performers mostly followed Mei Lanfang's revision and discarded the erotic implications.

First stage: Appearance

In Mei Lanfang's version of *Guifei Zuijiu*, the maids stood in two lines on stage and formed a road to welcome Yang Yuhuan's appearance. It created the atmosphere of the entrance of the favoured concubine. Then Mei Lanfang came into the stage with a folding fan, followed by two maids with large fans in their hands. He first flung his *shuixiu* (lit: water sleeve, an extra white sleeve attached to cloth) and slowly opened his folding fan. Then he started to sing the first song, "海岛冰轮初转腾" (*The Moon just Rose from an Island*) (*Xikao*). This song describes the Moon rising scene. It uses the allusion of *chang'e* (嫦娥, the fairy in Moon Palace) and *yutu* (玉兔, lit: jade rabbit, an animal that lives on the Moon) in Chinese classical mythology (*Xikao*). Yang Yuhuan compares the rising of the Moon to Chang'e leaving the Moon Palace and further describes herself as Chang'e, which implicates her delight on the way to meet the emperor and her self-appreciation of her beauty. Mei Lanfang's movements mainly involved sleeves and folding fan when singing this song. The general tone was soft and slow, with no prominent or strong actions. When singing the line "I am like Chang'e leaving the Moon Palace" (奴似嫦娥离月宫) (*Xikao*), he walked with his body while swaying gently, which expressed the character's satisfaction with her appearance and the proudness of comparing herself as a character in fairy tales. Then he closed his fan and tidied up his accessories and hair to sit on a stone stool to finish his appearance. Mei Lanfang's facial expression echoed the implicit performance style during his appearance. He did not reveal his teeth when smiling and kept a minimum change of mouth shape to remain smiling during singing. The movement and facial expression in

the appearance song created an elegant, beautiful, dignified, and self-appreciative royal concubine image. The feeling of excitement and pride for attending the appointment with the emperor was revealed in this song.

In Li Yuru's version of the performance, she also made the appearance with a folding fan in her hands. The difference was that she flung her *shuixiu* (lit: water sleeve) wider, and her arms were at a higher angle than Mei Lanfang's performance, whose arms were towards the ground. Li Yuru came into the stage with a broader smile, which showed her teeth to the audience. She maintained the teeth-revealing smile and mouth shape while singing. When she singing the line "the ice wheel leaves the island" (冰轮离海岛), she held the fan vertically, shaking the fan and her sleeves from side to side, and drawing her arms in clockwise circles while slowly squatting down with one leg in front and the other leg behind (*Xikao*). This set of technical movements were not seen in Mei Lanfang's performance. As for the line "I am like Chang'e leaving the Moon Palace", Li Yuru performed with fan movement and several freezing moments to attract the audience's attention. She wore a big smile on her face, which expressed her awareness and confidence about her beauty. Generally, her range of movement on the stage was more extensive than Mei Lanfang's and she slowly walked in a circle more times than Mei Lanfang during the first song.

After Yang Yuhuan made her appearance, she sat on the stone stool and had a few lines to introduce her identity as a favoured concubine, and she was going to an appointment with the emperor. Then she set off for the appointment place, Flower Pavilion. On the way to the pavilion, she was attracted by the golden carp and the wild goose, which built a joyful atmosphere. The movement further emphasised Yang Yuhuan's beauty since they were also impressed by her. The performance style on the way to the pavilion was consistent with the performance at the entrance. Although Mei Lanfang and Li Yuru had similar arrangements in this section, their delivery was different. Even though they acted in the same movement, Mei Lanfang's interpretation was more subtle and gentle, while Li Yuru's expression was stronger and more extensive but not overacted.

Compared with Mei Lanfang, Li Yuru's performance style was more explicit. Overall, the Yang Yuhuan she portrayed was still decent and subtle, but she expressed her feelings more directly through a wider smile and movements. Mei Lanfang integrated his personal pursuits in portraying the character Yang Yuhuan. In the first section of his performance, he created an ideal woman image – good-looking, favoured by the emperor, and obeyed the royal requirements for female behaviour. He only veiled delivered some of the character's emotions. As for Li Yuru's performance, she arranged the character to smile wider and, to some extent, reveal her feeling of enjoyment, self-esteem, and self-appreciation, which was absorbed from Xiao Cuihua's performance style. This way of deconstructing the character did make sense since there was no accurate record of the personality of Yang Yuhuan in history.

There are two possible reasons for this performance difference. According to An-ch'i Wang's analysis, Mei Lanfang intended to build a dignified and elegant personal image. With continuous effort, he managed to cast his ideal personality on the female characters he played (13). An-ch'i Wang suggested that "it was difficult to distinguish whether this portrayal of Yang Yuhuan was Mei Lanfang's interpretation of the character or his personality he intended to present to the audience" (14). This was his pursuit of creating characters in cross-dressing performances.

Similarly, Li Yuru's experience in *huadan* performance might have affected her interpretation. As she explained in her biography, she would not present the character attractively if she had followed Mei Lanfang's style step by step. In order to attract the audience and win applause, she decided to "spend more effort on technical movements depending on individual conditions and reserve other performers' style" (192). The technical movements she applied were taken from earlier male dan performance. Instead developing characteristics on her own, she again relied on existing male performance style, which reflected the deep influence of male dan on female performers.

Second stage: Drinking

The following section of the performance was that Yang Yuhuan is informed the

emperor went to another concubine's place instead. Having taken so much pride in her appearance, she is left aside by the emperor, which makes her angry and embarrassed in front of all the servants. Yang Yuhuan then turns to alcohol to ease her emotions. In Mei Lanfang's version, he did not expose much emotion even in this circumstance. Hearing this upsetting news, Mei Lanfang rolled his eyes around and pouted to let the eunuchs leave. On second thought, he refused to accept the information and called out to the two eunuchs to figure out why. There were no obvious angry expressions on his face. The only change was that his smile disappeared. Without hearing the answer, Mei Lanfang slightly signed and surrendered questioning, flung his sleeve down, turned back to the audience, and then said, "let him be" (*Xikao*). He seemed to make up his mind when he turned back and asked the eunuchs to set up the table and prepare wine for herself. He had an inward angry expression on his face, which turned into a expressionless look as he closed his fan and tidied up his accessories and hair as if he made up his mind to put what was bothering him aside. Then he wore the proper smile again and turned back to the table. Before he turned back, he flicked the corner of the table gently with his sleeve and slightly held it with his hand. Then he sat down at the table and received wines from his servants. In this section, Mei Lanfang presented his anger primarily by no smiling. There was no outburst; neither were obvious furious expressions. There were moments when he was eager to continue inquiring or express his anger. But he soon remembered his identity as a favoured concubine, collected his thoughts and feelings, and behaved well. Although he was annoyed and frustrated by the emperor's broken appointment, he chose not to display much emotion swings outwardly in front of other servants. The Yang Yuhuan character he portrayed was deeply oppressed by the royal restrictions and was acquainted with incorporating these requirements into her daily conduct.

Li Yuru's version created a more vibrant Yang Yuhuan, who expressed a stronger emotion in this section. In her version, she heard the news that the emperor had broken the appointment when she returned to the audience. She slowly turned back and furiously stared at the eunuch who delivered the message. Her eyesight swept from the

eunuch's bottom to the top, expressing her anger. This dramatic movement design enlarged Yang Yuhuan's emotion of being irritated by the news and takes out some of her anger on the messenger. When she questions the eunuch, her eyes are furiously wide, and she opens the fan to hold it beside her face as if she intends to hide this conversation from other servants. After all, she just introduces herself as the concubine who received all the attention and affection from the emperor. The emperor's broken appointment makes her feel embarrassed in front of all the servants. When Li Yuru finished the sentence "why did the emperor go for another place" (*Xikao*), one of her hands held the fan, the other hand squeezed into the shape of the orchid and pointed in the direction of her sight. Then her eyes lost focus, aimlessly looked into the air, as if she suddenly felt a sense of powerlessness and emptiness. Soon she returned to her mind and vented her resentment, saying, "let him be" (*Xikao*). It seemed that she imaged the emperor's face in front of her and delivered her fury directly to him. After ordering eunuchs to prepare wine for her, she kept her eyebrow deeply frowned, indicating she felt resentment as well as self-pity.

As the servants left, Li Yuru took a small pace on the stage. Suddenly she was startled by some noise and nervously opened her fan in front of her face and looked around, hoping it was the appearance of the emperor. Then she realised nobody was in there; she closed the fan and flung the sleeves as if she were trying to put these concerns aside. Li Yuru's next movement was to tidy her accessories and hair, which also contained the meaning of collecting her emotions and calming herself down. After this, she looked much happier and slowly walked toward the table in a swaying and delightful way. Li Yuru also saved the movement that flicked over table, but her action was wider. Finally, she reached the table and drank the wine provided by the servants. The Yang Yuhuan character created by Li Yuru in this section had more diverse changes in emotion. She resented the emperor's broken appointment and expressed her anger through facial expression. The emotion of embarrassment could also be seen in Yang Yuhuan, but soon her strong self-appreciation assisted her in recovering her feelings. Li Yuru's version of Yang Yuhuan had a more straightforward personality

compared with Mei Lanfang's interpretation. Her anger came fast and eased quickly, which was supported by her confidence in her looks and the emperor's affection for her.

The next plot was Yang Yuhuan's drinking. She first drank three cups of wine served by servants. In this part, some gestures and movements contained erotic suggestions, which were revised or deleted by Mei Lanfang. The second cup of wine was named *longfengjiu* (lit: dragon-and-phoenix wine), which meant "the emperor and the concubine drink together" (*Xikao*). In Li Yuru's version, this meaning was reserved. She was excited to hear the implication of this wine and could not wait for the maid to finish her sentence. When she held the cup in her hand, a complicated expression appeared on her face, which mixed with a sense of sorrow. It seemed that she reminded of the disappointing behaviour of the emperor. But she decided to drink the wine with a happy face as if it could appeal to the emperor's attention. In Mei Lanfang's version, he changed the meaning of *longfengjiu* into "a wine that was made in the imperial harem" and cut off the implication with the emperor, which was intended to reduce sexual content (*Xikao*). The third cup of wine was served by Gao Lishi, one of the eunuchs. Seeing his coming, Li Yuru leaned her upper body over the table and lifted it towards the audience's side so that people could see her teasing movement. Mei Lanfang's version of this movement was softer and lighter. He did not fully lean on the table, and neither did he lift the table. The flirting intention in the original action was largely decreased. In the first round of drinking, Mei Lanfang tried to maintain decent behaviour and only showed slightly drunkenness. His version of Yang Yuhuan was more depressed and withheld his emotions. Li Yuru was more visibly drunk in her interpretation, she also expressed the balminess of the emperor, but after drinking a cup of wine, she turned to flirt with the eunuch.

After drinking three cups of wine, Yang Yuhuan went off stage to change clothes. In this part, she came back to stage, and waited for another round of wine by herself on the stage. This part contained the technical movement *woyu* (lit: lying fish), which was one of the performance highlights of *Guifei Zuijiu*. In Mei Lanfang's version, he expressed the character's drunkenness by swaying his body while walking. He

embellished the drunken state to make it consistent with the refined and soft style of the previous performances. Entering the stage, Mei Lanfang saw the empty table and chair, which reminded him of the broken appointment with the emperor. A sense of anger appeared on his face. But he soon was attracted by the flower (there was no actual flower on stage, he just made the gesture to smell the flower to convey to the audience) and came forward to smell the flowers, which was *woyu* movement. In the earlier version, there were only conventionalised movements without implied meaning in the performance. Mei Lanfang deconstructed the plot and added hand and eyesight points to the technique movements, which increased the layer of his performance. He also adjusted the *woyu* movement according to his performance style. Mei Lanfang crossed his leg and slowly squatted down with his eyes fixed on the “imaginary” flower. When he reached the lowest point, he slightly looked backwards to turn his upper body and then switched his attention to the flower. He used one hand to pull the flower closer and smelled it. His facial expression indicated that he immersed himself in admiring the flower. Then Mei Lanfang slowly stood up and noticed the flower on the other side. Then he did another *woyu* movement, only facing another direction. The difference between the first and second *woyu* movements was in Mei Lanfang’s hands. The first time, he pulled the flower with his hands hid in the sleeves, while the second time, he revealed his hands and used both hands to pick the flowers and smell them. After he stood up, he soon lost interest in the flower and threw it to the ground. Finally, Mei Lanfang returned to the table and sat down. Gao Lishi came in to serve the second round of wine.

Li Yuru’s version reserved more of the early performance style. She walked backwards onto the stage with no slightly drunken swing. When she faced the audience, her usual large smile returned. Then she noticed the empty table and chair, which made her smile disappear. Li Yuru’s *woyu* movement followed the early requirement. She lifted one leg and slowly moved it backwards as a half-circle, which was intended to show off the *qiao* in the earlier performance. Then she crossed her legs and squatted down. When she reached the bottom, she slowly leaned her upper body toward the

imaginary flower with an earnest, longing expression. In the end, her body lay on its side on the ground, and she held her head accessories with one hand, which accomplished the movement of *woyu*. The early version of this movement required the upper body to be placed as close to the ground as possible, making the performer look like a lying fish. This movement required strength and flexibility from the leg and waist, which was why this character was played by *daomadan* (lit: knife and horse dan) performers in the early days. In Li Yuru's version, she reserved three *woyu* movements. The reason was explained in her biography. She aimed to highlight her performance with technique movements. The three *woyu* was the characteristic of the early performance. Mei Lanfang cut one of them and added the meanings to the technical movement to avoid the repetition (Li 199). Li Yuru absorbed the features from both versions of performance, kept three *woyu* and reorganised the meaning of each of them. She combined the characteristics from different male dan performance styles into her understandings. In her second *woyu*, she pulled the flower toward her and smelled it. Suddenly a sorrowful feeling occurred to her. She let the flower go and stood up with her eyebrow frowned. Li Yuru explained that here Yang Yuhuan associated the flower with herself. They were both beautiful and fragile, but there was no one to appreciate them (201). She felt so pathetic about herself as well as the flower and returned to the table. When she turned back, she was attracted by the imaginary flower in the downstage centre, where she did the third *woyu*. The meaning of this *woyu* was to pick the flower. And she reserved the technique in the early version of her performance. Instead of innovating new performance style, Li Yuru took advantage of the early male dan performance style as well as Mei Lanfang's refinement version. Her interpretation bought a sense of novelty to audience, but there was no original content from herself.

Third stage: Second round of drinking

When Yang Yuhuan was slightly drunk, the eunuchs served a second round of wine, which made her even more intoxicated. The drunken performance in this section was the highlight of the whole show. The plot was that Yang Yuhuan had the second round

of wine and her intoxication became more apparent. In order to persuade Yang Yuhuan to return to her place, the eunuchs lied that the emperor was coming. When she was told it was a lie, she felt sad and angry but she was too drunk to let out the feelings. There was an interaction between Yang Yuhuan and the two eunuchs separately. The performance length of Mei Lanfang's version was shorter since he made several deletions in this section. During late Qing and Republic China, Chinese society was affected by western democratic and scientific thoughts. The intellectuals advocated to delete the sexual contents in *jingju,* which landed in Mei Lanfang's changes (Wang 21). In his performance, he drank two cups of wine in this section. At first, he drank directly from the tray carried by Pei Lishi (one of the eunuchs). But he was burnt by the hot drink and displayed a shy, complaining look. Then Mei Lanfang crossed his hands at the waist, spun backwards with the cup in his mouth, and his waist bent backwards, which was another technique highlighted in this performance. It indicated that Yang Yuhuan had already drunk and started to make some strange moves. After that, Gao Lishi (another eunuch) entered to serve the second wine. Mei Lanfang firstly gave a look at the wine and lightly shook his hand. Gao Lishi touched the cup and realised it was too hot. So, he fanned the cup with his hand to cool it down. Then Mei Lanfang drank it with the same gesture as he drank the first cup. When he slowly squatted down, his eyesight was fixed on the eunuch, which contained a sense of flirting. After Yang Yuhuan finished drinking, the two eunuchs discussed fooling Yang Yuhuan with the fake news that the emperor was coming so that she would return to her place.

The performing point in this section was the drinking movement with the performer's waist bent. Mei Lanfang managed to add a sense of naturalness to his performance. He used slightly swaying steps and slowly turning movements to deliver the character's drunkenness. Mei Lanfang kept a proper smile during this section, indicating that he maintained his dignity even under intoxication.

In Li Yuru's version, she reserved the movement of drinking three cups of wine. She walked in a swaying choppy step toward the Pei Lishi to drink the wine. Compared with Mei Lanfang's drunken steps, her steps were more conventionalised and technical

in the sense of dan performance. When she drank from the cup, she raised her head three times with the cup in her mouth and then slowly turned her body and bent her waist backwards with a rounder curve. Her movement in drinking the first cup of wine was focused more on the technique instead of the slightly drunken clumsiness Mei Lanfang contained. Li Yuru was burnt by the second wine in her performance. Instead of having eye contact with Gao Lishi (the second eunuch to serve the wine), she looked at the cup when squatting down, which erased the flirting sense in Mei Lanfang's version. Li Yuru drank the second cup of wine in the same movement as the first one. She added an extra gesture of finding the tray when she put back the cup as if she could not see its position clearly because of the drunkenness. She squatted down and finally put the cup on the floor, where Gao Lishi caught the cup with the tray. There was the third cup of wine in Li Yuru's performance, which handmaids served. She first walked towards the wine, looked at it and shook her hands. Suddenly a sense of hesitation and melancholy appeared on her face. Then she looked at the two handmaids and smiled, put both hands on the tray, drank the wine, and bent her waist. The arrangement logic of *woyu* and waist-bending in her performance was the same – she performed the first movement on downstage left; the second on downstage right; and the last one in the downstage centre, so that the audience could admire her movement from different perspectives. Li Yuru wrote that once "Mr Mei advised me to cut off the third *woyu* to avoid repetition" (199). After struggle and consideration, Li Yuru decided to reserve the traditional arrangement of three *woyu* and three waist-bending movement in *Guifei Zuijiu*. She suggested, "I was a firm believer in maintaining and promoting the traditional arts, and it seemed to me that these movements were an inseparable part of *Guifei Zuijiu*" (200). Li Yuru returned to a more traditional performance rooted in male dan, which signified the influence of male-created dan performance styles.

Fourth stage: quarrel with two eunuchs

After two eunuchs lied to Yang Yuhuan with the fake news of the emperor's coming, Yang Yuhuan had a small quarrel with the two eunuchs respectively. The early version

of this part contained some erotic flirting between Yang Yuhuan and Gao Lishi, which Mei Lanfang deleted. In this section, Yang Yuhuan is fully drunk and upset by the fake news. She asks the eunuch to come to her and required them to invite the emperor over here. Yang Yuhuan first quarrels with Pei Lishi. She says if the eunuch could follow her wish, she would offer him a promotion. In Mei Lanfang's version, he expressed his requirement with the hand gesture, indicating he wanted another drink. Pei Lishi replies that Yang Yuhuan has already had enough wine, and he is afraid that something terrible would happen if he offered another drink. This reply made Mei Lanfang angry, he used the sleeve to softly slap Pei Lishi's face three times, one with the right sleeve, the other with the left sleeve, and the last with the right sleeve on the middle front. He had a shyly grumbling expression on his face. When he was sitting, his eyes were almost closed, indicating he was intoxicated. Then Pei Lishi went off, and Gao Lishi entered. Mei Lanfang required him to invite the emperor to come over. When he delivered the message with gestures, he smiled shyly and even used his sleeve to cover his face in the end. He was hopeful and optimistic. But Gao Lishi said the other concubine was so jealous that he was afraid to do that, which enraged Mei Lanfang who slapped the eunuch with his hands. Then he accused Gao Lishi of not satisfying his request. Gao Lishi defended that he would be beheaded if he went there. Mei Lanfang appeared more annoyed, went to hold Gao Lishi's head in his arms and only took off his hat. His eyes were dazed, and he smiled when he played with Gao Lishi for not returning his hat. Mei Lanfang even put Gao Lishi's hat on top of his own hat and walked with them. After having fun, he tossed the hat to Gao Lishi and sobered up a little, feeling sorry about herself.

In Mei Lanfang's performance, he cut off the erotic movement and teasing suggestions between Yang Yuhuan and Gao Lishi's interaction and shortened the length of it. Even though he was drunk, he still behaved with dignity. The drunkenness and the broken appointment stirred Yang Yuhuan's lovesickness for the emperor, making the character appear shy in front of the eunuchs. The emphasis of the interpretation of Mei Lanfang's version was that the concubine was pathetic for being a woman dependent

on the emperor in the palace.

In Li Yuru's version, she reacted more quickly hearing Pei Lishi refused to offer her another wine. She immediately crossed her hands on her waist to express her anger. Then she used the sleeve to slap Pei Lishi's face with a stronger strength than Mei Lanfang. Li Yuru also performed her sense of drunkenness through swaying steps. When she sat on the chair and asked the eunuchs questions, her eyes were almost closed, and she wore the broad smile which exposed her teeth. The drunkenness softened and eased her mood. Before Gao Lishi entered the stage, he said to Pei Lishi that Yang Yuifei liked his face, which set the mood for flirting movements. After Li Yuru finished the first sentence with Gao Lishi, she left her seat, spun around, leaned her arms on the back of the chair, and shyly smiled at him, suggesting her happiness at his coming.

Li Yuru also utilised hand gestures to explain her request to let Gao Lishi invite the emperor. But she had her own design of the movement and added a pulling movement indicating to bring the emperor over here. She delivered the request in a more direct way compared to Mei Lanfang. When Gao Lishi understood her meaning, she gladly made a clapping gesture. However, the eunuch refused her order with some excuses, which made her angry. She slapped Gao Lishi also with the sleeves. She flung her sleeve back first, then hit on his face, and then the other sleeve. On the third time, Li Yuru slapped him with both sleeves, which suggested her different treatments between Pei Lishi and Gao Lishi. Before she took off Gao Lishi's hat, she first played with him by pouncing on him. Gao Lishi dodged from side to side. Then Li Yuru had a faint hug toward Gao Lishi's head, and she successfully held his head on the second time. She held it for a while and even walked a few steps before taking off his hat. In this version, Gao Lishi giggled and played with Yang Yuhuan. As Li Yuru took off Gao's hat from her head, she had a movement as if she was going to vomit in his hat, which scared Gao Lishi. Then Li Yuru smiled and shook her hand. In her version, she referred to Guo Jixiang's performance in this section, and added more interactions between Gao Lishi and Yang Yuhuan, which made the performance more playful, which characteristics was learned from early male *huadan* performance. It was one features of male to perform

young femininity on *jingju* stage.

Li Yuru explained her understanding of this section. She considered that "the more Yang Yuhuan played with Gao Lishi when she drunk, the more she would feel desolated and terrified as she sobered up" (208). The Yang Yuhuan, in her version, seemed more affected by the alcohol emotionally. As usual, the character she portrayed had more significant emotional ups and downs, which was one feature of *huadan* characters. The interactions between Yang Yuhuan and the eunuch Gao Lishi did not strengthen the erotic sense in the performance. It suggested the boredom feeling of Yang Yuhuan was stimulated by the alcohol and the absence of the emperor. With the effect of alcohol, she enjoyed the company of Gao Lishi and had fun with him, which was not in accordance with the royal regulations. When she sobered up and realised what she had done, she was surrounded by a huge sense of despair, which emphasised the pathetic of this character.

To conclude, Mei Lanfang deconstructed the character with his personal pursuit and philosophy. He intended to create a stage image that was decent, dignified, and out of reach. With this concern, he deleted the erotic sense in the performance and reimaged a shyly, well-behaved Yang Guifei. The character he portrayed strictly followed the royal rules, even under drunken conditions. Being restricted by the feudal rites made her control her emotions outflow in front of people. As a concubine of the emperor, Yang Yuhuan had one and only goal in her life, which was to please the emperor. Mei Lanfang enlarged the pathos of the concubine with soft movements and a shy smile.

The character Li Yuru portrayed had a different personality. She first learnt the early version of *Guifei Zuijiu* (The Drunken Concubine), which heavily focused on the technique movements. Then Mei Lanfang reformed the performance and created high aesthetic and theatrical values, making *Guifei Zuijiu* one of his representative works. As a female performer, she had many concerns when generating her own version. Li Yuru understood that it would be inappropriate if she completely imitated Mei Lanfang's performance since his personal style was incomparable. Thus, she decided to combine the two performance versions she learned and create her own performance

style that both had meanings and visual effects. She utilised her *huadan* experience in interpreting Yang Yuhuan and portrayed a concubine who dared to expose some emotions since the emperor preferred her. The character's emotional changes from hearing that the emperor cancelled the appointment to her drunkenness were clearly expressed through facial expressions and body movements. This version of concubine was also restrained by the feudal rules. But she showed her loneliness and playful personality after being drunk, which added extra layers to the portrayal of her characteristics.

Conclusion

Due to the cultural policy published by the Chinese feudal government, female performers were prevented from *jingju* stage for a long time. Then men performed female roles and developed a detailed performance of femininity. They categorized female characters and generalized their images in performance rather than created realistic portrayals of individual women. Male dan performers played an important part in the development of *jingju* and profoundly affected how female roles were established. In order to disguise as female on stage, male dan performers put on exterior materials, including costumes, wigs, make-up and other props. They invented these techniques to portray the female characters under the aesthetic system appreciated by men. Butler argues that "discrete genders are part of what 'humanizes' individuals within contemporary culture; indeed, those who fail to do their gender right are regularly punished" (522). In *jingju*, male dan performers portrayed female characters following the binary gender system. The performance of femininity became codified in established costume, wigs and cosmetics traditions, so that the introduction of women to *jingju* did not materially change the performance aesthetics. With these external elements, male dan performers disciplined the bodies to perform femininity on stage. The phenomenon of women performers following cross-dressing performance techniques is the research object of this thesis. Since male actors established dan performance styles and well developed them, the idealized female images were accepted by the audience. Additionally, *jingju* highly valued the importance of inheritance and tradition, which forced female to learn from male dan masters and follow their performance styles.

In the *jingju* performance system, characters were categorized, and each category contained stereotypical portrayals. Women characters were categorized by age, marriage status, family background, and occupation. Chapter 1 mainly focused on the *huadan* and *wudan* category, which referred to unmarried young ladies or flirtatious female characters and women warriors in *jingju.* When portraying these types of

character, male dan performers introduced one significant prop: *qiao*. It was utilized by male cross-dressing performers to imitate women's bound feet in Chinese feudal society. In performance, it was mainly used for two purposes; one was to heighten the erotic elements of the performance, and the other was to present acrobatic movements. The former purpose suggested the men's portrayal of femininity on stage. In *huadan* performance, *qiao* imitated the eroticized qualities of bound feet and delivered sexual contents to audience. Male dan performers constructed the unmarried young ladies and the flirtatious female characters with *qiao*, suggesting their understanding and expectation of femininity performance. The latter one enriched the visual effect of performance and produced unreachable female images. In reality, the bound feet restricted women from moving freely. However, *qiao* enabled performers to walk fast and quick, which also affected the portrayal of female images.

Besides, *qiao* added extra height to performers, which lengthened the silhouette in line. But it created a pair of disproportioned legs on female bodies. The small feet it exposed also expanded the difference between female and male characters' bodies. In this perspective, *qiao* simply served as a representation of the stage gender identity of the actor. The staging of women was represented by a pair of *qiao*, which was the objectified women image.

Qiao was invented to imitate the bound feet of women, whose social context could not be overlooked. Male performers' understanding and analysis of female roles could be seen through the two main functions of *qiao*. After *qiao* was introduced into *jingju*, it was welcomed by audiences and became a required technique for dan performers to handle. When females returned to the stage, they had to follow the performance style developed by male performers and learn to perform with *qiao*. The influence of male discourse in portraying female characters affected the form of performance style by women actors.

The use of *qiao* to shape stage femininity was discussed in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 turned to the other external elements, including make-up, wigs, and costumes that male performers utilized to disguise as women. Changing the shape of the feet was not

enough to convince the audience that they played female roles. Besides, there were other female character categories in *jingju* did not wear *qiao* on stage. In early *jingju*, the wig and make-up on male cross-dressing performers were underdeveloped. They directly learned women's hairstyle and make-up in reality and applied them to men's heads. Then male dan performer Mei Lanfang made improvements to them so they could better transform polish men's faces and heads. He pursued the classic beauty in ancient Chinese drawings. Since stories from the past featured heavily in *jingju*, the performance styles as well as portrayal of characters largely referred to the ancient aesthetics of beauty. The tendency of referring to tradition was another nature of jingju, which caused difficulty of female performers to make innovations. Men's faces were further reshaped and polished with the strengthened wig and make-up. The refined hair and make-up styles were designed on the basis of men's faces. But these designs were welcomed by the audience and followed by other performers, making them became the discipline that female performers had to obey. Costume, wig, and make-up were all external decorations to indicate performers' identities on stage. Because male dan was born as *jingju* came into being, the male cross-dressing performance became mainstream on *jingju* stage. As dan performance developed, some famous male dan performers became celebrities in society. When female performers eventually return to the stage, they cannot compete with male dan performers in popularity. They did not have a strong and steady audience group, which was one of the reasons female performers did not further refine the performance style. Some people indicated that male cross-dressing performers acted better than female performers because they understood women well. The truth was that they had a decent knowledge of the male-dominated aesthetics in *jingju* performance.

Chapter 3 contained a case study of Mei Lanfang and Li Yuru's different portray of the same character Yang Yuhuan in *Guifei Zuijiu* (*The Drunken Concubine*). Mei Lanfang was born during the flourishing period of *jingju*. With his artistic ambitions, he made reformation the existing dan performance style and formed his own way of shaping the characters. Li Yuru entered the business when Mei Lanfang had made

success in performance. She attended the Chinese Theatre School and obtained the dan performance technique from various masters. Mei Lanfang immersed his artistic pursuit and philosophy of life into his performance style. The Yang Yuhuan character he developed was elegant, decent, subtle, and restrained. There were no obvious emotional ups and downs in his character. Mei Lanfang also deleted the erotic scenes in the original script. He built an de-eroticised female image through his performance. When Li Yuru stepped into the theatre industry, Mei Lanfang's performance style was already well-known. She combined the early performance style of Yang Yuhuan and Mei Lanfang's reformed version to create her way of making the character. The earlier version of Yang Yuhuan contained more acrobatic body movements. Also, the drunken flirtation section was performed erotically. In order to attract the audience, Li Yuru made a combination of acrobatic movements and Mei Lanfang's subtle reestablishment of the character. She did make efforts to have some changes when facing the male-established dan performance style. But her solution was to seek the former performance style, which was also created by male dan performer. Li Yuru did not invent any distinctive performance style. She was still deeply affected by the male-dominated way of dan performance. In this case study, Mei Lanfang successfully developed his own performance style, while Li Yuru took advantage of the existing male performance techniques and adjusted them. Considering the highly conventionalized feature of *jingju*, female performers as latecomers were constrained within male-dominated performance modes and aesthetics.

The cultural policy assigned by the feudal government caused the phenomenon of male-dominating female characters' performances in the early *jingju*. When creating characters, men merged the male aesthetic of idealized women images into them. They also invented internal and external elements to assist them in disguising themselves as women on stage. When women returned to the stage, they had to follow the performance discipline and behavioural patterns set up by male cross-dressing performers and reinforce the ideal women image created by men. This conclusion leads to the deeper understanding of staging femininity in *jingju*. It's not just that men had to

adapt external elements including costume, wigs, and make-up to look more feminine, it's also the male-defined category of women, and the repeated performance of an aestheticized femininity that was refined through performance.

Bibliography

Alexandra, B. Bonds. *Beijing Opera Costumes: The Visual Communication of Character and Culture.* University of Hawai'i Press, 2008.

Bao Jiting, and Li Desheng. "Jingju de Yaolan: Fuliancheng." *(The Cradle of Jingju).* Shanxi People's Publishing House, 2008.

Beijing and Shanghai Academy of Arts. *Zhongguo Jingju Shi* (History of Chinese Jingju). Beijing: China Drama Press, 1999.

Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex".* New York and London: Routledge. Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2011.

---. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 2006.

---. *Undoing Gender*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004.

Bullough, Vern L., et al. *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender.* University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993.

Carter, Keryn. *Consuming the Ballerina: Feet, Fetishism and the Pointe Shoe*. Australian Feminist Studies, 15:31, pp. 81-90, 2000.

Chao, Guo. *Shifting Gender Roles: Male Dan in Chinese Theatre* (Thesis, Doctor of Philosophy). University of Otago. Retrieved from http://hdl.handle.net/10523/9014, 2019.

---. *The "change" and "normalcy": on hairstyles and dan role's make-up from the qing dynasty to the Republic of China.* In *Xiqu Research,* Vol 124, P137-157, 2021.

Chen, Ya-chen. *New Modern Chinese Women and Gender Politics: The Centennial of the End of the Qing Dynasty.* New York: Routledge, 2014.

China Drama Press, editor. *Shuo Wang Yaoqing. (Talk about Wang Yaoqing.)* Beijing First Edition, 2011.

Chou, Hui-ling. *Staging Revolution: Actresses, Realism & the New Woman Movement in Chinese Spoken Drama & Film, 1919-1949.* New York University, Graduate School of Arts and Science, 1997.

---. "Striking Their Own Poses: The History of Cross-Dressing on the Chinese Stage." In *TDR*, Vol.41, No.2, pp. 130-152, 1997.

---. *Performing China: Actress, Performance Culture, Visual Polities, 1910-1945.* Taipei: Rye Field Publishing, 2004.

Danuo, Wang. *Xikao*. *(Jingju Records)*. China Library, 1920.

Dolan, Jill. *The Feminist Spectator as Critic.* Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 2012.

Dongyuan, Chen. *Zhongguo Funv Shenghuo Shi. (The History of Chinese Women's Life).* The Commercial Press, 1998.

E. Howard, Jean. "Crossdressing, The Theatre, and Gender Struggle in Early Modern England." In *Shakespeare Quarterly*, Vol.39, No.4, 1988, pp. 418-440.

Ekins, Richard. *Male Femaling: A Grounded Theory Approach to Cross-Dressing and Sex-Changing*. Routledge, 2002.

Fan, Xing. "Stars on the Rise: Jingju Actresses in Republican China." In *Women in Asian Performance: Aesthetics and Politics*, ed. Arya Madhavan. London and New York: Routledge, 2016, pp. 66-80.

Feng, Jie, editor. *Jingju Dajia Jue Yi Lv Yi Bian: Dan Hang Pian*. *(The Performance Art of Jingju Celebrities: dan).* First Edition, The Commercial Press, 2016.

Ferris, Lesley. *Acting Women Images of Women in Theatre.* Hampshire and London: Macmillan Education LTD, 1990.

---. *Crossing the Stage: Controversies on Cross-dressing.* Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2005.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison.* Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, Random House. Inc, 1995.

---. *The History of Sexuality.* Pantheon Books, 1978.

Fu, Jianhua. *Cong Meipai Jingdian Zaoxing Guankui Mei Lanfang Jingju Gaige (A Glimpse of Mei Lanfang's Jingju Reform from the Classic Look of the Mei School).* Home of Theatre, Vol. 35, 2020.

Fu, Jin. *A History of Chinese Theatre in the 20th Century I.* Routledge, 2020.

---. *A History of Chinese Theatre in the 20th Century II.* Routledge, 2020.

Hebaotang. *Xun Huisheng Wenji*. China Drama Press, 2014.

Hongxing, Gao. *The History of Foot Binding.* Shanghai Literature & Art Publishing House, 1995.

Hu, Cui. *Ti Duchengnanzhuang.* (*Written at Chang'an Nanzhuang*). In *Quan Tangshi*. (Full Poem in Tang Dynasty), Tang Dynasty.

Huang, Yufu. *Jingju, qiao he Zhongguo de xingbie guanxi (1902-1937). Chinese Gender Relations as Seen through Qiao in Peking Opera: (1902-1937).* Beijing: Sanlian shudian, 1998, 17.

Jiang, Jin. *Women Playing Men: Yue Opera and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Shanghai.* University of Washington Press, 2009.

Jing, Ma. *Chuantong Jingju Danjue Huazhuang Jifa. (Traditional jingju dan characters make-up technique).* China Drama Press, 2009.

Kanwairen. *Jingju Jianwen Lv. (Anecdotes of Jingju).* Baowentang Bookshop, 1987.

Lanfang, Mei. *Wutai Shenghuo Sishinian. (Forty Years on Stage).* China Drama Press, 1987.

Li, Ruru. "Cong Jumu, Yanjuguan, Biaoyan Fangfa De Biangeng Taolun 'Xigai' Yu 'Gairen'" (*From the change of repertoire, acting view and performing style to discuss "theatre revolution" and "transformation of people"*) In *Journal of National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts*. Vol. 37. No. 2, 2016.

---. "Lixiang, Shiye, Guifan: Xiqu Jiaoyu de Shiyan/Beipingshi Sili Zhongguo Gaoji Xiqu Zhiye Xuexiao (Zhonghua Xixiao) (1930-1940)" (*Ideal, Vision, Regulation: the Experiment of Xiqu Education/Beijing Indigenous Theatre School (Zhonghua Indigenous Theatre School) (1930-1940)).* China Theatre Book Press, 2020.

Li, Jinhong. *Tan Jingju Wudan. (Discuss about Wudan in Jingju).* Xiquyishu (The art of Xiqu), Vol. 4, 1982, pp.57-61.

Li, Siu Leung. *Cross-dressing in Chinese Opera.* Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003.

Ling Ling, Li. *Mei Lanfang de Yishu yu Qinggan. (Mei Lanfang's Arts and Emotions)*. United Press, 2008.

Liu, Qing. "Ming Qing Shiqi De Xiju Guanli" (*The Management of Theatre during Ming and Qing Dynasties*). China Theatre Press, 2006.

---. "Guanli Yu Jinling: Ming Qing Xiju Yanchu Shengtailun" (*Control and Restriction: Ming and Qing dynasties Performance Ecology*). Shanghai: Shanghai Shiji Press, 2014.

Li, Yuru. *Jingyingtouliang de Yu: Li Yuru Wutai Shangxia Jiating Neiwai. (Crystal-clear Jade: Li Yuru on and off the Stage, inside and outside the Home).* Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2015.

---. *Li Yuru Tan Xi Shuo Yi*. Shanghai Literature & Art Publishing House, 2008.

Miao, Lu. "La Tiemen: Minguo Shanghai Jingju Shengchan Tizhi Yanjiu." (*Pull Iron Gate: Research of Jingju Production System in Republican China*). China Wenshi Press, 2016.

Qi, Song. *Jingju Mingling Yishu CuiJi*. *(Review on Beijing Opera Celebrities)*. First Edition, China Drama Press, Beijing, 2011.

Shen, Defu. *Wanli Yehuo Bian.* (A Collection of Wild History in Wanli Era). Beijing: Beijing Yanshan Publish, 1998.

Shi, Ruoxu, and Lingxiang Xun. *Wang Yaoqing Yishu Pinglun Ji. (Wang Yaoqing Art Review Collection).* China Drama Press, 1985.

Straub, Kristina. *Sexual Suspects: Eighteenth-Century Players and Sexual Ideology.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992.

Tian, Min. "Male Dan: the Paradox of Sex, Acting and Perception of Female Impersonation in Traditional Chinese Theatre." In *Asian Theatre Journal*. Vol.17, No.1, 2000, pp. 78-97.

Tingxin, Wang. "The Formation of Mei style Jingju and its way to portray stage characters". In *Mei Lanfang Biaoyan Tixi Yanjiu (The Study of Mei Lanfang Performance System).* Intellectual Property Press, 2016.

Wang, An-ch'i. *Xingbie Zhengzhi Yu Jingju Biaoyan Wenhua (Gender, Politics and*

Performance Culture of Jingju), Taipei: National Taiwan University Press. 2011.

Wang, Zhizhang. *Zhongguo Jingju Biannianshi.* China Jingju Chronicle. China Theatre Publish, 2003.

Wu, Guanda. "Should Nandan Be Abolished? The Debate over Female Impersonation in Early Republican China and Its Underlying Cultural Logic." In *Asian Theatre Journal*. Vol.30, No.1, 2013, pp. 189-206.

Xiao, Cuihua. *Jingju Huadan Biaoyan Yishu*. Edited by Yizhen Liu, Beijing Press, 1962.

Xing, Jie. "Xingbie Biaoyan: Houxiandai Yujing Xia De Kuajie Lilun Yu Shijian." (*Gender Performativity: Cross-border Theory and Practice in the Post-modern Context*). Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2016.

Xu, Lanyuan, and Ji Tang. *Wo de Cao Qin Sheng Huo: Xu Lanyuan Kou Shu Li Shi. (Xu Lanyuan Oral History)*. Second Edition, China Drama Press, 2012.

Xu, Jichuan. *Xu Jichuan Yitan Man lv. (Xu Jichuan Art Collection)*. Zhonghua Book Company, 1994.

---. *Zhongguo Sida Mingdan. (Chinese Four Great Dan).* Hebei People's Publishing House, 1990.

Yang, Huiling. "Xiqu Banshe Yanjiu: Ming Qing Jiaban." *A Study on the Opera Troupe of Family in Ming and Qing Dynasties*. Xiamen: Xiamen University Press, 2006.

Zeng, Yongyi. *Shuo Xiqu.* (Discussing Xiqu). Taipei: Linking Books, 1976.

Zhang, Wen. *Mingxing de Dansheng: Nvling yu Jindai Shanghai Shehui* (*Stars are born: female actors and modern Shanghai society*). Jinan: Jinan Press, 2019.

Zhao, Yanxia. *Wo de Wutai Yishu. (My Performing Art).* Changjiang Literature and Art Publishing House, 1983.

Zhuang, Yintang, Dai, Lansheng, *Xichang Xianhua (Ramdam Talk about Theatre),* Vol. 1, Beiping: Current Affairs Vernacular Newspaper, 1928.

"Guifei Zuijiu", Performed by Li Yuru, Shanghai *Jingju* Theatre Company., 1987.

"Guifei Zuijiu", Performed by Mei Lanfang, Beijing Film Studio., 1955.

"Xiao shangfen", Performed by Chen Yongling, CCTV Theatre Archive.

“Zhan Wancheng”, Performed by Chen Yongling, Taiwan, 1996.

“Zhan Wancheng”, Performed by Chen Yongling, Shanghai Art Institute, 1980.