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**The tragic dimensions of traditional Chinese drama: A study of
Yuan zaju**

Lo, Wai Luk, Ph.D.

City University of New York, 1994

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The Tragic Dimensions of Traditional Chinese Drama:

A Study of Yuan Zaju

by

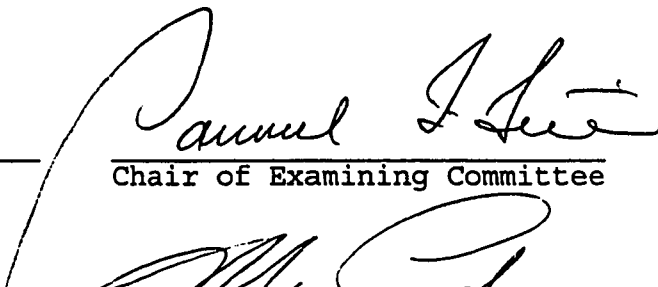
Wai Luk Lo

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York.

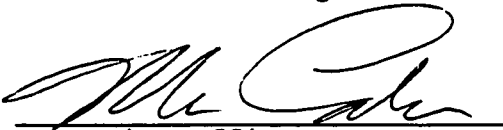
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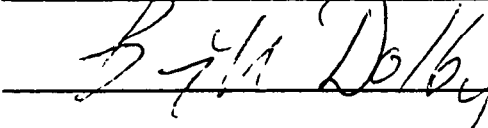
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Abstract

The Tragic Dimensions of Traditional Chinese Drama:

A Study of Yuan Zaju

by

Wai Luk Lo

Adviser: Professor Samuel Leiter

Although tragedy is the major critical canon in Western literary history, the term beiju 悲劇, the Chinese translation of "tragedy", did not appear in traditional Chinese literary criticism until the 1910s when Wang Guowei (1877-1927) first used this term to describe several Yuan zaju 元雜劇 (mixed drama). This study starts with a generally accepted notion in the discussion of tragedy--the tragic spirit--and relates it to the Chinese aesthetic concept of bei-zhuang 悲壯 (tragic-heroic) which then will be augmented with some other terms in traditional Chinese criticism to derive from the semantic corpus of the word-stem bei 悲 four tragic dimensions of traditional Chinese drama, namely: bei-ai 悲哀, bei-yuan 悲怨, bei-fen 悲憤, and bei-zhuang. The framework this structural linguistic approach establishes will then be applied to the dramatic analyses of eight Yuan zaju: Feng Yu Lan 馮玉蘭 (The misery of the young lady Feng), Huo Lang Dan 貨郎旦 (Woman singer of the

Huo Lang style), Han Gong Qiu 漢宮秋 (Autumn in the Han Palace), Shuang Fu Meng 雙赴夢 (Dream of Two on a journey), Dou E Yuan 竇娥冤 (The injustice done to Dou E), Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui 火燒介子推 (Burning Jie Zi Tui alive), Zhao Shi Gu Er 趙氏孤兒 (The orphan of the family of Zhao), and Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi 張千替殺妻 (Zhang kills his sworn-brother's wife). The findings will then be compared with selected major Western notions of tragedy, including tragic fate, tragic mode, tragic rhythm, and tragic vision. Readers may also find it interesting to read the three appendixes: "Multiplicity of Tragedy," "The Organic Structure of Yuan zaju," and "The Tragic Sense of Life: East and West," for further perspectives on the problem of Chinese tragedy.

Preface

I am a native of Hong Kong and was brought up in a Chinese cultural environment. As a Chinese theatre student studying in the United States, I would like to contribute to the Western awareness of the Chinese dramatic tradition. Having a familiarity with Chinese aesthetics and literary theory, as well as an acquired knowledge of Western tragedy and tragic theory, I am naturally drawn to one of the most controversial problems in the contemporary scholarship of comparative drama--the question of "Chinese tragedy."

If you ask what motivates me to undertake the present study, my answer is A.D., affinity and discrepancy. Affinity: some moments in traditional Chinese drama stir me in ways similar to those in certain great Western tragedies. Discrepancy: although tragedy is the major critical canon in Western literary history, the term beiju (悲劇) (the Chinese translation of "tragedy") did not appear in traditional Chinese literary criticism until the 1910s when Wang Guowei (王國維) (1877-1927) first used this term to describe several Yuan zaju (雜劇).¹ Since Thespis won the first official contest for tragedy at Athens in 534 B.C., tragedy had been continuously produced in Greece for several hundred years, and later, even long

¹ Wang Guowei, Wang Guowei Xiqu Lunwenji (王國維戲曲論文集) (The collected essays on Chinese opera by Wang Guowei) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1986), 85.

after the tradition was lost in the Middle Ages, tragedy flourished again in the Renaissance. In China, however, playwrights never consciously thought that they wrote beiju. In the past, the Chinese people wrote zaju (mixed drama), nanxi (南戲) (Southern drama), or chuanqi (傳奇) (dramatic romance²); all were dramatic forms that combined different moods.

Perhaps it is due to differences in cultural morphology that the Chinese people did not dichotomize beiju (tragedy) and xiju (喜劇) (comedy) as different literary genres. The playwright prince Zhu Quan (朱權) (1378-1448) classifies zaju into twelve ke (科) (categories); but his classifying principle is based upon theme and subject matter.³ The Chinese concept of ke is not equivalent to the Western concept of genre.

Did tragedy exist in traditional Chinese drama? If so, why didn't the Chinese have a term to describe it? And if Chinese culture did not have tragedy in its conventional form, did the Chinese not have the sense of the tragic? If this sense did exist, how might it have been embodied in Chinese drama?

² It should be noted that "dramatic romance" is only an approximate rendering.

³ Zhu Quan, "Tai He Zheng Yin Pu" (太和正音譜) (The supreme harmony chart of correct sounds), in Chen Duo, and Ye Changhai, eds., Zhongguo Lidai Julun Xuanzhu (中國歷代劇論選) (Commentary on selected texts of traditional Chinese dramatic criticism) (Changsha: Hunan Wenyi Chubanshe, 1987), 92-98.

These questions have puzzled me for years. They will be addressed in the present study, which employs critical tools from both the Chinese and Western traditions.

As my presentation shows, I do not assume that tragedy exists in traditional Chinese drama, nor do I assume that the sense of the tragic is compatible with Chinese thought. Sixty years ago, a major Chinese aesthetician, Chu Kwang-Tsien (朱光潛), already forcibly argued that tragic thought and Chinese philosophy are not compatible.⁴ I do have, however, a basic assumption in this study: no matter how seemingly dissimilar their cultural orientations, thinking patterns, and metaphysics are, Chinese and Westerners share common human limitations and challenges. This assumption is grounded in one semantic correlation. In the West, from the word "human" there grows the word "humane;" in China, from the word "人" (sound: ren; meaning: human being, man) there grows the homonym "仁" (benevolence, kind-heartedness, humanity).

We immediately face one difficulty: due to the multiplicity of Western tragic theories,⁵ it is difficult, if not impossible, to use a generic approach in our study. Even if we go back to the basics--the extant Greek tragedies--we find diverse forms. To some modern critics, some of the Greek tragedies are not tragic.

⁴ Chu Kwang-Tsien, The Psychology of Tragedy (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1987).

⁵ For a discussion of the multiplicity of tragedy, please see appendix 1.

The multiplicity of tragedy's form and definition is addressed by many modern critics. Some of them try to liberate tragedy's genre restriction and to call for a focus on the true meaning of individual plays. F. L. Lucas, for example, says that we need to restate Aristotle's definition of tragedy as follows: "Serious drama is a serious representation by speech and action of some phase of human life."⁶ What concerns him is whether the play "is a serious attempt to represent life." If it is, "it makes no great difference whether or not good fortune intervenes in the last scene."⁷

Lucas' definition is not useful in this study. Of course we can select several great Yuan zaju that seriously represent life, and analyze their forms, meanings, and emotional effects; in doing so, however, we are not addressing the problem of "Chinese tragedy." In other words, although this study might not use a generic approach, it still needs to focus on certain aspects of tragedy in order to be justified as a study of traditional Chinese drama's tragic dimensions.⁸

⁶ F. L. Lucas, Tragedy: Serious Drama in Relation to Aristotle's 'Poetics', rev. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 33.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Perhaps I may illustrate my point by the following syllogism: we cannot say that a dog is a man, nor that a man is a god; but we may say that a certain dog and a certain god have a humane quality. Similarly, Greek tragedy is not Chinese drama, yet some Greek tragedies may have certain qualities that resemble Chinese drama and vice versa.

As I read Greek tragedy, the strokes of heroism and the protests of the protagonist against his fate mysteriously transport me. It seems as though there is some supernatural force operating. The undeserved suffering of the tragic hero horrifies me; the invincible will of the tragic hero elevates me. I both pity and admire him, yet my admiration is complex, a combination of a conscious sympathy and a subconscious uneasiness. Emotion fuses with rationality.

Such a reading experience is unforgettable. Indeed, even if the plot has withered away in my mind, the experience still remains in my heart, strongly felt. Eventually, it crystallizes into an image: a wounded man standing against an approaching tempest, forcing his gaze upward to the darkening sky.⁹

When I was small, I loved listening to my teacher tell stories. There must have been magic in those tales. Not only because the restless class would quiet down as soon as my teacher became a story-teller, but also because the heroes of those stories have lived in my mind since then. The stories are from Chinese mythology and history. Like

⁹ In Poetics, Aristotle defines tragedy as the "imitation of an action" which will, "through pity and fear," lead to the tragic effect of "catharsis." I don't know whether my crystallization of great tragedies into the "man-against-tempest" image is Aristotle's catharsis or not. I think it is not, because it is the aftermath of the tragic experience. While a catharsis is a process, an image drives us to a focus. Experience is tactile: we feel it, bear it, and endure or resolve it. An image is visual: we see it, recognize it, and understand or disregard it.

all Chinese, I know by heart the famous stories of the giant Kua Fu (夸父), who runs after the sun and dies of thirst as he is approaching his target; by heart I also know the rebellious god Xing Tian (刑天), who keeps striking his axe and shield after he has been beheaded by Emperor Huang Di (黄帝).

Kua Fu strives for something he never will attain; Xing Tian not only fights against the most powerful god, a losing battle, but continues fighting after his defeat. They both act with great determination. It seems as though their destiny is their destruction, the nature of which, interestingly enough, is described concisely by their names.¹⁰ Kua Fu will not stop running until he is dead; does he not feel the white heat of the sun? Xing Tian is defeated but he cannot be destroyed; does he not feel the pain of having beheaded? To me, they both possess what the Greek scholar Angelos Terzakis describes as "the tragic spirit" of a typical Greek tragic hero.¹¹ In Kua Fu I see a persistently searching spirit similar to that of Oedipus; and in Xing Tian a stubbornly rebellious and self-righteous attitude similar to that of Antigone.

¹⁰ The word kua (夸) means to exaggerate, to boast, to raise, or to compete. There are two other words "跨," and "垮," of the same sounds but in different pitches, meaning to stride and to collapse, respectively. As for Xing Tian, xing (刑) means punishment, and tian (天) means sky, but in this context may mean head. So "Xing Tian" means either capital punishment or a god who suffers punishment.

¹¹ Angelos Terzakis, "The Tragic Spirit," in Homage to the Tragic Muse, trans. Athan H. Anagnostopoulos (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 4-25.

According to Ernst Cassirer (1874-1945) in Mythical Thought,¹² the mythology of a people is not only a group of interesting stories, but is also a symbolic system corresponding to the psyche of the people. If there are Chinese myths that show a heroic tragic spirit similar to that of Western tragedy, there must be traces of tragic acts in Chinese civilization, recorded both in history and in literature, which are reflected in the subconscious of Chinese writers, though they did not consciously name those acts as tragic.

From Qu Yuan (屈原), Jing Ke (荊軻), and Xiang Yu (項羽) to Tiananmen Square, Chinese history has produced personae whose deliberation to act against an invincible force is so great that their stories are ke ge ke qi (可歌可泣) (deserved odes and tears) in their own right.¹³ Even though the dramatic forms embodying their stories might not be identical in structure to Western tragedies, their spirit is very close.

¹² Ernst Cassirer, The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms: Vol.2: Mythical Thought, trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1966).

¹³ Qu Yuan, a renowned scholar and a faithful statesman, after asking the sky all the questions humanity had been puzzling over, jumped into the river to protest his losing the king's favor; Jing Ke was the most famous cike (刺客) (assassin) of ancient China, who tried, unsuccessfully, to assassinate Emperor Qin; Xiang Yu was a great hero who failed to establish himself as the ruler of China, and, deeply humiliated and unable to face the people of his homeland of Dong Jiang (East river), committed suicide on the bank of the river Wu to preserve his dignity.

This study starts with the notion of the tragic spirit,¹⁴ relates it to the Chinese aesthetic concept of bei-zhuang (悲壯)¹⁵, augments it with some other terms of Chinese criticism, and derives from the semantic corpus of the word bei (悲) four tragic dimensions of traditional Chinese drama.

By using Yuan zaju as examples, I am going to explore the four tragic dimensions, namely: bei-ai (悲哀), bei-yuan (悲怨), bei-fen (悲憤), and bei-zhuang.¹⁶ The findings (or interpretations) will then be compared with selected major Western notions of tragedy, including tragic fate, tragic mode, tragic rhythm, and tragic vision.

I delimit my scope to Yuan zaju for three reasons. First, its magnitude is easier to grasp when compared with that of nanxi or chuangxi, developed in the Southern Song

¹⁴ It should be noted that this is not the only approach. We may, for example, start with suffering--the common ground of the pathetic and the tragic--and work out its different causes, the sufferers' different attitudes, etc. Then we can construct a system and see to which categories different traditional Chinese dramas belong. We may also, say, start with some other prevailing notions in the discussion of tragedy, e.g., the tragic vision, the tragic rhythm, the tragic mode, etc. Nevertheless, whichever direction we adopt, we must not assume that it is the only authentic way, and that it embraces all possibilities of the tragic.

¹⁵ At this point, it is not appropriate to render the term with an English translation. The author begs the reader's patient to read on until later chapters.

¹⁶ English translations of the four dimensions will be rendered in Chapter 1, where a full discussion will be given.

(1127-1279) and Ming dynasty (1368-1611), respectively. Second, being a major literary genre¹⁷ in the Yuan dynasty, zaju achieved its fullest development during this period and zaju playwrights gave us the finest works of the genre. Third, the plays are accessible. With the publication of two standard Chinese anthologies, Yuan Ou Xuan (元曲選) and Yuan Ou Xuan Wei Bian (元曲選外編),¹⁸ in 1958 and 1959, respectively, every serious student of traditional Chinese drama can get hold of 162 extant zaju, most of them from the Yuan dynasty and several from the early Ming dynasty. This comprises about one fourth of the zaju written in the Yuan dynasty.¹⁹

This study is a dialogue. It journeys to and fro, East and West. From time to time it makes reference to Greek tragedies to establish a common ground for discussion among Western and Chinese readers. Greek tragedy is chosen

¹⁷ In Chinese literary history, genre means external forms of expression such as shi (詩) (poetry), ci (詞) (verse), ge (歌) (song), or fu (賦) (prose poetry)

¹⁸ Zang Zian Shu, ed., Yuan Ou Xuan (Anthology of Yuan opera) Vols.1-4 (Beijing: Zhong Hua Shuju, 1958); Sui Shu Sen, ed., Yuan Ou Xuan Wai Bian (Further selections of Yuan opera) Vols. 1-3 (Beijing: Zhong Hua Shuju, 1959).

¹⁹ The exact number of extant Yuan zaju is a special topic in Chinese literature. The two standard anthologies give us 162 plays but some of them have been proved to be works of the Ming dynasty. Besides the two anthologies, there remain the famous long zaju West Wing (西廂記) and sixteen zaju published in the Yuan era which have not been included in the two anthologies. So the upper limit of the number of extant Yuan zaju is 179. Chung-Wen Shih gives the number 171 in her The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Tsa-Chu (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1976).

because it is the first golden age of tragedy in human literary history. The general attitude of the study is also dialogic: less familiar zaju will be placed side by side with more familiar zaju so that the method this study employs is tested with diverse examples.

Before ending the preface, perhaps it would be proper for me to state my position on the problem of "Chinese tragedy." To me, whether tragedy as a genre exists in China is subjective: it depends on one's definition of tragedy. Yet there were traditional Chinese dramas that show striking similarities to some tragic notions derived in the West. On the other hand, even in the dissimilarities, something cuts deep. This something, though unnameable, drives me to ponder the possibility of a more universal and more inclusive conception of the tragic. Nevertheless, as a great work is great in its own right, a great Chinese drama is great in its own right, whether it is a tragedy, a comedy, an epic, or a zaju.

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Introduction

The problem of "Chinese tragedy" is a historical phenomenon. To the Chinese before the twentieth century, there was no such thing as tragedy; to Westerners before the nineteenth century, when the philosophizing of tragedy had not yet begun, tragedy "naturally" existed in China. For example, Voltaire and his contemporary used the term "tragedy" to describe Zhao Shi Gu Er (趙氏孤兒, The orphan of the family of Zhao). Nevertheless, "Chinese tragedy" has evoked much controversy in contemporary theatre scholarship. In both East and West, critics have expressed diverse opinions as to whether tragedy existed in traditional Chinese drama at a time when Western influence had not yet reached China.

Outline History of the Controversy

While some Western scholars, such as Cyril Birch and Henry Wells, indiscriminately use the generic concepts of tragedy, comedy, and tragicomedy to classify and analyze traditional Chinese plays,¹ others restrict these concepts

¹ In Cyril Birch's Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1965), a first anthology of its kind, there are two Yuan zaju, "Autumn in the Palace of Han" and "Li K'uei Carries Thorns." Birch deliberately juxtaposes them to make the point that there exists a generic dichotomy of tragedy and comedy in Yuan zaju. In the same year, Henry Wells uses the Western conception of tragedy, comedy, and tragicomedy to categorize and analyze several representative traditional Chinese plays in his The Classical Drama of the Orient (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965).

to Western literature only. In their "Introduction" to Chinese Theater: From its Origins to the Present Day, to illustrate that even the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) did not do away with the dominant element of Chinese theatre--humor, Colin Mackerras and Elizabeth Wichmann state concisely that "The Chinese audience has little patience with unrelieved solemnity, and there is no genre of tragedy as in the West."² In A History of Chinese Drama, William Dolby also sees Yuan zaju as haunted by humor; he states the question more dialectically,

humor does not prevent a play from being sad, tragic in the looser senses of the word[,] . . . but the overall sadness of a fair number of Chinese plays is quite strongly negated or mitigated by a sudden optimistic or would-be happy ending. Whether this overrides or detrimentally contradicts the sad note of the rest of the play may well be a matter of personal judgement. One suspects that for the audience the sad feelings would often provide the main impression while the happy endings would often just be a convention to round off the play. Yet undoubtedly there is more involved in such endings than mere conventionality.³

Dolby does not define tragedy in rigorous terms. He does not intend to. What he tries to do is to put forward some

² Colin Mackerras and Elizabeth Wichmann, Chinese Theater: From its Origins to the Present Day (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1983), 2. It should be noted that Colin Mackerras does use the word "tragedy" once to describe a traditional Peking opera, "The Li Ling Stele," in his Chinese Drama: A Historical Survey (Beijing: New World Press, 1990), but he uses the term quite loosely, only in the sense of defeat and death. He does not mean to define Chinese "tragedy" by this single usage.

³ William Dolby, A History of Chinese Drama (London: Paul Elek, 1976), 47.

of his observations. To him, some plays in Yuan zaju, e.g., Dream of Two on a Journey, Autumn in the Han Palace, and Rain on the Paulownia Tree, do "raise the perennial question of whether early Chinese drama ever contained tragedy." Yet he thinks that "the matter is complicated," and does not venture into a full discussion.⁴

The matter is complicated, perhaps too complicated, for there even exist some scholars who deny the possibility of Chinese tragedy. At the beginning of the Death of Tragedy (1961), George Steiner says:

All men are aware of tragedy in life. But tragedy as a form of drama is not universal. . . . The representation of personal suffering and heroism which we call tragic drama is distinctive of the Western tradition.⁵

This bold statement, however, is neither proved nor elaborated on in subsequent pages of the book. In chapter one of this dissertation, I will show how Steiner's assertive statement is false based on his own definition of the tragic.

While Steiner's statement is a false judgement owing to the lack of information, the following statement of American playwright Elmer Rice is ignorant and biased: "The generally loose structure of Chinese societal life (. . . of pre-communist China) was not conducive to the

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ George Steiner, The Death of Tragedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 3.

high degree of organization that an effective theatre demands."⁶

Rice's judgment is simple-minded popular anthropology. With this kind of logic, he certainly cannot explain why, though they had produced large scale performances, the highly bureaucratic palaces from the Han dynasty (B.C. 206-220 A.D.) to the Song dynasty (960-1279) did not create mature drama which, instead, found its nourishing soil in the loosely structured Chinese society.⁷

Contrary to Rice's assumption, in an in-depth study of the relationship between folk culture and traditional Chinese opera, the scholar Zheng Chuan Yin (鄭傳寅) has pointed out that the folk festival is the main channel for the dissemination of traditional theatrical culture.⁸

The controversy of "Chinese tragedy" also exists among Chinese. For example, two major twentieth-century scholars hold contradictory opinions. Wang Guowei, the forerunner of modern scholarship of traditional Chinese opera, uses

⁶ Elmer Rice, The Living Theatre (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1959), 49.

⁷ In mainland China, many scholars apply a Marxist perspective to theatre history. To them, the origin of theatre is in the people, not in the palace. For a thorough discussion on this, see Zhou Yibai, Zhongguo Xiqu Fazhanshi Gangyao (中國戲曲發展史綱要, An essential history of Chinese opera) (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1979).

⁸ Zheng Chuan Yin, Chuantong Wenhua yu Gudian Xiqu (傳統文化與古典戲曲, Traditional culture and classical opera) (Hubei, China: Hubei Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 1990).

for the first time in Chinese critical history the term beiju 悲劇 (used in the sense of tragedy) to describe several Yuan zaju. He says that two of them--Zhao Shi Gu Er (The orphan of the family of Zhao) and Dou E Yuan (竇娥冤, The injustice done to Dou E)--can even be placed alongside the world's great tragedies.⁹ On the contrary, the most famous Chinese aesthetician of the century, Chu Kwang Tsien, rejects Wang's idea. "More than five hundred plays were written in the Yuan Dynasty alone," says Chu, "but not a single one of them can be properly called a tragedy."¹⁰

While Wang's commentary is brief (but exceedingly insightful), Chu's is very long. In "The Dearth and Death of Tragedy: Tragedy in Relation to Religion and Philosophy," the last chapter of his 1933 dissertation, The Psychology of Tragedy, Chu goes so far as to deny the possibility of Chinese tragedy.¹¹ To him, tragedy and

⁹ Wang Guowei, Wang Guowei Xiqu Lunwenji (Collective essays on Chinese opera by Wang Guowei) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1984), 85. Other plays he mentions are Autumn in the Han Palace, Rain on the Paulownia Tree, The Dream at Western Setzhuang, Burning Jie Zi Tui Alive, and Zhang Kills Another Man's Wife. Except for the Rain on the Paulownia Tree, all the "tragic" Yuan zaju he mentions will be discussed in this dissertation. This is a happy coincidence because I selected the sample plays to be discussed only after I had finished reading all the extant Yuan zaju, and only after I had developed vaguely my idea of the tragic dimensions of traditional Chinese drama.

¹⁰ Chu Kwang Tsien, The Psychology of Tragedy (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing Co., 1987), 209.

¹¹ Chu Kwang-Tsien studied in several European

Chinese philosophy are incompatible.

Chu's argument is so well thought but at the same time so restrictive that it deserves some elaboration here. He argues that the Hebrews, the Hindus, and the Chinese did not develop tragedy because, through acceptance of a religion or a philosophy, they automatically accept life's suffering. To him, this is contrary to the tragic spirit. Chu regards Fate as the most important motivational force of tragedy. But unlike religion and philosophy, tragedy is not fatalistic; though tragedy "tries to solve the ultimate problems of Good and Evil as religion and philosophy, its spirit is alien to both."¹²

Many scholars adopt Chu's line of thought. They engage themselves in philosophical analyses and deduce that there was no tragedy in Chinese culture. They include the major figure of neo-Confucianism, Tang Jun Yi (唐君毅)¹³; the

universities. The dissertation, originated from a paper on "Pleasure in Tragedy" read in 1927 to a discussion group of advanced students in Psychology at the University of Edinburgh, was first published in English in the spring of 1933 by the Librarie Universitaire d'Alsace, 1. Place de l'Universite Strasbourg, France. It was not until February 1983 that a Chinese edition was published by the People's Literature Publishing House, Beijing. In 1987 the book was reprinted in English by a Hong Kong publisher. It should be noted that long before George Steiner, Chu talked about "the dearth and death of tragedy." Chu's approach, however, is philosophical rather than dramaturgical.

¹² Chu, The Psychology of Tragedy, 203.

¹³ Tang Jun Yi, "Zhongxi Wenhua Jingshen zi Bijiao" (中西文化精神之比較, A comparison of the cultural spirit of Chinese and the West), in Yu Long Yu, ed., Zhongxi Wenhua Yitong Lun (中西文化異同論, On the similarity and difference of Chinese and Western cultures) (Beijing: Sanlian Shudian, 1989), 31-50.

father of modern Chinese comparative literature, Qian Zhong Shu (錢鍾書)¹⁴; the major dramatic critic of Taiwan, Yao Yi Wei (姚一葦)¹⁵; and in the West, the German philosopher, Karl Jaspers¹⁶; and the American drama critic, Herbert Muller.¹⁷

The philosophic analyses of these thinkers are so profound, and their arguments are so strong that it will be necessary to devote a separate section to them. For the time being, however, let us continue the outline history of the controversy over "Chinese tragedy."

In the seventies, the applicability of the generic concept of tragedy to classical Chinese literature attracted much attention from Chinese scholars (especially those from Taiwan and Hong Kong). It is as if critics at that time were trying to establish a basic "axiom" for the discussion of "Chinese tragedy." The "axiom" is: "That tragedy exists in traditional Chinese literature." Therefore, many of these writings either assert the tragic

¹⁴ Ch'ien Chung-shu, "Tragedy in Old Chinese Drama," Tien Hsia Monthly, 1 (1939).

¹⁵ Yao Yi Wei, "Yuan zaju Zhong de Beijuguan Chutan" (元雜劇中的悲劇觀初探, A first study on the tragic thought of Yuan variety play), in Xi Ju yu Wen Xue (戲劇與文學, Drama and literature) (Taipei, Taiwan: Yuan Jing Chubanshe, 1984), 1-18.

¹⁶ Karl Jaspers, Tragedy is not Enough, trans. Harald A. T. Reiche, Harry T. Moore, and Darle W. Deutsch, (Archon Books, 1969).

¹⁷ Herbert J. Muller, The Spirit of Tragedy (New York: Washington Square Press, 1956).

quality of a particular work, or challenge a play's authenticity as a tragedy. Eventually, one zaju was singled out as the central work of the debate. The zaju is Dou E Yuan, a play regarded by Wang Guowei as great tragedy. This is understandable. Logically, if the most "typical" (or the most significant) work--a work regarded by the most important critic as great tragedy--is proved to be un-tragic, then the basic assumption that there was tragedy in traditional Chinese literature is at stake. The following are some of the major essays in the debate:

1. Chang Han-liang, "Guan Han Qing di Dou E Yuan: Yi Ke Tongshuju" (關漢卿的《竇娥冤》：一個通俗劇, Guan Han Qing's The injustice done to Dou E: a melodrama), in Chung-wai Literary Monthly (中外文學), 4, No. 8 (1976), 128-41.
2. Gu Tian-hong, "Beiju: Gan Tian Dong Di Dou E Yuan" (悲劇：感天動地竇娥冤, Tragedy: The injustice done to Dou E which moves Heaven and Earth), in Chung-wai Literary Monthly, 4, No. 8 (1976), 112-26.
3. Zhang Shu-xiang, "Cong Xiju di Zhuti Jiegou Tan Dou E di Yuan" (從戲劇的主題結構談竇娥的冤, From the thematic structure of a play to analyze The injustice done to Dou E), in Chung-wai Literary Monthly, 5, No. 2 (1976), 174-216.
4. Cheung Ping-cheung, "Tou O Yuan as Tragedy," in New Asia Academic Bulletin, 1 (1978), 251-275.
5. Tang Wen Biao, "Zuo Ren di Bei ju: Shilun Dou E Yuan ji Zeshan Wenti" (做人的悲劇：試論《竇娥冤》的擇善問題, The tragedy of man: On Dou E Yuan and the problem of choosing the good), in Tang Wen Biao, Zhongguo Gudiao Xijushi Chugao (中國古代戲劇史初稿, Essays on Chinese ancient drama history) (Taipei, Taiwan: Ling Jing Chuban Shiye, 1985), 234-249.

Statistically, as we have shown, a majority of critics regard Dou E Yuan as a tragedy. Yet, the situation is more complicated than that. For example, even among those critics who regard the zaju as a tragedy, there are contradictory view points on the last section of Dou E Yuan. While Cheng Ping-cheung thinks that "The fourth and last act of the play, because of its comical aspects, seems most detrimental to the claim of Tou O Yuan [Dou E Yuan] as a tragedy,"¹⁸ Henry W. Wells regards the meeting between the ghost of Dou E and her father as "tragically moving conversation, the unmistakable result of which for the audience is purgation of the emotions of pity and fear."¹⁹ Whereas Cheung regards the zaju's last section as "a comical end tagged on to a melancholy drama" due to the "return of Tou O as a disquiet ghost,"²⁰ Wells says that the scene is "as moving a scene as the interview between Prince Hamlet and his father."²¹

Some scholars go on to ask more fundamental questions. Wai-lim Yip (葉維廉), one of the most important Chinese critics in comparative literature, challenges the use of Western models in East-West comparative literature. To

¹⁸ Cheung Ping-cheung, "Tou O Yuan as Tragedy," in New Asia Academic Bulletin, 1 (1978), 273.

¹⁹ Henry W. Wells, The Classical Drama of the Orient (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965), 59.

²⁰ Cheng Ping-cheung, 274.

²¹ Wells, 61.

him, any particular model is grown from a particular cultural soil, which may not be appropriate to transplant to other places. He suggests that East-West comparative literature critics should adopt a dialectical attitude, work simultaneously on both Eastern and Western soils on the one hand, and ground themselves in more fundamental relationships of the literary system on the other. Therefore, the inter-relationships among the literary works, authors, readers, and society should be explored without cultural biased.²² Luk Yun-Tong (陸潤棠), a lecturer in the Chinese University of Hong Kong, questions the applicability of the generic concept to classical Chinese drama. He thinks that even though the generic concept of tragedy is sound, its transplantation to classical Chinese drama is debatable. He suggests that critics should instead derive from Chinese philosophy the tragic elements in the discussion of "Chinese tragedy."²³

On Mainland China, tragedy was a jin-qu (禁區, forbidden zone) after October 1949, when the communists

²² Wai-lim Yip, "Dong Xi Fang Wenxue zhong 'mo-zi' de Yinyong" (東西方文學中 '模子' 的應用, The use of models in East-West comparative literature), in Xunzhao Kua Zhong Xi Wenhua de Gongtong Wenxue Guilu (尋找跨中西文化的共同文學

規律, In search of common poetics between Chinese and Western cultures) (Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 1986).

²³ Yun-Tong Luk, "The concept of Tragedy as Genre and Its Applicability to Classical Chinese Drama," in The Chinese Text: Studies in Comparative Literature (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1986), 15-27.

took over China.²⁴ Although it was not written black and white, it was very clear that the authorities did not encourage the study of tragedy, nor did they encourage the tragic form. For example, in one major bibliography of Chinese aesthetics,²⁵ there are twelve articles about tragedy from 1946 to 1949, but the list's next item dealing with tragedy is dated December 1979. This represents a thirty year hiatus in the study of tragedy!

Opinion changes with the times. After the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976), more affirmative opinions were heard when once again the problem of Chinese tragedy became a key issue discussed among China's intelligentsia. In the same list used above, from December 1979 to December 1982, there are thirty-two entries under the heading beiju (悲劇). This shows that immediately after the Cultural Revolution, the study of "Chinese tragedy" and of the tragic spirit of the Chinese people appeared abruptly. This is understandable because the sentiment of a generation which has gone through great national suffering usually leans toward the tragic.

In 1982, an ambitious, two-volume anthology entitled

²⁴ This itself is a very interesting phenomenon worth studying, for Marxism implies an absolute aesthetics that is close to the spirit of tragedy.

²⁵ Jiang Hong, Zhang Huan Min, and Wang You Ru, ed., Zhongguo Xiandai Meixue Lunzhu Yizhu Tiya (中國現代美學論著譯著提要, Annotated bibliography of modern Chinese aesthetics) (Shanghai: Fudan Daxue Chubanshe, 1987), 306-309.

Zhongguo Shidai Gudian Beijuji (中國十大古典悲劇集, A collection of ten great Chinese tragedies) was published. It aroused considerable interest in tragedy in general and "Chinese tragedy" in particular. In the study of traditional Chinese drama, more and more critics use the generic concept of tragedy and comedy in analysis. In Lun Yuandai Zaju (論元代雜劇, On Yuan dynasty's mixed drama), for example, Shang Tao (商韜) devotes three chapters (out of six) to tragedy, comedy, and drama (as a generic concept) respectively. The same publisher of the two-volume anthology of ten great traditional "Chinese tragedies" subsequently went on to publish two other anthologies: one on ten great traditional "Chinese comedies," and one on "Chinese tragicomedies." Eventually in 1989, Jiao Wen Bin (焦文彬) published a book of substantial length entitled Zhongguo Gudian Beiju Lun (中國古典悲劇論, On classical Chinese tragedy).²⁶

There is another line to the discussion. With the vision of promoting the tragic spirit, writers from fields other than drama have probed the question of "Chinese tragedy." In the second half of the eighties, a series of books appeared discussing the tragic spirit of the Chinese people: Renlei yu Beiju Yishi (人類與悲劇意識, Human beings and the tragic consciousness, 1989),²⁷ Zhongguo

²⁶ Jiao Wen Bin, Zhongguo Gudian Beiju Lun (On Classical Chinese tragedy) (Xi An: Xibei Daxue Chubanshe, 1990).

Wenhua yu Beiju Yishi (中國文化與悲劇意識, Chinese culture and tragic consciousness, 1989),²⁸ Beiju Jingshen yu Minzu Yishi (悲劇精神與民族意識, Tragic spirit and national consciousness, 1990),²⁹ and Lishi de Beiju Yishi (歷史的悲劇意識, The tragic consciousness of history, 1992).³⁰ Simply by glancing at the titles, we can feel the enthusiasm of the writers. Nevertheless, most of their discussions are axiomatic. Anxious to establish a framework for a new national consciousness (or, perhaps, to recover a lost consciousness that was suppressed by the communists), they usually start with grand theoretical assumptions. Their assumptions, unfortunately, are not rigorously discussed.

The weakness of the prevailing discussions of "Chinese tragedy" among both Western and Chinese scholars lies in the fact that they all base their studies on this or that particular Western theory. Through a deductive operation, they strive to come up with some theories to superimpose

²⁷ Zhao Kai, Renlei yu Beiju Yishi (Human beings and the tragic consciousness) (Shanghai: Shelin Chubanshe, 1989).

²⁸ Zhang Fa, Zhongguo Wenhua yu Beiju Yishi (Chinese culture and tragic consciousness) (Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, 1989).

²⁹ Qiu Zi Hua, Beiju Jingshen yu Minzu Yishi (Tragic spirit and national consciousness) (Wuchang: Huazhong Shifan Daxue Chubanshe, 1990).

³⁰ Xu Su Min, Lishi de Beiju Yishi (The tragic consciousness of history) (Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 1992).

onto the Chinese plays. This kind of deductive operation is one-dimensional. It looks at the object through a subjective filter and very often degenerates into a matching exercise. Its conclusion cannot but be biased.

To remedy this, the basic procedure of my study will be inductive.

The Plays: selection and structure

Instead of starting from theory, this study starts with a group of representative plays. I will analyze their forms and meanings before comparing their characteristics with the tragic theories of the Western academic tradition.

We immediately face a fundamental paradox: the Chinese did not employ the term beiju in traditional literary criticism, so how is research on Chinese tragedy possible? To start with any definition of the terms "tragic" or "tragedy" not only violates our basic inductive procedure, but also artificially delimits our field of inquiry. On the other hand, without any definition of terms, it is not possible to select appropriate sample plays for analysis. We need to solve this paradox before we can actually venture into our study.

Although they appreciated the dramatic differently, the Chinese people shared with all races common human emotions. If we do not confine ourselves to the external form of Western tragedy, i.e., if we do not impose the

Western generic canon of tragedy onto traditional Chinese texts, but look into Yuan zaju's emotional effects and core imageries, we may be able to relate some works to the tragic.

According to Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), the suffering of the Greek protagonist should trigger tragic emotions. So, if these emotions are also being evoked when we see (or feel) the suffering of a character in a Yuan zaju, then we may say that it resembles Greek tragedy in at least one aspect.

When we examine some of the oldest Chinese myths, we immediately see in them several isomorphic images of Greek tragedy--a wounded man standing against an approaching tempest, forcing his gaze upward to the darkening sky. It is generally accepted that a people's mythology reflects its psyche. So, by working with those images, giving names to them according to their distinctive characteristics, we can probably find some meaningful tragic dimensions to be used to classify Yuan zaju.

In chapter one of this study, I will use two Chinese myths--Xingtian (刑天) and Jingwei (精衛)--to show that a spirit similar to that of the tragic described by many Western critics is also found in Chinese culture. I will then use the Chinese idea of yin-yang (陰陽), together with a Greimasian structural semantic perspective, to construct a Chinese tragic system.

We will then investigate the Chinese language to

collect the basic terms which the Chinese people employ to describe tragedy and the tragic. For instance, the Chinese did not use the term beiju to describe drama but had the terms "bei" (悲) and "yuan" (怨) (not to be confused with the historical period); both emerged more than two thousand years ago. "Bei" refers to psychological disturbance and "yuan" describes various sentiments of discontent. Sometimes, the Chinese protagonist, in a state of yuan fen nan ping (怨憤難平), unable to resume a state of emotional equilibrium after experiencing feelings of injustice and after falling into a web of agony and discontent, even died for a cause or for a passion.

With this in mind, let us take a look at the terms "tragedy" and "the tragic." While the term tragedy is translated into Chinese as "beiju," the meaning of "bei" in Chinese culture is not equivalent to the term "tragic" as we normally understand it in Western literature (it is, however, closer in meaning to the everyday usage of the "pathetic" in the West). We cannot use "bei-ai" (悲哀, grieved and sorrowful) to describe Oedipus' emotion after he has recognized his real identity, but we can perhaps use "chen-tong" (沈痛, profound grief, deep remorse) or "bei-gai" (悲慨), one of the twenty-four flavors of poetry developed by the Tang poet and theorist Si Kong Tu (司空圖) (837-908), whose complex meaning cannot be translated by one or two words.

The Chinese people also lived through and responded to

suffering. "When the emotions within one are stimulated into activity, they assume verbal forms (情動於中而形於言)," says the anonymous author of the famous Preface to the Mao text of the Book of Poetry (毛詩序).³¹ To the Chinese people, suffering is a matter of the heart. As such, nearly all words signifying different sufferings have a heart radical (i.e., 心 or 忄): "bei" (悲), "yuan" (怨), "fen" (憤), "chou" (愁), "hen" (恨), "can" (慘), to cite just a few. Our responses need words for descriptions. Although the word "bei" alone cannot represent the meaning of the tragic, when it combines with other words to form more complicated concepts, they may. When grouped together, these words form a semantic system. Individual members of this system map with different dramatic expressions.

This is a Wittgenstein language game being played on a Greimas semantic "chess" board. If we can use the similar terminology to describe different art works, there must exist some "family resemblance" between them. In chapter one, we are going to "play" this language game.

After we have derived some tragic dimensions, we will read all the extant Yuan zaju and select from them the representative ones to be analyzed thoroughly.

The four tragic dimensions this study will deal with

³¹ Anonymous, "Preface to the Mao text of the Book of Poetry," in Early Chinese Literary Criticism, Siu-kit Wong, ed. and trans. (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing, 1983), 1.

are bei-ai (悲哀), bei-yuan (悲怨), bei-fen (悲憤), and bei-zhuang (悲壯); Though they stem from the same root--bei (悲)--they have different moods and feelings. They correspond to four different emotional effects evoked by human sufferings. Semantically, they relate to each other in a meaningful way. Although generally speaking bei-ai and bei-yuan are closer to the pathetic, and bei-fan and bei-zhuang are closer to the tragic, it should be noted that the Chinese terms and their Western counterparts are not identical. Chapter one will give a full discussion of the system's derivation, and the meanings of the four dimensions.

The plays to be studied are:

- 1) bei-ai: Feng Yu Lan (馮玉蘭) (The misery of the young lady Feng);
Huo Lang Tan (貨郎旦) (Woman singer of the Huo Lang style).
- 2) bei-yuan: Han Guan Qiu (漢宮秋) (Autumn in the Han palace);
Shuang Fu Meng (雙赴夢) (Dream of two on a journey).
- 3) bei-fen: Dou E Yuan (竇娥冤) (The injustice done to Dou E);
Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui (火燒介子推) (Burning Jie Zi Tui alive).
- 4) bei-zhuang: Zhao Shi Gu Er (趙氏孤兒) (The orphan of the family of Zhao);

Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi (張千替殺妻)

(Zhang Qian kills his sworn-brother's wife).

Among these eight zaju, three are very well-known both in China and in the West. They are Zhao Shi Gu Er, Dou E Yuan, and Han Gong Qiu. These zaju are regarded by many Chinese scholars as great "Chinese tragedies." They are also the three beiju of the Yuan dynasty included in the celebrated Zhongguo Shidai Gudian Beijuji (A collection of ten great Chinese tragedies).³²

When Wang Guowei affirmed that there are beiju in Yuan zaju, he mentions seven titles.³³ Besides the above three zaju, the other four are: Wu Tong Yu (梧桐雨) (Rain on the paulownia tree), Xi Shu Meng [i.e., Shuang Fu Meng], Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui, and Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi. As mentioned above, except for Wu Tong Yu, all the others will be discussed in this study.

All the selected zaju have a strong inclination towards Confucianism, rather than towards Taoism and Buddhism. This is understandable because the metaphysical assumptions of both Taoism and Buddhism are basically non-tragic (not un-tragic!), although in a larger context we still can relate the Western conception of the tragic to

³² Wang Jisi, and others, ed., Zhongguo Shidai Gudian Beijuji (A collection of ten great Chinese tragedies), Vols. 1-2 (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1982).

³³ Wang Guowei, Wang Guowei Xiqu Lunwenji (Collected essays on Chinese opera by Wang Guowei) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1984), 85.

some concepts in both schools of thought. For example, the dual concept of bei-zi (悲智), the sympathetic and the rationalistic modes of praxis, is certainly comparable to the tragic through the mediation of the pathetic.³⁴

According to Aristotle, any dramatic form will have a beginning, a middle, and an end; Yuan zaju's beginning and end are relatively short and straight-forward. Normally a zaju begins by setting up a scene so that the main character can express his passions or thoughts, or recount what has happened to him in the middle. The end of a Yuan zaju is more a conventional justification than a "well-made" resolution. This gives us an insight into understanding the most important distinction between Chinese drama and Western drama: Chinese drama stresses passion; Western drama stresses action.

In the past, Chinese critics did not use the concept of dramatic action to discuss plays, and the normal textual structure of a Yuan zaju consisted of four zhe (折) (literally, folds; semantically, sections) and one xie-zi (楔子) (wedge, the optional short section normally placed before section one, but occasionally between other sections). As the term "act" has the implication of action, and action is not emphasized in Yuan zaju, this study will use "section" and "wedge" in dramatic analysis.

In zaju, the part sung is more important than the part

³⁴ See appendix 3 for the relationship between these two concepts and Unamuno's "the tragic sense of life."

recited or acted. Thus when Yuan people published a zaju, they reduced the recited part to the minimum if they did not eliminate them. Contrarily, while the actions were briefly described, the portion sung were recorded with detailed notes on key and tune.

Yuan zaju's emphasis on the sung part is a result both of the Chinese national personality, i.e., an inclination towards the lyrical, and of the influence of zhu gong diao (諸宮調, various modes of musical key), a story-telling performance prevailing in the North during Song and Yuan dynasties.³⁵ And it is very clear that zhu gong diao actually shaped the most important conventions of Yuan zaju. First, just as there is only one narrator in a zhu gong diao, every zaju is basically sung by the main actor (or actress) only. Second, each zhe (section) of a Yuan zaju is somewhat like a zhu gong diao; it consists of a set of songs in the same key. There are usually four sections in a Yuan zaju, so normally a Yuan zaju consists of four sets of songs. If the zaju is to be sung by the main actor, it is called a mo ben (末本) (male actor script); if by the main actress, dan ben (旦本) (female

³⁵ One reason of Chinese drama's lyrical inclination is historical. When the dramatic form appeared in China, the prevailing literary forms, shi and ci, are lyrical in nature. The playwrights of Yuan zaju first of all are poets. In fact, besides writing zaju, they wrote san qu (散曲) (scattered song), a flexible poetic form directly descended from ci--poetry written to certain tunes with strict tonal patterns and rhyme schemes, in fixed numbers of lines and words, originating in the Tang Dynasty (618-907) and fully developed in the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

actress script). The main actor may take up several roles in a zaju but, except in the xie-zi (the wedge) or some situational songs relating to the scene, the singing remains his privilege. In other words, a Yuan zaju allows several singing characters to appear in different sections of the zaju, but these characters should only be impersonated by the main actor himself.³⁶

This practice is comparable to Greek tragedy before Aeschylus, in which all roles were taken only by the protagonist, who answered the questions of the chorus. It is interesting to note that whereas in Greek tragedy the protagonist answered the chorus in recitative speeches or songs, and the chorus lamented primarily in songs, in Yuan zaju, by and large, the main actor sang and all other performers recited.

Analytical tool

In traditional Western dramaturgy the essence of a play is its action. "Tragedy is an imitation of an action," says Aristotle several times in his Poetics. But unlike Westerners, the Chinese did not use the term "action" when they analyzed drama. Instead they used terms like shi (事) (story), guan mu (關目) (plot, or treatment),

³⁶ There are exceptions, of course. In Feng Yu Lan, a dan ben, there are two singing roles, the main actress sings in section one, and the associate main actress in sections two, three, and four.

qing (情) (emotion), qu (趣) (interests), wei (味) (flavor), and, metaphorically, zhunao (主腦) (main brain). As noted above, a zaju is not divided by acts as Western drama normally is, but by section (zhe), and the short wedge (xie-zi).

To reconcile the discrepancy in East and West critical traditions, I will start my investigation with the method of the imagery school of the Chinese critical tradition.

Imagery, like mythology, is universal. Ancient writers of East and West use images to represent complex thoughts that cannot be expressed in language alone, although it was not until the twentieth century that Western critics formally established the imagery school. At the end of most Yuan zaju, the author usually employs the convention of zheng ming (正名) (proper title) to summarize the core imagery of the zaju in one to two lines of poetry. This provides us a good start for the selection of sample plays.

The basic analytical tool of this study is a hybrid of Li Yu's (1611-1679) thought of zhunao (main-brain), the imagery school of Chinese literature, Kenneth Burke's dramatism, and the yin-yang philosophy in Chinese thought. As chapter one will give a full discussion on the concept of yin-yang, I will save its explanation for later, and elaborate on the other concepts.

Li Yu was classical Chinese drama's most important theorist. Unlike other Chinese critics of the past, who

always focused on the literary value of a play, Li emphasized the theatrical value. And unlike most of the important theorists before his time, who regarded music as the most important aspect of a play, Li stressed the dramatic aspect. To him, a play must be dramatic in order to be theatrical. This thought is reflected in the chaptering (or, pedantically, construction principle) of his treatise--Li Li Weng Ou Hua (李笠翁曲話) (Theatre treatises of Li Li Weng, 1671).³⁷ He divided the treatise into two parts: playwriting and performance, with the playwriting part first. In this part, there are six sections: structure, choice of words, musical aspects of the words, dialogue, gesture and comic interlude, and formal convention. It is quite clear that he places the primary importance on structure. Indeed he puts it very strongly:

The two words jie-gou (structure, composition) should be placed before composing the musical notes and writing the verses. This is analogous to the creation of a living organism. At the moment of the fixation of the essence and the blood, i.e., before the embryo is formed, there should be an idea of the mature form so that once blood drains (starts nourishing [the embryo]), the five sense organs and all the bones of the body will eventually emerge.³⁸

至于“結構”二字，則在引商刻之先，拈抽毫之始。
如造物之賦形：當其精血初凝，胞胎未就，先為制定
全形，使點血而具五官百骸之勢。

³⁷ Li Yu, Li Li Weng Ou Hua (Theatre treatise of Li Li Weng [Li Yu]), ed. Chen Duo (Hunan: Hunan Renmin Chubanshe, 1980).

³⁸ Li Yu, Li Li Weng Ou Hua, 7.

In order to have a good structure, a playwright must establish the zhunao (main brain),³⁹ the flow of the play with respect to the passion and the event concerning the protagonist. Li suggested a "one-person-one-event" (一人一事) formula:

The playwright's primary concern is only directed towards one person--the protagonist. Apart from him, all other characters are secondary. Moreover, all the passions and guan mu (plots or events) involved in the partings and union, joys and sorrows that befall the protagonist are derivative. They are there only for the sake of one major event to him. This one-person-one event formula is the zhunao (main brain) of the play.⁴⁰

一本戲中，有無數人名，究竟俱屬陪賓，原其初心，止為一人而設。即此一人之身，自始至終，離合悲歡，中具無限情由、無窮關目，究竟俱屬衍文，原其初心，又止為事而設。此一人一事，即作傳奇之主腦也。

Li's idea of plot is dialectical. On the one hand he stresses the importance of tuo ke jiu (脫窠臼) (liberation from set patterns⁴¹), on the other, he emphasizes jie huang tang (戒荒唐) (avoiding absurdity).⁴² Thus an effective play should be original, so as to evoke the audience's imagination, and at the same time, be convincing, so as to hold the audience's "suspension of

³⁹ Ibid., 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid. It is interesting that Aristotle also stresses the singularity in the issue of tragedy when he is talking about the criteria of a well-constructed plot.

⁴¹ Li Yu, Li Li Weng Ou Hua, 23.

⁴² Ibid., 32.

disbelief."⁴³

One striking difference between the Chinese and the Western ways of thinking is the orientation towards imagery.⁴⁴ Chinese is the only living and fully pictorial language in the world; Chinese poetics stresses the use of suggestive metaphors; and Chinese critics have a strong tendency to use imagery (often in the form of poems) to express their theories or criticisms.

The key word in the Chinese imagery school is xiang (象), which means an elephant or an image. According to the ancient philosopher Han Fei (韓非, d. B.C. 233), there were elephants in ancient China. Years after they had died and deteriorated, their skeletons were found. From these skeletons, people imagined the original form of the elephant. That is why imagination is xian xiang (想象, literally, to think about the elephant), an image is yi xiang (意象, literally, the elephant in the mind), and an

⁴³ Once again, we find a parallel to Li Yu's ideas in Aristotle's Poetics. In chapter 9 of Poetics, Aristotle states that poetry is more philosophical than history because poetry resides in the domain of the universal, and history in that of the particular; in chapter 24, he stresses that "convincing impossibilities are to be preferred to unconvincing possibilities."

⁴⁴ The materials concerning the Chinese imagery school is based on two articles by Zhang Dai Nian and others, Zhongguo Siwei Pianxiang (中國思維偏向) (The orientations of the Chinese way of thinking) (Beijing: Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Chubanshe, 1991). The two articles are Wang Bo Shuan's "Lun Yi Xiang Siwei" (論意象思維) (On imagery thinking), 62-73, and Jiang Guang Fei's "Zhengtì, Zhijue, Quxiang Bilei ji Qita" (整體、直覺、取象比類及其他) (Holistic, intuitive, suggesting by imagery, and others), 74-92.

object is wu xiang (物象, the thing in reality, like the elephant in its actuality).

Semantically, Xiang's generative power is very great. Though an ancient word, many contemporary terms in Chinese still contain the word "xiang." In Chinese astrology, the expert interprets the kua xiang (卦象, the images of the divination); in astronomy, the scientist observes the tian xiang (天象, celestial phenomena); a physician trained in the traditional Chinese medicine "reads" the mai xiang (脈象, feels the pulse); and a modernist painter who paints abstract paintings belongs to the chou xiang school (抽象派).

According to the Chinese imagery school's critical tradition, yi (意, the meaning), yan (言, the expression), and xiang (象, the image) are three aspects of a concept.⁴⁵ Although they may look obscure, their relationship is not complicated. Suppose we have an idea (yi) in our hearts: we formulate an image (xiang) in our mind, which, in literature, is articulated in speech (yan). On the other hand, as a reader or listener, we first receive from the author the speech (yan); from the speech, we grasp the image (xiang); and, from the image, we understand the meaning (yi) of the author. That is why in the Chinese imagery school critical tradition there is

⁴⁵ The striking similarity of the classical Chinese imagery school and the modern Western discipline of semiotics should be noted.

a saying, "When you have grasped the image, forget about the expression; when you have grasped the meaning, forget about the image." (得象忘言, 得意忘象)

Xiang, thus, mediates the thought and the expression. It should be noted that a xiang (better translated as "imagery" than simply "image") is not just a picture or a visual icon. It is a complex web combining the action, the situation, the nature of the protagonist, and the act.

Kenneth Burke coins the term "dramatism" and expounds it in great detail in A Grammar of Motives (1945). The central question is, "What is involved, when we say what people are doing and why they are doing it?"⁴⁶ To answer this question, Burke employs five key terms--act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose--which are, except for "agent," more or less equivalent to everyday usage. To a journalist, Burke's five terms are old friends, for he should know and use the six W's--when, where, who, what, why, and how--very well. In fact, Burke's five terms and the six W's are closely related:

any complete statement about motives will offer some kind of answers to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose).⁴⁷

Because these five terms are simple, perceivable, and

⁴⁶ Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), xv.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

straightforward, and because Burke creates them out of the universality of human motives, they are of particular usefulness in this study. If a study of Yuan zaju, a form that sprang from the Chinese soil, uses analytical tools which are too restrictive (e.g., Freytag's pyramid) or too culturally biased (unity of action, realism,⁴⁸ etc.), the result will very likely be unsatisfactory.

These five terms are only generative terms in Burke's dramatism. When we group any two of them, we get ten pairs of relationships, which are dialectical and changeable. Burke coins the terms "scene-act ratio," "scene-agent ratio," etc. to describe the ten pairs of relationships. The ratio of the two terms within one particular pair, however, is not fixed. "Using 'scene' in the sense of setting, or background, and 'act' in the sense of action, one could say that 'the scene contains the act.' And using 'agents' in the sense of actors, or actors, one could say that 'the scene contains the agents.'"⁴⁹ Yet, when in aggregate, individual acts may become scene (e.g., demonstration). Sometimes, because of the particular act of an actor (agent), the scene changes. For example, when Dou E is going to be executed, the scene is the execution ground, but she makes prophecies, an act which changes not only the scene's nature (she becomes the activator of the

⁴⁸ Actually, they are both product of a particular time in Western dramatic history.

⁴⁹ Burke, A Grammar of Motives, 3.

scene, not simply a passive receiver of what is done to her), but also its appearance (snow falls on the spot⁵⁰).

Burke sees the embodiment of a dialectic process in tragedy, a process "where the agent's action involves a corresponding passion, and from the sufferance of the passion there arises an understanding of the act, an understanding that transcends the act."⁵¹ This final understanding is very important in tragedy, because it evokes the tragic vision, in which "intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are merged."⁵²

The dialectic of tragedy is a very powerful tool. Burke uses three Greek terms--poiemata, pathemata, and mathemata--to describe this process. In The Idea of a Theatre (1949),⁵³ Francis Fergusson simplifies the terms as purpose, passion, and perception, calls the three-fold process the tragic rhythm, and applies it in a brilliant analysis of ten Western tragedies.

Both Burke and Fergusson see tragedy in the light of rhythm, a term commonly used in Chinese aesthetics. Like Western drama, Chinese drama also creates intrinsic rhythms which generate different structures of feeling.

⁵⁰ Of course, on Yuan zaju's empty stage, this is realized only in the audience's mind. The snow is an eidetic reality, not a physical actuality.

⁵¹ Ibid., 38.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theater (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1949).

These structures, which may seem foreign to untrained Westerners, may in their inner forms be comparable to the tragic rhythm. They not only have moved Chinese audience but also have provoked them to reflect upon the sublime in humanity. So, even if Chinese drama has a structure apparently different from that of the West, we can still use the three concepts to analyze its structure.

Historical Background and Ethical Codes

To fully appreciate Yuan zaju, we need to understand the morality involved in the various dramatic situations. Two aspects are of particular importance in shaping Yuan zaju's morality. They are the historical background and the ethical codes.

The Yuan dynasty was a time when the Han people was ruled by the Mongols, a nomadic tribe which, as we all know, conquered not only China but also the entire Asian continent. It is said that some generals had even proposed to the Khan (the chief commander of the Mongols) to massacre all Chinese and turn the vast North China plain into a huge grassland to raise Mongolian herds. Fortunately, the Khan's advisor, Ye Lu Chu Cai (耶律楚材), intervened with his wise words and reasonable economic plan, and the Khan did not carry out the proposal.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Li Dong Fang, Xi Shuo Yuan Chao (細說元朝) (A long chat on the History of China under the Mongol dynasty) (Hong Kong: Culture Book House, 1969), 219. Ye Lu Chu Cai was not a Mongolian. He came from Northeastern China, and

Notwithstanding, the Mongolian conquerors treated the Chinese badly. A caste system was imposed in China. The Mongols, being the ruling race, came first; semuren (色目人, peoples with colored eyes), and peoples of the minority races in the west came second; Northern Chinese, Khitan tartars, Nuzhen tartars, and Koreans came third; the Southern Chinese, being the Han people proper, and having unyieldingly resisted the Mongolian invaders, belonged to the bottom of the hierarchy.

In the "Introduction" to Six Yuan Plays, Liu Jung-en gives a summary of the severe oppression of the Mongols. This summary is so vivid that I quote it at length:

When a Mongol committed a murder he was exiled, but a Chinese who murdered was executed; when a Mongol beat a Chinese the Chinese was not allowed to return the blow; the Chinese were not permitted to have weapons of any kind, to hunt, learn military arts, rear hordes, pray in a group, or hold fairs. A curfew was imposed every night and lights were forbidden. During the conquest of the Southern Sung dynasty all males of two hundred cities were massacred and women and children enslaved. In the other cities which surrendered all the Chinese were made slaves. Thus slaves acquired in war became so numerous that a slave trade flourished and Chinese slaves were sold overseas.⁵⁵

Under these oppressive measures, the Chinese naturally developed great indignation towards the Mongolian ruler. This explains why many zaju deal with the theme of the

joined the Mongolian army first as a fortune teller, and later, as the chief secretary of state.

⁵⁵ Liu Jung-en, Six Yuan Plays (Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin Books, 1977), 9.

struggle between the good and the evil.

With this in mind, we can understand why the submission of the imperial concubine of the Han palace to the Mongols in Han Gong Giu (Autumn in the Han palace) is so great a loss to the Han emperor. We can also understand why the survival of the little orphan of the family of Zhao is so vital in Zhao Shi Gu Er (The orphan of the family of Zhao).

The theme of Han Gong Giu lies in the emperor's recognition of his helplessness. The emperor, a symbol of the Han people, comes face to face with the realistic national condition that China is helpless, and that the loss of his concubine, a symbol for all the beautiful things Chinese, is irreparable. The illusively prosperous balloon had recently been broken by a sharp pin.

After the balloon exploded, the Chinese still tried to assemble the scattered parts, as Isis tried to gather Osiris' dismembered body in the ancient Egyptian passion play. This psychological urge actually motivates the dramatic action of Zhao Shi Gu Er. The reason is simple: the family name of the extinguished empire, the Song dynasty, is Zhao (趙). To the Chinese, a conquered nation, "Zhao" meant not only a name but a symbol for the Chinese empire, and the orphan, not only a life but the vital force of the Chinese people. That is why every time the zaju was performed in the Yuan dynasty, the response was great enough to arouse a riot. In the Song dynasty, no

matter how inefficient and how corrupt the government was, the Chinese (the Han people at that time) were not treated inhumanely. Yet, in the Yuan dynasty, the Chinese belonged to the lowest class. Inequality was the source of discontent. That is why the Chinese maintained their rebellious attitude towards the Mongols. This collective consciousness of a conquered nation made Zhao Shi Gu Er not only a work that has tremendous aesthetic insight but one that bears profound ethical momentum.

There was a mutual dislike between the new ruler and the Chinese intelligentsia. On the one hand, the Mongols abolished the imperial examination, a practice that had prevailed since the Han dynasty, to prevent the Chinese gentry from moving up into high positions in the government. "The Mongols degraded the Confucian scholars to the ninth class of subjects, lower than the prostitutes who came into the eighth class and only one class higher than the bottom-most, the beggars."⁵⁶ On the other hand, Chinese scholars did not want to work for the new ruler. This was not only because the Mongols were regarded as barbarians by the Han people, but also because of the Chinese scholars' observance of the virtue of chastity, a moral concept originally applied to widows but later extended to women and to government officers in general.

According to Confucianism, female virtues include

⁵⁶ Liu Jung-en, Six Yuan Plays, 9.

- 1) the fidelity of widows towards their deceased husbands, and
- 2) the safeguarding of sexual purity by a woman, through suicide if necessary.

Female chastity, however, should not be viewed simply as an oppressive measure towards women. Although it did become so in the Ming and Qing dynasties, times when it was elevated to a law or a moral necessity, before the Yuan dynasty its observance was optional, more a moral virtue than a golden rule. In particular circumstances, the determination of a woman to observe her chastity was actually an important expression of will power that supported her in her fight against the injustice done upon her. This, as we will see, is the case of Dou E in Dou E Yuan. In the beginning of the zaju, Dou E expresses her sorrow as a young widow, her unhappiness towards her fate, and her determination to observe her chastity. This determination gives her a purpose that motivates her to stand against the forthcoming injustices done to her.

The moral virtue of chastity later extended to government officials. In the Chinese language, there are maxims such as esi shixiao, shijie shida (餓死事小, 失節事大), to lose virtue is more serious than starving to death, and lienu bushi erfu, zhongchen bushi erzhu (烈女不事二夫, 忠臣不事二主), a faithful widow does not marry a second husband, neither does a loyal minister serve two lords. To lend one's loyalties to

a new ruler was, to a government official, a betrayal to the old. This idea of chastity was deeply etched in the minds of most Chinese. As early as the eleventh century B.C. there was a story relating to this concept:

In the kingdom of Zhou the two old men Bo Yi and Shu Qi believed King Wu wrong in rising against King Zhou. They were ashamed and fled to Shouyang Mountain, where they composed songs of loyalty and lived on a wild plant called Wei. But one day an old woman came to them and said: "I am told that you are wise men and from loyalty to the old prince will not eat the food of King Wu of Zhou. But even these wild plants belong to the Zhou dynasty, so why do you eat them?" So the old men's pride was wounded and they died of hunger.⁵⁷

武王伐紂，夷齊不從，隱於首陽山，採薇而食。王摩子入山，難之曰：「君不食周粟，而隱周山，食周薇，奈何？」二人遂不食薇，經七天，天遣白鹿乳之。二人私念，此鹿食之必美。鹿知其意，不復來，二人遂餓而去。

The virtue of chastity is called zhen (貞) in Chinese. A widow who observes her fidelity is a zhennu (貞女). When the virtue of chastity is applied to a government official, it is called zhong (忠) (loyalty). Thus, an official loyal to his sovereign is a zhong chen (忠臣), and the qualities of loyalty, faithfulness, and staunchness is zhong cheng (忠誠).

Zhong and zhen can combine to form the term zhong zhen (忠貞, loyal and steadfast), the most graceful quality of

⁵⁷ Yuan Ke, Dragons and Dynasties: An Introduction to Chinese Mythology, ed. and trans. Kim Echlin and Nie Zhixiong (Singapore: Penguin Books, 1993), 162.

any person who is serving either a cause or a good master. When a woman has tried her best, even by committing suicide, to avoid being raped, or when an official does not bow to the new ruler even in face of death, the Chinese will call them zhong zhen bu chu (忠貞不屈, staunch and indomitable).

To observe his loyalty to the Song dynasty, Wen Tian Xiang (文天祥), the major pillar of the retreating Southern Song dynasty, did not yield to the Mongols even after he had been kept alone in a dark room for three years. No matter how high the position, and no matter how much money the new ruler offered him, Wen remained unswerving in his loyalty. "From ancient times to the present, every man will die some day; it is on the Han people's history that my red heart shall shed rays" (人生自古誰無死，留取丹心照汗青) : these two lines he wrote in prison have become the invincible spirit of the Chinese people. This spirit can be described as zhong zhen bu chu.

Wen Tian Xiang observed his loyalty by not yielding to the new ruler. Historians praise his death by the term cheng ren (成仁), to die for a righteous cause.

Ren (benevolence, kind-heartedness, humanity), in fact, is the most valuable ethical ideal for a Confucian scholar. It is on a higher level than zhong because zhong is only ren's particular manifestation. "Ren zhe ai ren (仁者愛人, a man with the quality of ren loves mankind),"

Confucius says. Loyalty is only a particular aspect of love, so a Confucian scholar should reflect upon his relation to a master who does not have benevolence. That is the situation of Jie Zhi Tui in Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui (Burning Jie Zi Tui alive). Because Jie's master does not honor the good deeds--deeds of zhong and ren--Jie has done to him, Jie understands clearly that his master is not a ren jun (仁君), a king who does not have the quality of ren. This recognition motivates Jie's retreat to the mountain.⁵⁸

Besides ren, there are four other fundamental ethical causes in Chinese culture: yi (義, justice, righteousness), li (禮, propriety, rites, courtesy, etiquette), zhi (智, wisdom, rationality), and xin (信, fidelity, trust, faith, confidence). Together, they are called wu chang (五常), the five constant virtues which every Chinese should observe. These five virtues are often mentioned side by side with san gang (三綱), the three

⁵⁸ Of course, we can also interpret the zaju as a subtle way to express the ideology of yin shi (隱士) (recluse, hermit) of the Yuan dynasty, during which many Chinese scholars retreated to the country. Having no incentive to serve the Mongolian ruler, they became yin shi. When they were alone, they expressed in poetry their contemplative lives and their lamentations of things past. That is why there is a pessimistic tone prevailing in the Yuan dynasty's san qu (scattered poem, the prevailing form of lyric poem in the Yuan dynasty). Due to the popular nature of Yuan zaju's performance conditions, most zaju do not have san qu's pessimistic tone. Nevertheless, we can feel this pessimistic tone in section four of Han Gong Qiu, in which the Han emperor retreats to the garden and falls into melancholy.

cardinal guides: jun zhen (君臣, ruler guides subject), fu zi (父子, father guides son), and fu fu (夫婦, husband guides wife). Unlike the code of brotherhood or friendship, these three basic human relationships have a hierarchic structure.

San gang differs from wu chang in that we are "born into" the relationships, but we need to learn to know the virtues, and even though we know them, we have choice. Whether the virtues will be observed depends upon a man's moral consciousness. To put it in more familiar terms, the three relationships belong to the body, and the five virtues to the mind (or heart, a term more appropriate for Chinese matters). Thus filial piety is an obligation which everybody should observe because we are born into this ethical hierarchy, and we are obliged to conform to the ethical code. There is a Chinese saying which illustrates this, "Of the hundred behaviors, filial piety comes first." (百行孝為先) Yet, as one grows and becomes socialized, one learns other virtues as well. At times, one may need to face the conflict between what he is born into and what he has learned. This conflict has created many dramatic possibilities. In Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi, Zhang Qian confesses to the court that it is he instead of his sworn-brother who has killed his sworn-brother's lascivious wife. This righteous act, however, immediately traps him into a conflict between filial piety and the code of justice. If we understand this, we should know how

great an ethical dilemma he is facing. This might be regarded as the conflict between the body and the mind, a basic conflict in Western philosophy.

Of the five constant virtues, ren and yi are the most important. They often come together in the Chinese language. Thus when one has done everything called for by humanity and duty (i.e., has done everything to help another), it is ren zhi yi jin (仁至義盡). An army which fights in a humane way for a noble cause is ren yi zhi shi (仁義之師).

Confucius says, "When a man is not benevolent, what can he do with the rites? And what can he do with music?"⁵⁹ From this we know that rites or rituals (li) and music (arts in general) are not so important as humanity.⁶⁰ If li, the third in the five constant virtues, comes after ren, then zhi (wisdom) and xing (faith), the fourth and the fifth virtues, certainly follow. What about yi?

Between ren and yi, ren is more important. A contemporary Chinese philosopher explains this very well:

With regard to the virtues of the individual, Confucius emphasized human-heartedness and righteousness, especially the former. Righteousness

⁵⁹ Confucius, Lun Yu (論語) (The analects), III: 3.

⁶⁰ This explains why there is a strong inclination towards literary pragmatism. This pragmatism, however, is not superficial and selfish; rather, it is ethical and humanistic. The arts may not necessarily embrace politics, but they should not harm humanity.

(yi) means the "oughtness" of a situation. It is a categorical imperative. Every one in society has certain things which he ought to do, and which must be done for their own sake, because they are the morally right things to do. If, however, he does them only because of other non-moral considerations, then even though he does what he ought to do, his action is no longer a righteous one... The idea of yi is rather formal, but that of jen [ren] (human-heartedness) is much more concrete. The formal essence of the duties of man in society is their "oughtness," because all these duties are what he ought to do. But the material essence of these duties is "loving others," i.e., jen [ren] or human-heartedness... Hence in the Analects we see that Confucius sometimes uses the word jen [ren] not only to denote a special kind of virtue, but also to denote all the virtues combined, so that the term "man of jen [ren]" becomes synonymous with the man of all-round virtue. In such contexts, jen [ren] can be translated as "perfect virtue."⁶¹

Ren's primal status among the ethical codes in Confucianism is reflected also in its semantic field. Besides human-heartedness, humanity, and benevolence, ren means also sensitivity and, interestingly, kernel (i.e., nut). Thus, the peanut is called huasheng ren (花生仁), and the walnut kernel, hetao ren (核桃仁). There is undoubtedly an intrinsic relationship between ren and humankind. First, the visual representation of the word ren (仁) is derived from the word for humankind and personality (人); second, both words have the same sound in the same pitch. Humankind is also called ren. This is true both in Mandarin and in Cantonese.

⁶¹ Fung Yu-Lan, A Short History of Chinese Philosophy, ed. Derk Bodde (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 42-43.

In the ren's semantic family, there are several words which have ethical implications, and which have the same sound but different pitches. They are "忍" (ren, in its third pitch), "認," and "韌" (both in their fourth pitch). "忍" means to bear, to endure, or to tolerate; "認" means to recognize, to enter into a certain relationship with, to admit, or to undertake to do something; "韌" means pliable but strong, tenacious, and tough. There is a structural element common in all three words: "刃." "刃" (ren, in its fourth pitch) is the edge of a knife. The semantic connection is very clear: to endure something (忍) is as if there is a knife cutting right into the heart; when the leather is to be put side by side with a knife (韌), it is to test its tenacity; and in order to recognize something (認), we need to have the patience (忍) either to pursue it in speech or to grasp the meaning of it through words.

The semantic field of ren suggests that it is soft outside and hard inside, a harmonized structure of the yin and yang qualities. In Shuang Fu Meng, even though Zhuge Liang, the Shu Kingdom's prime minister, feels a great loss when he knows that Zhang Fei and Guan Yu, the two most powerful generals, have been entrapped and killed, he decides not to report the news to the chief commander, Liu Bei, so as not to imperil morale. This is a decision of a military expert. This is also a praxis out of ren, for if he report the news right away, the chief commander will

react irrationally to revenge his two sworn-brothers, which will cause unnecessary loss of lives.

In praxis, ren finds expression in many forms: a white lie, offering a cup of water to someone in need, showing sympathy to a sufferer, being loyal to one's friend, forgiving the wrongs of another, etc. The central element of ren, however, is to love others. So, a man with the virtue of ren is considerate, sympathetic, and forgiving. In section three of Feng Yu Lan, when the imperial inspector hears from the drifting ship the lamentation of Feng Yu Lan, the young girl whose family members have been massacred, he asks his followers to go over to see what has happened. "Do not frighten her, only ask her what has happened," he says. This line reveals his constant praxis of ren.

The praxis of ren, a matter of human-heartedness, is qualitative rather than quantitative. Thus a man who donates one million dollars for a school but denies a dime to a beggar is only a "philanthropist," not a man of ren. Nevertheless, an act stemming from ren sometime may cause one to lose one's life. In Dou E Yuan, no sooner has the young widow stood all the physical torture to deny the unjust accusation against her than she admits the murder; she cannot bear the threat that her elderly mother-in-law will be beaten. The price of this act of ren is indeed very high.

Although ren (仁) is the most important ethical virtue

in a Confucian culture, its dramatic possibility is not so great when compared with that of yi (義). The concept of yi is not only important among the literati, but also finds its way into society and establishes its roots among the commoners. It is the most important ethical code in popular drama and novels.⁶² When a man places righteousness above family bonding, e.g., turning in his gangster son to the police, the Chinese will use the saying "da yi mie qin" (大義滅親, sacrifice ties of blood to righteousness) to praise him. A magnanimous act undertaken for the public good is yi ju (義舉), and a person who upholds justice is called yi shi (義士). The spirit of yi can generate courage; out of the emotion of yi fen (義憤, righteous indignation) a common man will commit a great deed.

Interestingly enough, from the perspective of Chinese etymology, the word yi (義), combining the word yang (羊) (sheep) and the word wo (我) (I or me, depending on the position), relates to the following words: mei (美), shan (善), yi (儀), and xi (犧), which mean beauty, good, ceremony, and sacrifice, respectively. The semantic web of these words strongly suggests the dramatic movement that the term bei-zhuang can generate. To use the similar terminology of the structural linguist Roman Jakobson, yi

⁶² For example, the historical novel (or historical romance) is called yan yi (演義) (literally, the acting out of justice) in China, e.g., San Guo Yan Yi (三國演義) (The romance of the Three Kingdoms).

(義) is in the same paradigmatic axis with yi (儀), and xi (犧). Perhaps we can interpret this to mean that justice, or righteousness, is the foundation of ritualistic sacrifice. On the other hand, yi (義) relates to mei (美) and shan (善) syntagmatically. Yi, thus, is one of the good qualities in Chinese ethical aesthetics. It differs from mei and shan in the element wo (I or me), so yi implies self-sacrifice, which, as will be shown, is the act of bei-zhuang that the characters manifest in Zhao Shi Gu Er and Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi.

The characters in the eight Yuan zaju we are going to discuss are created out of the Chinese minds that were living under Mongolian oppression. In this historical context, a time when the Chinese ideal of existential harmony was at stake, Confucian ethics was a subversive force. "Forfeit your life and take justice!" (捨生取義) says Mencius. "Sacrifice your body and achieve human-heartedness!" (殺身成仁) says Confucius. These two maxims give us hints to relate the Chinese tragic dimensions to Western tragic theories.

Chapter 1: The Tragic Dimensions of Traditional Chinese Drama

To students of drama, tragedy is a genre, well-defined. To a serious student of tragedy, however, it is a problem, badly shaped. Indeed, tragedy is a complicated problem whose shape is, like a ghost, constantly changing.⁶³

Just as one person may see a ghost but another may not, one person may see the problems of tragedy, another may not. No matter if you see ghosts or not, however, if you have the patience to read various reports and arguments concerning ghosts, you will be aware of the complexity of "the ghost phenomenon." While a thinker may argue that ghosts do not exist in modern times because they are a product of superstition, which is out of pace with "the modern temper," a scientist may prove, with the assistance of modern equipment, the existence of metaphysical spirits.

The philosophizing of the tragic

It is said that the twentieth century does not produce tragedies as grand as those of ancient Greece, Elizabethan England, and seventeenth-century France, but our century, fortunately or unfortunately, has produced a "harvest" of tragic expressions in life and philosophy. While the term

⁶³ For the discussion of the multiplicity of tragedy, please refer to appendix 1.

tragedy is used indiscriminately to refer to human disasters, literary critics have been trying their best to confine the usage of the term to works which might have a very different outlook from tragedies of the past. That is why Walter Kaufmann calls for a return to the basics--Greek tragedies.⁶⁴

The first important characteristic of the tragic quest of this century is the shift of attention from the literary form to the tragic human condition. Thinkers reflect on metaphysical questions of human suffering, and ask questions such as: What is the absolute criterion of tragedy? Is the tragic an absolute quality of human society?

Three philosophers are particularly important in shaping the tragic consciousness of contemporary Western men. They are Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), Max Scheler (1874-1928), and Karl Jaspers (1883-1969).⁶⁵

Unamuno coins the phrase "the tragic sense of life" in his book of the same title.⁶⁶ He regards human life as fundamental. There is, however, one inevitable

⁶⁴ Walter Kaufmann, Tragedy and Philosophy (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁶⁵ In addition, the literary critic Northrop Frye has produced a powerful theory--the theory of myth--in which tragedy is related to the cyclical natural rhythm and its imagery. It has influenced many literature students. In chapter 6, his idea will be compared with similar ideas in Chinese literature.

⁶⁶ Miguel de Unamuno, Tragic Sense of Life, trans. J.E. Crawford Flitch (New York: Dover Publications, 1954).

contradiction each man of flesh and blood must face: the contradiction of the human desire for eternity and his knowledge of the finitude of human life. Unamuno calls this awareness the tragic sense of life.⁶⁷

Max Scheler tries to establish the ontology of the tragic in his famous article "On the Tragic."⁶⁸ He stresses the importance of value in any consideration of the tragic. "In a universe free of values, such as that constructed by mechanical physics, there are no tragedies," says Scheler.⁶⁹ His idea of the tragic in fact is phenomenological because he stresses subjectivity in the understanding of the tragic. To him, a phenomenon is tragic only if some value is destroyed.⁷⁰ He takes the concept of value relatively so that "it is not necessary human life; a plan, a desire, a power, a possession, or a faith can all cause the tragic through its destruction forced upon by an entity of lower value."⁷¹ Scheler coins the term "the tragic knot" to describe the most tragic

⁶⁷ For a discussion of Unamuno's notion with similar ideas in Chinese thoughts, see appendix 3.

⁶⁸ Max Scheler, "On the Tragic," in Moderns on Tragedy, ed. Lionel Abel (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, 1967.) 249-267.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 252.

⁷⁰ It is interesting that in China, at about the same time, the writer Lu Shun (鲁迅) dichotomizes tragedy and comedy in a way similar to Scheler's "value theory of tragedy."

⁷¹ Max Scheler, "On the Tragic," 252.

situation where "the same power which has brought either itself or another object to a very high positive value becomes its destroyer--especially if this takes place in the very act of its achievement."⁷² This certainly echoes Aristotle's idea of synchronization of *peripeteia* (reversal) and *anagnorisis* (recognition).

While Max Scheler stresses the importance of the destruction of value in any tragedy, Karl Jaspers stresses the discrepancy between awareness and potential. Whenever a man's awareness exceeds his potential but keeps striving for his target, there is tragedy. Man strives to transcend his limitations toward an unattainable destiny because he has the tragic knowledge that his being will be elevated through this process. Jaspers regards this as the ideology of tragedy. To him, whether tragedy affirms or refutes life, "tragedy is not enough."

Jaspers perhaps is one of the most serious critics of tragedy. Embracing with a metaphysical consciousness derives from all the calamities in the first half of the twentieth century, he is deeply aware of the insufficiency of tragedy as a moral force. He first distinguishes between the tragic reality and the tragic pose, two concepts that people often mix up. As a form, tragedy gives people pleasure; as an ideology, tragedy gives people an illusion--that it is meaningful for man to

⁷² Ibid., 256.

embrace destruction. If a man stays on the tragic plane, being self-assertive and self-elevated, he will not see the destructions of his tragic reality. Jaspers, thus, proposes the concept of the "Encompassing."

The "Encompassing" (das Umgreifende) is a complicated metaphysical concept whose full meaning is very difficult to give here. Basically it is a process toward Being. It unifies the subject-being and the object-being. There are seven modes. The being which embraces us is called "world" and "Transcendence." The being which we are is called "existence," "consciousness-as-such," "spirit," and "Existenz." The common medium of their realization is "reason." The "Encompassing" in us is actually the simultaneous embracement of all the seven modes.⁷³

To put it simpler, the "Encompassing" is a consciousness that "sees" beyond the horizon, not only of our own sight, awareness, and spirit, but also of our world and our environment. Yet since we "see" beyond, by reasoning, we know that there is always something that at any given moment we do not see. In his "Introduction" to Jaspers' Tragedy is Not Enough, Karl W. Deutsch gives a good analogy of the "Encompassing": it is as if we are climbing a mountain. The higher we climb the further we see. We see more and more and we know that even if we are

⁷³ Gerhard Knauss, "The concept of the 'Encompassing' in Jaspers' Philosophy," in Paul Arthur Schilpp, ed., The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court Publishing Company, 1974), 141-175

capable of climbing to the top of the mountain, there is still something we will not see.⁷⁴ This actually is the relationship between the area and the circumference of a circle: the larger the area a circle embraces, the greater the external world the circumference touches.

The Tragic Spirit

For those who are still concerned with tragedy as a dramatic form, however, the problem of the multiplicity of tragic expressions is the first hurdle. This multiplicity adds to our study one more difficulty (besides the absence of the term beiju 悲劇 in traditional Chinese criticism) because we cannot venture into our analysis of traditional Chinese drama with one simple but clear definition of tragedy. As shown in appendix 1, from the level of form to the level of philosophy, it is not possible to resolve the "essence" of tragedy. For the purpose of this study, it seems not very relevant to assume a philosophical attitude, and to produce an ontology of tragedy, which, even if really executed, might only be another item in the vast landscape of tragic theories. Perhaps we should draw wisdom from Aristotle's doctrine of the mean, a notion which resonates with Confucian philosophy, and grasp the problem in the domain which lie between the abstract philosophical and the restrictive formal. In The Theatre

⁷⁴ Karl W. Deutsch, "Introduction," in Karl Jaspers, Tragedy is Not Enough (Boston: Beacon Press, 1952).

in Search of a Fix, Robert W. Corrigan suggests that

a much more effective way of dealing with the subject would be to distinguish between the form of tragedy, which constantly changes--even in the work of a single dramatist--and the tragic, which is a way of looking at experience that has persisted more or less unchanged in the Western world from the time of Homer to the present.⁷⁵

Corrigan's strategy does shed light on our study for he stresses the perception of tragic experiences. He sees man's struggle with necessity as "the constant of tragic drama."⁷⁶ But several questions immediately arise: how do we know that what we will have deduced is the constant of tragedy? Is there only one constant? If a play does not satisfy the requirement of "the constant," are we justified in saying that it is not a tragedy?

These questions are no less philosophical than the previous method. Even if there is "one" constant in Western tragedies from Homer to the present, we cannot logically deduce that this is the only constant in all tragedies, of the future, or from other dramatic traditions. This indeed is the "absolute" tragic--the limitation and contingency of human experience. "We shall fail to understand the mysteriousness of the essence of being-human, . . . if we snatch at value judgments of any

⁷⁵ Robert W. Corrigan, The Theatre in Search of a Fix (New York: Delacorte Press, 1973), 5.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 9.

inner dividedness of the protagonist and not by some external force."⁷⁹ This is fatal, for we cannot resolve our inner dividedness except by embracing our own doom. Corrigan defines the tragic view of life as an attitude with which we search meaning in the inevitable doom despite our conscious self-knowledge and the acceptance of our fate. The process of searching for meaning in the face of our inevitable doom, whether successful or not, generates the tragic spirit. "It is the struggle itself that is the source of the dramatic significance, and it is out of this struggle with necessity that heroism is born."⁸⁰

Corrigan's methodology does shed light in our study. In particular, the term "tragic spirit" can be a good starting point in our enquiry, for it is a concept that has not been "polluted" by the contemporary linguistic environment. While the term "tragedy" and "tragic" can be used about everyday events to describe general disasters and human sufferings, the term "the tragic spirit" cannot. A newspaper may print the headline "Tragic Earthquake Hits Los Angeles" and nobody will challenge the editor. In a "tragedy of a conflagration," the courageous firemen who rush into the burning fire to save the children inside would, however, be described only as heroic. We would not

⁷⁹ Ibid., 8.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 7-8.

kind."⁷⁷ Nevertheless, in our study, this "constant" might be a crucial bridge between the Western tragic tradition and traditional Chinese drama. If there are Chinese cultural forms--myth, legend, literature (including historical records)--that contain this "constant" or, simpler, if there are Chinese expressions--proverbs or words--that are analogous to this "constant," we will be able to construct, through various semantic operations, some tragic dimensions within the Chinese cultural context. On the other hand, if we cannot find forms and expressions in Chinese culture that describe the "constant," the tension that arises will still be a starting point for our reflection towards a more universal perspective of the problem of the tragic. What follows is an attempt to study the tragic dimensions of traditional Chinese drama through the "contingent constant" of Western tragedies.

Starting with an assertive analysis of the most important characteristic of tragedy, Corrigan comes up with the notion that the constant in tragedy is "the tragic view of life" or "the tragic spirit."⁷⁸ To Corrigan, tragedy distinguishes itself from all other dramatic forms in that all catastrophes are caused by "the

⁷⁷ Martin Heidegger, "The Limitation of Being," in Lionel Abel ed. Moderns on Tragedy, 312.

⁷⁸ Robert W. Corrigan, The Theatre in Search of a Fix, 6.

say that they are "tragic heroes," and we cannot apply the term "tragic spirit" to the heroism of the firemen.

Perhaps this is why scholars often use the term "the tragic spirit" when they talk about tragedy.⁸¹ Besides Corrigan, both of the two most influential figures in the debate of "the death of tragedy"--Joseph Wood Krutch (1893-1970) and George Steiner--use the concept of the tragic spirit as their starting point to define tragedy. It is worthwhile to take a closer look at their arguments because, as critics of tragedy, they must have selected the most important aspects of tragedy in order to knock it down.

In the chapter "The Tragic Fallacy" of The Modern Temper,⁸² Krutch argues that tragedy cannot exist in modern times because tragedy is "a profession of faith," the faith in the greatness of human beings: "every real tragedy... is an affirmation of faith in life, a declaration that even if God is not in his Heaven, then at least Man is in his world."⁸³ To Krutch, faith is a product of the human mind, which changes with respect to history. When the reality that produces faith has changed,

⁸¹ The Greek scholar Angelos Terzakis, for example, begins his reflections of tragedy with a chapter entitled "The Tragic Spirit." Angelos Terzakis, Homage to the Tragic Muse, trans. Athan H. Anagnostopoulos (Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978), 4-25.

⁸² Joseph Wood Krutch, "The Tragic Fallacy," in The Modern Temper (New York: Harvest/HBJ, 1957), 79-97.

⁸³ Ibid., 86.

the human mind will no longer understand faith. Modern men can no longer express genuine faith because they do not believe in faith any more. Without faith, the modern temper does not find the urgency of tragedy compelling. Krutch stresses subjectivity in tragedy and amends Aristotle's definition.

According to Aristotle, tragedy is the imitation of a noble action. To the Greek philosopher, nobility is an absolute value, existing objectively. This is exactly where Krutch disagrees. To the critic of modern temper, "no one knows what a noble action is or whether or not such a thing as nobility exists in nature apart from the mind of man."⁸⁴ Thus, to Krutch, "tragedy is a representation of actions considered as noble."⁸⁵ The word "considered" should be carefully noted because it explains why, to him, tragedy is a fallacy that has lost its reality in the modern time:

the Tragic Fallacy depends ultimately upon the assumption which man is so readily makes that something outside his own being, some "spirit not himself"--be it God, Nature, or that still vaguer thing called a Moral Order--joins him in the emphasis which he places upon this or that and confirms him in his feelings that his passions and his opinions are important.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Ibid., 83.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 93.

According to Krutch, it is our faith in the Tragic Spirit which produces tragedies. The strength of the Tragic Spirit is so unfathomable that it has fallen into the deep well of mystery, which modern men do not feel. He concludes that

Today these great expressions of a great faith have declined, not merely into poetry but into a kind of poetry whose premises are so far from any we can really accept that we can partially and dimly grasp its meaning. . . . We read but we do not write tragedies. The tragic solution of the problem of existence, the reconciliation to life by means of the tragic spirit is . . . now only a fiction surviving in art.⁸⁷

To Steiner, tragedy is irreparable, and the tragic hero is in full knowledge of his doom. This distinguishes the tragic hero from other heroes. The cause of tragedy, however, is not justifiable. Tragedy has nothing to do with justice and reason because this kind of self-destructive tragic spirit can only be motivated by undefinable demonic forces from some mysterious domain outside the reach of normal human consciousness.

Both the tragic and the heroic have the will to encounter disaster. The tragic hero differs from the epic hero or the romantic hero in his view of destiny. In The Death of Tragedy, Steiner cites Eteocles' walking towards his own doom as example illustrating the spirit of a tragic hero. To Steiner, a tragedy, then, is an imitation

⁸⁷ Ibid., 97.

of an action of the tragic hero who consciously journeys to his inevitable doom while enduring suffering on his way.

Steiner has constructed a web which connects neatly and intrinsically the terms which suffuse tragedy: the will, the disaster, the tragic hero, the heroic, the action, the inevitable doom, the suffering, and the endurance.

Both Krutch and Steiner see the tragic spirit as essential in tragedy but they look at the spirit from different view points. Krutch stresses faith; Steiner stresses injustice. The dignity of human beings is preserved in Krutch's tragic conception; the value of human integrity is destroyed in Steiner's construction. To Steiner, the tragic spirit is the product of "demonic energies which prey upon the soul and turn it to madness or which poison our will so that we inflict irreparable outrage upon ourselves and those we love."⁸⁸ This is certainly a reasonable observation. We see this kind of destructive tragic act in many Greek tragedies. If a man is "reasonable" or practical enough he certainly will not burn himself to save his name or for a symbolic cause whose importance is unperceived by common sense.

But men do burn themselves, East and West, either in heroic strokes or in quiet determination, to save their

⁸⁸ Steiner, The Death of Tragedy, 7.

names, to serve a "holy" cause, or to regain some lost values. If the tragic spirit is the spirit to face one's own doom with dignity and determination, we can immediately say that this spirit also exists, even prevails, in Chinese culture.

The action motivated by the tragic spirit can be described in a Chinese saying: ming zhi bukewei er weizi (明之不可為而為之)--commit an impossible act with the full knowledge of its consequence--one's failure or one's destruction.⁸⁹

In Chinese history there are many acts that can be described as ming zhi bukewei er weizi. In the first systematic history of China--Shi Ji (史記) (Records of history), which is itself a product of great determination and endurance--Sima Qian (司馬遷) narrates many actions which are imbued with a spirit almost identical to the Western notion of the tragic spirit. For example, in "Xin Ling Jun Jiu Zhao" (信陵君救趙) (Prince Xin Ling saving the kingdom Zhao), there is a famous scene of ming zhi bukewei er weizi.

The story is very close in spirit to Western drama: it starts with a problem to be solved by the protagonist. In the beginning of the story, we are told that Prince Xin

⁸⁹ We find similar ideas expressed in Pirandello and Terzakis' writings. Pirandello talks about a tragic hero is one who takes one absolute action and bears no matter what consequence comes forth, and Terzakis defines the tragic spirit as a spirit embodied in a tragic hero who strives for the meaning through voluntary destruction.

Ling of the kingdom of Wei decided to help the kingdom of Zhao, whose king's younger brother is the husband of his elder sister, against the siege of the powerful army of Qin. He sought help from the king of Wei. The king originally had sent one hundred thousand men heading towards the scene but was threatened by an ambassador from Qin and so he ordered the army to halt. In view of this, Prince Xin Ling decided to head towards the scene with all his might--himself and a hundred or so of his followers. To describe the will of the Prince, Sima Qian uses the sentences "ji bu du sheng er ling Zhao wang" (計不獨生而令趙亡) (to determine that he would not survive the perishing of the kingdom of Zhao) and "yu Zhao ju si" (與趙俱死) (to die together with the kingdom of Zhao). Certainly, this is the tragic spirit revealed in a Chinese context. Hence, long before any direct communication of East and West, Chinese and Westerners arrive at a common spirit in the face of necessity.

Here perhaps we can pause a moment and see how Steiner's notion of the tragic is analogous to the saying ming zhi bukewei er weizi. Steiner cites Eteocles' walking towards his own doom and the Greek fleets' expedition to Sicily as examples to illustrate the tragic spirit. They both journey to their ruin with full knowledge of it. Corrigan calls this kind of action "men's struggle with necessity,"⁹⁰ and Steiner says that this is "the tragic

design drawn by Thucydides."⁹¹ To Steiner, tragedy has nothing to do with justice and reason because this kind of self-destructive tragic spirit can only be motivated by undefinable demonic forces from some mysterious domain outside the reach of normal human consciousness. Comparatively speaking, Chinese culture lacks this mysterious domain. When a Chinese commits an impossible act, there is usually a very strong ethical reason behind it. He sees his journey to his own doom as an obligation more than a "struggle." This point is extremely crucial in our derivation of the tragic dimension. Yet, whether obligation or struggles, it is necessity, at least from the perspective of the person involved.

Bei-zhuang

In Chinese language there is a term which precisely describes the mood, the spirit, and the atmosphere involved in this kind of tragic action. The term is 悲壯 (bei-zhuang) . When Eteocles went forward to his doom, he said:

We are already past the care of gods.
For them our death is the admirable offering.
Why then delay, fawning upon our doom?⁹²

⁹⁰ Corrigan, The Theatre in Search of a Fix, 7.

⁹¹ Steiner, The Death of Tragedy, 7.

⁹² Ibid.

A Chinese will describe this atmosphere as bei-zhuang because it involves both the sentimental and the heroic aspects of the mood of the tragic hero. Perhaps we may roughly translate it as "tragic-heroic."

From ancient China to the present day, Chinese people incessantly celebrate, admire, and make odes to actions that are bei-zhuang, as mood, spirit, or act. When Jing Ke set forth to Qin to assassinate its mighty emperor, everyone cried in the farewell scene because the act is bei-zhuang. Whether the assassination succeeded or failed, Jing Ke the assassin would die. Perhaps that is why for the first time in history, Sima Qian wrote biographies of famous Chinese assassins. In the farewell scene of Jing Ke's biography, he writes:

Then he set out. The crown prince and all their associates who knew what was happening put on white robes and caps of mourning to see the party off, accompanying them as far as the Yi River. After they had sacrificed to the god of the road and chosen their route, Kao Chien-li struck up his lute and Ching K'o joined in with a song in the mournful pien-chih mode [Jing Ke]. Tears streamed from the eyes of the company. Ching K'o came forward and sang this song:

Wings cry hsiao-hsiao,
Yi waters are cold.
Brave men, once gone,
Never come back again.

Shifting to the yu mode with its martial air, Ching K'o sang once more; this time the eyes of the men flashed with anger and their hair bristled beneath their caps. Then he mounted his carriage and set off,

never once looking back.⁹³

遂發。太子及賓客知其事者，皆白衣冠以送之，至易水之上。既祖，取道，高漸離擊筑，荆軻和而歌，為變徵之聲，士皆垂淚涕泣。又前而歌曰：「風蕭蕭兮易水寒，壯士一去兮不復還！」復為羽聲慷慨，士皆瞋目，髮盡上指冠。於是，荆軻就車而去，終已不顧。

I quote at length to show how the tragic and the heroic are involved in bei-zhuang. The first tone Jing Ke sings is in the pien-chin (變徵) mode, a mode comparable to some minor keys, and he repeats the song in the yu (羽) mode, a tone comparable to some major keys. Bei-zhuang, thus, is a combination of sad destiny and the heroic spirit. The song Jing Ke sings is perhaps a description of the tragic spirit with a very strong Chinese flavor--lyrical, aesthetic, and intermingles the emotion and the scene. From an aesthetic point of view, we can say that bei-zhuang is a nuance-complex involving the purpose, the mood, the scene, the action, the destination, and the tragic spirit.

As expressed in introduction to this study, mythology reflects the psyche of a people. Indeed, there are some Chinese myths which we will use the term bei-zhuang to describe. Here are two of them:

Xingtian

Xingtian tried to seize the Emperor's throne. For

⁹³ Ssu-ma Ch'ien, "The Biography of Ching K'o," trans. Burton Watson, in Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century, ed. Cyril Birch (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1965), 113-113.

this the Emperor cut off his head and buried him on Mount Changyang. Then Xingtian used his nipples as his eyes and his navel as his mouth, brandishing a shield and an axe.⁹⁴

刑天舞干戚

刑天與帝爭神，帝斷其首，葬之常羊之山，乃以乳為目，以臍為口，操干戚以舞。

Jingwei

On Fajiu Hill grew a lot of mulberry trees. Among them lived a bird which looked like a crow, but had a colorful head, a white bill and two red claws. Its call sounded like its name: Jingwei. The bird was said to be Emperor Yandi's youngest daughter, Nuwa, who, while playing on the East Sea, had been drowned and never returned. She had turned into Jingwei, and the bird would often carry bits of twigs and stones all the way from the west mountains to the East Sea—to fill it up.⁹⁵

精衛填海

發鳩之山，其上多柘木。有鳥焉，其狀如烏，文首，白喙，赤足，名曰精衛，其名自詠；是炎帝之少女名曰女娃。女娃游於東海，溺而不返，故為精衛，常銜西山之木石以堙於東海。

These two myths give the Chinese people the image of the struggle against necessity. After his defeat, Xingtian keeps on fighting against his enemy. Is this not what the Western saying describes: "Man can be destroyed but cannot be defeated"? Jingwei's struggle is also a struggle against necessity because there is no chance for her to win the battle. This image is both powerful and beautiful

⁹⁴ "Shan Hai Jing," (Book of mountain and seas), trans. Ding Wangdao, 100 Chinese Myths and Fantasies (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1983), 29.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 25.

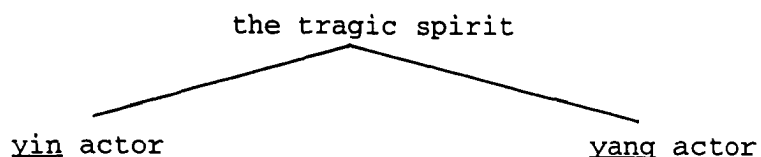
because her struggle is eternal. "Numberless are the world's wonders, but none more wonderful than man; the stormgray sea yields to his prows, the huge crests bear him high," the chorus of Antigone sang.⁹⁶ In ancient China, the people had already manifested a tremendous spirit that echoed the tragic chorus' ode. "Jingwei filling the sea" (精衛填海) suggests a sublime vision that transcends time: the final triumph in the unattainable infinity.

Undoubtedly these two images contain the tragic spirit as perceived by Corrigan, Terzakis, Steiner, and Krutch. These two myths also give us hints for constructing a Chinese tragic system.

If we use the concept of yin-yang (陰陽) to see them, we can see that, although the myths' spirit is the same, their moods are different. Xingtian's reaction is yang (陽) and Jingwei's is yin (陰). Xingtian's struggle is more manly, with heroic aspects; Jingwei's struggle is more womanly, enacted with quiet determination. Xingtian is a rebellious god, he is beheaded; Nuwa is a victim, she is killed. In short: Xingtian acts; Nuwa reacts. They form two important archetypes of Chinese drama. As we shall see, Zhao Shi Gu E belongs to the Xingtian archetype, Dou E Yuan belongs to the Jingwei archetype. Here we have a

⁹⁶ Sophocles, "Antigone," in The Oedipus Cycle, trans. Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald (San Diego: Harvest/ H B J Book, 1977), 199.

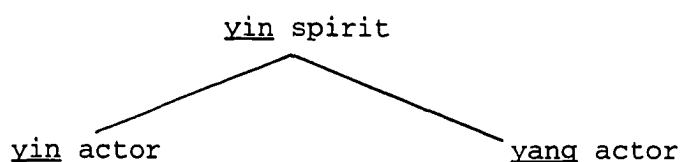
very interesting binary oppositional pair: the yin tragic actor and the yang tragic actor. It can be represented by the following diagram:



In Greek tragedies, the chorus will, from time to time, give the protagonist practical advice: to calm him down, to soothe him, and to check his outrage. The chorus normally is formed by a group of elders or a group of women. They are physically weak and temperamentally modest. Their wisdom is very practical, down to earth. The tragic hero, on the other hand, usually possesses a contrary personality. He acts despite any possible destruction. Antigone does not listen to Ismene her sister, Oedipus does not listen to Tiresias and Jocasta, Pentheus does not listen to Cadmus. The will of the tragic hero is so great that sometimes it is very terrible. It haunts us.

If we view the nature of the chorus and the protagonist according to the yin-yang concept, we may say that the practical wisdom of the chorus is yin and the individualistic will of the protagonist is yang. By the same perspective, we may say that there are two kinds of

spirit: the receptive yin spirit and the manifesting yang spirit. Since the tragic spirit is a spirit manifesting itself, it is yang by nature. As we have a yang spirit--the tragic spirit--mediating the yin actor and the yang actor, there must exist a philosophical possibility of a yin spirit as mediator, represented by the following diagram:



Thus, by applying the yin-yang concept to the actor and the spirit respectively, we have four categories:

	actor	spirit
1)	<u>yin</u>	<u>yin</u>
2)	<u>yin</u>	<u>yang</u>
3)	<u>yang</u>	<u>yin</u>
4)	<u>yang</u>	<u>yang</u>

As our discussion proceeds, we can see how our hypothetical categorization leads us to four tragic dimensions of traditional Chinese drama. At the same time, we need to introduce two concepts in Chinese philosophy to give our categories some semantic possibilities. The two concepts are ti (體) and yong (用) (body and expression). Ti means what has not been discharged and yong means what has been discharged. In our discussion, the actor is

equivalent to the body and the spirit is the expression. So any entity will have a ti aspect and a yong aspect, and both aspects can be ascribed to either yin or yang. Our hypothetical categorization, thus, is an ontology--the science of being--because it links any being in the universe to the four dimensions. This is a meta-lingual system situated above any concrete semantic content. If our subject is color, we can immediately talk about the four different dimensions: a color with yin body and yang expression, a color with yang body and yin expression, etc. Our study is tragedy. We are concerned with the being of the tragic (not the tragic being!); this hypothetical categorization therefore gives us the four tragic dimensions.

When we talk about the body's yin and yang, it should be noted that yin and yang are not necessarily distinguished as male and female. Yin and yang can be just the body's strength or weakness. In our context, it is a combination of social status, means of survival, will power, and physical strength. The heroine in Dou E Yuan, for example, a young woman without any social status, is certainly yin in ti (body). The hero in Han Gong Qiu, a helpless emperor who melancholically laments the loss of his beloved, is yin in yong (expression).

Thus we have formatted a Chinese tragic system. What we need to do next is to give meanings to the four dimensions, i.e., to embody the system with semantic

content. This process is analogous to data processing in computer science: we need to format a disc before we can enter data. Ours, however, is a more complicated process because our data is not at hand. We need to extract from the Chinese language four terms that represent semantically the four hypothetical tragic dimensions of our system.

The tragic dimensions of traditional Chinese drama

In terms of poetics, there are two paradigms in ancient Chinese aesthetics that relate to the Western conception of the tragic. These two paradigms--bei (悲) and yuan (怨)⁹⁷--originated from Chinese poetry's two ancestors: Shi Jing (詩經) (Books of Songs) and Chu Ci (楚辭) (Plaints of Chu Kingdom). These two anthologies contain all extant ancient Chinese poems. "Like nearly everything Chinese, they form a neat pair: yin and yang, north and south, oral and literary, communal and personal, natural and supernatural, orthodox and heterodox."⁹⁸ These observations of American poet Eliot Weinberger is correct. Although they are both lyrical poetry, Shi Jing and Chu Ci were written in two distinctive styles. The anonymous

⁹⁷ This yuan (怨), in the third pitch, is different from the yuan (冤) in the title of the zaju Dou E Yuan, which means injustice. It is also different from the Yuan (元) in "Yuan Dynasty."

⁹⁸ Eliot Weinberger, "What Were the Questions?" in Works on Paper: Essays by Eliot Weinberger (New York: New Directions, 1986), 58.

poets of the North expressed in Shi Jing the joy and suffering of the people in a forceful rhythm of the repetitive folk song style--each line contains four characters. On the other hand, the individualistic poets of the Southern Kingdom express mainly their doubts and grievances in Chu Ci, which has more words in the irregular lines, making its rhythm more plaintive.⁹⁹

As they originated from different sources, the semantic content of bei and yuan are different. Yuan means resentment, discontent, and complaint. When the people were discontented with the rulers or the hardships of life, they expressed their "yuan." Sometime the discontent is so great that the feeling approaches hatred. Therefore, yuan generates the term yuan-hen (怨恨) (discontent-hatred) or the term yuan-fen (怨憤) (discontent-agitation). For discontent superseded by the sadness of the singers, the expression is more pathetic, and we have the term ai-yuan (哀怨) (sentimental-discontent). Bei (悲) means sad, sorrowful, and compassionate. It is primarily self-directed when compared with yuan. The poet not only laments his own sorrow, but also sings of his compassion for the inevitable withering of the natural rhythm.

In terms of yin-yang philosophy, bei is yin and yuan

⁹⁹ Interestingly enough, the subject of our study--Yuan zaju, which originated northern China, normally had four sections, while nanxi (Southern drama) assumed a flexible structure that usually had more episodes.

is, comparatively, yang in nature although both bei and yuan are expressions of "the injured and insulted." For example, bei does not relate with hen as yuan does. From their birth to the present, both paradigms evolved with vitality and flexibility, expanding their semantic possibilities by incorporating other words in the Chinese language. Thus in The Pinyin Chinese-English Dictionary,¹⁰⁰ which gives us contemporary Chinese compound words, we have the following two lists:

Bei (悲)

bei-ai (悲哀) (grieved, sorrowful)
bei-can (悲惨) (miserable, tragic)
bei-dao (悲悼) (mourn, grieve over somebody's death)
bei-fen (悲憤) (grief and indignation)
bei-ge (悲歌) (sad melody; elegy; sing with solemn favour)
bei-guan (悲觀) (pessimistic)
bei-huan-li-he (悲歡離合) (joys and sorrows, partings and reunions--vicissitudes of life)
bei-ju (悲劇) (tragedy)
bei-ming (悲鳴) (utter sad calls, lament)
bei-qi (悲悽) (weep with grief)
bei-qie (悲切) (mournful)
bei-shang (悲傷) (sad, sorrowful)
bei-tan (悲嘆) (sigh mournfully, lament)
bei-tian-min-ren (悲天憫人) (bemoan the state of the universe and pity the fate of mankind)
bei-tong (悲痛) (grieved, sorrowful)
bei-xi-jiao-ji (悲喜交雜) (mixed feelings of grief and joy)
bei-xi-ju (悲喜劇) (tragicomedy)
bei-zhuang (悲壯) (solemn and stirring, moving and tragic)

¹⁰⁰ Beijing Foreign Language Institutes, The Pinyin Chinese-English Dictionary (Hong Kong: Commercial Press, 1979).

Yuan (怨)

yuan-du (怨毒) (enmity, hatred)
yuan-dui (怨懟) (resentment, enmity)
yuan-fen (怨憤) (discontent and indignation)
yuan-fu (怨府) (object of general indignation)
yuan-hen (怨恨) (have a grudge against somebody, hate;
resentment)
yuan-ou (怨偶) (an unhappy couple)
yuan-qi (怨氣) (grievance, complaint, resentment)
yuan-sheng zai dao (怨聲載道) (cries of discontent rise
all round)
yuan-tian you-ren (怨天尤人) (blame god and man--blame
everyone and everything but oneself)
yuan-yan (怨言) (complaint, grumble)
yuan-yi (怨艾) (resentment, grudge)
ai-yuan (哀怨) (sad, plaintive)

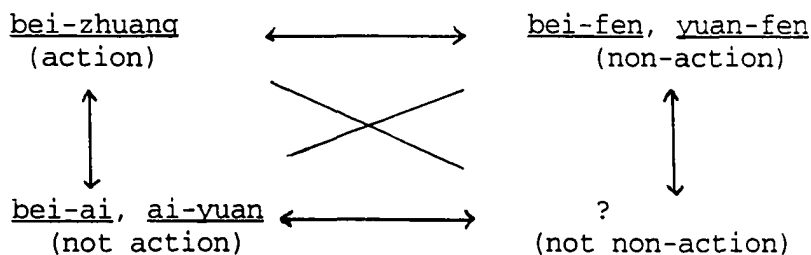
Although yuan is more other-directed and bei is more self-directed, the two lists have several commonalities. Both words assimilate the word ai (哀) (grief, mourning) to form bei-ai (悲哀) and ai-yuan (哀怨) respectively. The semantic momentum ai adds to both words is basically yin in nature. From our understanding of the yin-yang philosophy, we know that there must exist a word which adds the yang semantic momentum to both paradigms. The word is fen (憤). The compound words thus formed are bei-fen (悲憤) and yuan-fen (怨憤). The semantic space these four compound words create, however, still remains basically a land of subjective feeling. There is no act, in the sense of Western dramaturgy, involved.

This absence is neatly filled by the term introduced earlier in this chapter--bei-zhuang. The Western tragic

spirit has crossed the bridge of bei-zhuang (悲壯) to the semantic hinterland of the tragic in the Chinese language. We can see vaguely how a Chinese tragic system is going to emerge.

At this point, perhaps, we can apply the Western philosophic concepts of subject, object, consciousness, and spirit to classify our Chinese terms.

Bei-zhuang is a subjective spirit not only directed towards the object. It implies action. Bei-fen and yuan-fen are basically the subjective consciousness towards the object, but the spirit is only stirred, the direction is not yet defined. Bei-ai and ai-yuan are the subjective consciousness of the subject, the spirit has not yet formed. Thus, using action as the pivot, and applying a Greimasian semantic rectangle operation¹⁰¹ to our context, we have the following form:



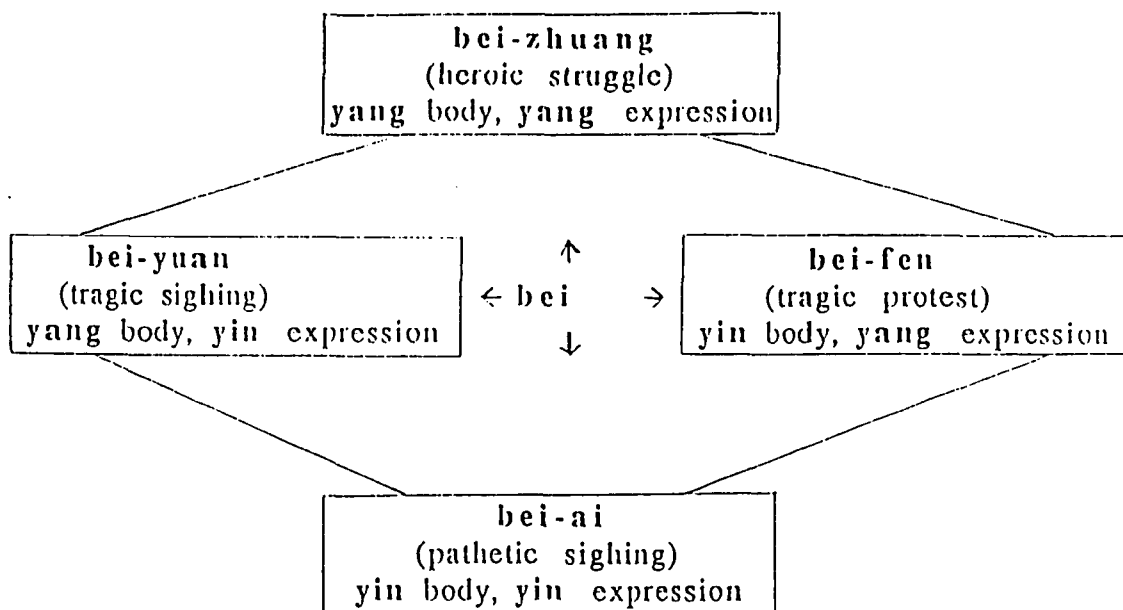
If we can find the missing term, we can have four

¹⁰¹ A.J. Greimas, Structural Semantics: An Attempt at a Method, trans. Daniele McDowell, Ronald Schleifer, and Alan Velie (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1983). See especially chapter two--"The Elementary Structure of Signification," 18-31.

dimensions that not only are meaningful with respect to the notion of the tragic but also semantically logical. This term is, logically, the hybrid of our two paradigms--bei-yuan (悲怨).

To standardize our terminology, we construct our four tragic dimensions in the following table and diagram (see next page):

The Tragic Dimensions of Traditional Chinese Drama



To put it into a table:

	body	expression	mood	action
bei-ai	yin	yin	pathetic	/
bei-yuan	yang	yin	sad	re-act
bei-fen	yin	yang	rage	re-act
bei-zhuang	yang	yang	heroic	act

In bei-ai there is no recognition of the cause of the suffering. The victim only cries for his pain. This is very common in Chinese drama and perhaps is equivalent to Aristotle's notion of tragedy of suffering.

Bei-yuan, bei-fen, and bei-zhuang are defined by the protagonist's subjectivity. Whereas bei-zhuang involves action, bei-fen and bei-yuan are descriptions of the mood of the situation. The protagonists do not fight against their enemy in both cases. They understand that they have been defeated but they have contrasting sentiments towards their enemy (or victimizer). In terms of recognition, bei-fen and bei-yuan are in the same domain but their sentiments are situated in a binary oppositional polarity, just like Antigone, who does not surrender to Creon's power, and Oedipus, who does, to fate.

In bei-zhuang the tragic hero has a different subjectivity from that of bei-yuan and bei-fen. He is not concerned about whether he is (or will be) defeated or not. He understands that even though he is going to be defeated, he needs to pursue his struggle until he is destroyed. The tragic hero's image is the fire-bird of Egyptian mythology and the phoenix of Chinese legend. They are both reborn from the ashes. The tragic hero's recognition of bei-zhuang is a tragic knowledge of the true meaning of life; he will not indulge himself in his suffering. This is, as we have seen, what Western critics generally describe as the tragic spirit. In fact, most

heroes do not regard their situations as suffering. The tragic hero chooses his own course and fights his own way out. He elevates himself from suffering to the level of self-actualization by struggle. This dimension of the Chinese tragic system, similar to Karl Jaspers' notion of "the tragic transcendence," perhaps is most compatible to the Western conception of tragedy.

The central image of bei-yuan, bei-fen, and bei-zhuang is, however, very similar: a wounded man standing against an approaching tempest, forcing his gaze towards the darkening sky. The protagonist who decides to struggle to death is bei-zhuang, he who does not surrender but keeps on protesting is bei-fen, and he who surrenders himself to his fate and endures his suffering is bei-yuan.

In the next four chapters, we will see how these four tragic dimensions can be applied to understand the emotional effects and core imageries of eight Yuan zaju.

Chapter 2: Bei-ai: The pathetic mourning

The two zaju discussed in this chapter were written by anonymous writers. Yet they surpass, in both poetry and dramaturgy, many zaju of famous playwrights. Compared with Feng Yu Lan (The misery of the young lady Feng), Huo Lang Dan (Woman singer of the Huo Lang style) is better known among Chinese critics and playwrights because it preserves a Song dynasty narrative performance--huo lang er (貨郎兒)--a narrative singing style which imitates the hawker's selling songs. But better known as Huo Lang Dan is, there is so far only one commentary on the zaju.¹⁰² There is an English summary of the play,¹⁰³ and it is said that the internationally renowned Peking opera artist Mei Lanfang (梅蘭芳) (1894-1961) once owned a manuscript copy of the zaju. The scripts used here for analysis are from the last volume of the 1989 edition of Zang Mao Xun's Yuan Ou Xuan.¹⁰⁴

Both plays are dan ben (female actress scripts). The protagonist of Feng Yu Lan is the twelve-year-old daughter

¹⁰² Zhou Mio Zhong, "Yi Ming Zuo Jia Di Jie Zuo--Feng Yu Xiang Sheng Huo Lang Dan" (佚名作家的傑作—《風雨像生貨郎旦》, A brilliant work by an anonymous writer: The itinerant woman singer of hawker's songs), in Yuan Zaju Jianshang Ji (元雜劇鑒賞集, Appreciative essays on Yuan opera) (Beijing: Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1983), 192-199.

¹⁰³ A. E. Zucker, The Chinese Theatres (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1925), 29-32.

¹⁰⁴ Zang Mao Xun, Yuan Ou Xuan (Selected Yuan operas), Vol.1-4, (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1989).

of Feng Luan, the imperial officer of the city of Luo Yang. The protagonist of Huo Lang Dan is more complicated. The zheng dan (正旦) (main actress) takes up the role of Mistress Liu, the wife of Li Yan He, the rich man. But Mistress Liu dies in section one. In section two, three, and four, the fu dan (副旦) (associate main actress) takes up the singing part, and acts as the loyal wet nurse of the Li family. Nevertheless, the main action of the play is on the wet nurse, to whom the zheng ming (正名) (proper or correct name) of the zaju is attached.

The two zaju have one conspicuous similarity: family disaster. In Feng Yu Lan, the Feng family is destroyed in a massacre: Feng the imperial officer, his seven-year-old son, the young servant, the young maid, and two unrelated boatmen are killed, and the mistress is kidnapped. The only survivor of the massacre is the twelve-year-old heroine, who survives among the dead bodies on a free floating boat drifting down river. In Huo Lang Dan, the mistress of the family has been "enraged to death" by the prostitute concubine Zhang, and the family house is burned down in a conflagration sparked by Zhang and her illicit lover Wei, who pushes Li Yan He into the river and tries to kill Li's seven-year-old son and the wet nurse at the riverbank.

Despite the pitiable sufferings involved, both zaju, surprisingly, have escaped the eyes of Chinese critics in their discussions of Chinese tragedy. For example, in the

landmark anthology Zhongguo Gudian Beiju Xiju Lunji (中國古典悲劇喜劇論集) (Essays on classical Chinese tragedy and comedy) of 1983, which is the first anthology of its kind after the Cultural Revolution, the single mention of Feng Yu Nan occurs when one writer lists those tragedies that have a bright ending.¹⁰⁵ The following will analyze both zajus' dramatic structure, and show the devices the playwrights employed to induce in the audience feelings of pity and fear, the two tragic emotions Aristotle mentions in Poetics.

To begin the analysis, it should be noted that although both family disasters are brought about by villains, the personalities of the heads of both families contribute significantly to the calamities.

In Huo Lang Dan, the tragic events follow rich man Li's taking in the prostitute concubine Zhang despite his righteous wife's refusal. If we consider the morality involved in the play from the point of view of popular ethics, we might say that the play's lesson is to illustrate the danger of taking a concubine, just as the lesson of Oedipus Rex is to remind us not to kill an old man and marry a woman old enough to be our mother if we know that a prophecy claims that we will kill our father and marry our mother. Nevertheless, the very act of the

¹⁰⁵ Fei Bing Xun, "Lun Yuandai Beiju" (論元代悲劇, On the tragedy of Yuan time), in Zhongguo Gudian Beiju Xiju Lunji (Essays on classical Chinese tragedy and comedy) (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1983), 55-82.

acceptance of the concubine ignites the misery of the family. Although it is the wicked concubine who motivates the family disaster, the first mover of all the events is the rich man himself.

As for the disaster of the Feng family, at first glance, it seems as though it is an accidental misfortune, caused entirely by the wrongdoing of the grand villain Tu Xi Hsiang, whose lust for the beauty of Feng's wife triggers the subsequent massacre. From a dramaturgical point of view, however, it is the credulity of Feng, the imperial officer, which motivates the tragedy. Without any in-depth knowledge of the stranger Tu, Feng invites him over to drink wine, and without any solid foundation in friendship, he asks the family members to come out to greet Tu. This act of politeness, unfortunately, will cause a calamity too great and too sudden for him to recognize.¹⁰⁶

In the eyes of an untrained audience, the sufferings of the family are not only undeserved but also unexpected. The head of the family, Feng, the imperial officer, is a Confucian scholar. At the beginning of the zaju he has just been promoted to chief magistrate of the Quan region of Fujian Province in South East China. For this reason the family needs to make a boat journey to Fujian.

¹⁰⁶ This reminds us of the importance of the ethical code of li, meaning, besides ritual and ceremony, propriety.

Everything seems fine at the play's beginning. If the family does not meet the wicked imperial river inspector Tu during the journey, they will lead a happy life afterwards.

For drama students who are familiar with the formation principle of drama, however, the calamity is not, dramaturgically, an accident. In Kenneth Burke's terms, we can say that the play has a very clear purpose, a purpose which threads through all the scenes. This purpose, however, does not dwell within the fictional world. It is not the motivation of the act of any character in the play. Instead, it belongs to the playwright. The playwright has employed subtle suggestions to create a mood of uneasiness that quietly slips into our mind. That is why, unlike Huo Lang Dan, which starts with the villain, Feng Yu Lan begins with Feng, the imperial officer, who sets out for a new job but becomes a victim in section two. The purpose of the villain in Huo Lang Dan is revealed early in section one but the purpose of Feng and the purpose of the play do not coincide. Indeed, in the beginning of Feng Yu Lan, we know little about its subsequent action. But we know (perhaps feel is a better word) very well that something is going to happen.

This point is crucial in grasping the vision of the zaju. If we look carefully, we can see that from the beginning of the play to the time of the massacre the playwright has, through direct and straightforward hints,

been foreshadowing the calamity through the point of view of the young heroine. The playwright deliberately lets officer Feng's jiajuan (家眷) (wife and children) journey towards the pier of the river one day before the boat trip so that he can tell in section one what happened before officer Feng joins them at the pier at the beginning of section two.

During the land journey, the young servant suggests that they should stop for a while so that he can go to buy some buns. The heroine's mother, Mistress Liu, says that she is not hungry and urges the servant to hurry on. The servant grumbles:

you are sitting inside the wagon, comfortable and at ease. I woke up early in the morning, took care of the luggage, and have been walking for half a day. You don't feel hungry but I do.¹⁰⁷

您每坐著車兒。自自在在的。我從五更鼓起來。打點行李。走了這半日。你便不知饑。我可肚裡饑哩。

The young heroine sings a song to express her dilemma. She urges the servant to go on, but not because she does not have sympathy for his hunger. It is because they are in the middle of the road, and there is no village or restaurant nearby. Although this is the first time she has stepped out of her house, and she has great curiosity in seeing the street, she also knows, being trained in the Confucian tradition, that it is not appropriate for a woman to be seen in a public space. That is why when they

¹⁰⁷ Zang Mao Xun, Yuan Ou Xuan, Vol. 4, 1738.

finally take a short recess to drink some tea, she suggests to her mother that they should remain inside the wagon. She explains this in the next song.

This point is of utmost importance in the play. It is not simply a routine display of Confucianism. In fact, we will see shortly in section two how officer Feng's careless introduction of the family's female members to a stranger leads to the family disaster.

At the end of section one, a strange dream comes to the young heroine. It is a visionary dream, actually acted out by the zheng den (main actress) and another actor. In terms of dramaturgy, it is the first plucking of the zaju's tragic string. After a long journey through the day, everyone is tired when night falls. They go inside the cabin to sleep, leaving the twelve-year-old girl alone. She sits down, falls asleep quickly, and has a bad dream. In her dream, a bandit, who is impersonated by a painted face actor, rushes onto the stage with a sword, and enters the cabin. Terrified, Feng tries to escape, but the bandit stops her. She begs for mercy but the bandit tries to kill her. Then, we are told, while the painted face actor is acting out the convention of gan-sha (趕殺) (attempted killing), the female main actress acts out the convention of jing-xing (驚醒) (waking up with a start). It is midnight. The little girl dares not sleep again. She can only wait for dawn, when her father will arrive.

This dream scene triggers haunting fear in the mind of

the audience. Being raised in a tradition strong in mythical consciousness, Chinese audiences believe in dreams. Nevertheless, sophisticated audience members from any culture will intuitively know that this scene is a key to understanding the zaju's subsequent events. This treatment is intentional, for the anonymous author has written three songs for the main actress to express her frustration and fear. Through this, the audience gets, dimly or strongly, depending on their sensitivity, the impression that something terrible is going to happen.

The purpose of the author is very clear: to establish the emotion of fear in the audience's mind. Without this, the massacre in section two will become a simple melodramatic device; with this, the calamity becomes tragic. The author not only shows us the horrible bloodshed but also, by employing the dramatic technique of foreshadowing, skilfully ignites our emotions of fear and pity.

This technique of dramatic foreshadowing can also be found in Huo Lang Dan. Compared with that in Feng Yu Lan, it comes about more explicitly--through the mouth of the villain--but no less effectively, to arouse our tragic emotions. At the end of section one, after the mistress of the family has been "enraged to death" by concubine Zhang, Zhang expresses to her illicit lover Wei her malicious intent to destroy the Li family. She hands to Wei all Li's property, asks him to get a boat at the pier and to

disguise himself as the boatman so that, after she has set the house on fire, and has brought Li to the pier, Wei can push Li into the river to drown him. They will then, Zhang suggests, kill both Li's son and the wet nurse.

This vicious plan is carried out immediately. Zhang sets the house on fire, and recites a poem to mark the end of section one.

The beginning of section two sees the Li family running for their lives. To a Western dramatist, this scene might only be a short interlude; to our anonymous zaju writer, however, this escape scene is the xi-he (戲核) (the dramatic kernel) of the section. The author's idea is to describe the family's miserable condition during their flight. That is why, out of the ten songs in this section, he uses eight for this escape scene. We experience their escape through a treatment of the temporal perception. In the first song the wet nurse sings about the nasty weather: from morning to night, the wind blows hard and the rain pours down. In the second song, she expresses her antipathy towards the concubine. Linking the present suffering with the concubine, the wet nurse keeps arguing with her. The remaining songs are mixed expressions of the physical hardship and her discontent.

This escape scene is one of suffering, no doubt. Because we know the vicious plan of the concubine, this is also a scene of dramatic irony. We understand very well that the Li family is approaching their doom because, at

the end of the journey, when the family finally reaches the pier, they are going to be murdered. So, while we see them struggling to escape for their lives, and while we see physical hardships fall upon them, the emotions of pity and fear haunt us.

Both zaju involve a change of fortune, from good to bad. One comes suddenly and the other as a natural consequence of the acceptance of the concubine. And before the scenes of catastrophe, both authors employ skilful dramatic foreshadowing to arouse the tragic emotions of pity and fear. Moreover, although the change of fortune involves an evil committed by a villain, it might have been otherwise if the rich man had not made his mistake. Hence, it seems that the plays match closely Aristotle's description of a good tragic plot. In chapter thirteen of Poetics, Aristotle writes that:

A well constructed plot should . . . be single in its issue, rather than double as some maintain. The change of fortune should be not from bad to good, but, reversely, from good to bad. It should come about as the result not of vice, but of some great error or frailty, in a character either such as we have described, or better rather than worse.¹⁰⁸

Thus, the two zaju certainly have a family resemblance with Greek tragedies. What follows is a discussion of their tragic dimension--bei-ai.

¹⁰⁸ Aristotle, The Poetics, trans. S. H. Butcher, in Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (New York: Dover Publications, 1951), 47.

These two zaju differ from most Western tragedies in one point: the protagonist is not the head of the family. By using two weak women as the main characters, both playwrights have created a feminine point of view analogous to that of The Trojan Women. In terms of Burke's dramatism, these two women are not actors, for they are not the movers of the events. At the beginning of the zaju, they do not even have a purpose. That is why the wet nurse does not appear until section two in Huo Lang Dan. The movements of the zaju, however, revolve around them. In other words, the playwrights let the audience witness two weak women suffering from the loss of their stable environment. When her immediate environment has been destroyed, the heroine needs to create a new way of living. These zaju thus show the human condition in general and the female condition in particular. The xi-he (literally, the nucleus of the play; semantically, the point of the play) of the two plays, thus, concern the sufferings of the family as perceived by women.

The drama of Feng Yu Lan is based on the juxtaposition of bloodshed with the juvenile heroine, the pure and innocent facing extreme horror. The xi-he of Huo Lang Dan is, of course, in section four when the loyal wet nurse Zhang performs for the grown-up boy of the Li family, whom she sold thirteen years ago, to motivate the reunion of the family. Both plays have an undertone of feminine endurance. Perhaps we can say that this feminine endurance

is what Lao Tzu refers in chapter seventy-eight of Tao Te Ching (道德經), "In the world there is nothing so submissive and weak as water. Yet for attacking that which is hard and strong nothing can surpass it." (天下莫柔弱於水也而攻堅者莫之能勝)¹⁰⁹

It is this feminine endurance that gives us aesthetic pleasure in both zaju. The effect is not simply pathetic. The emotion of the characters does not merely rest on the sentiments derived from their suffering; it grows. Through suffering, the characters gain an understanding of the world they live in. Although the two zaju are imbued with tragic emotions, the tragic feeling involved is not that associated with a manly, heroic spirit. The heroines in both zaju, Feng Yu Nan and Zhang the wet nurse, are weak women. They cannot fight against the villain directly (if they do, the zaju will become melodrama as we normally conceive it). In fact, being weak women, their first responses are emotional. The only weapon they have, perhaps, is their endurance. What they can do immediately after the calamity is to express their feelings, which subconsciously gives them strength to endure their sufferings with a quiet determination. That is why in Huo Lang Dan, after the illicit lover of the concubine has pushed Li the rich man into the river but has failed to murder the wet nurse, what the wet nurse expresses is

¹⁰⁹ Lao Tzu, Tao Te Ching, trans. D.C. Lau (Middlesex, England: Penguin, 1963), 140.

bitterness instead of hatred. And in Feng Yu Nan, the young girl sings a song expressing her fear as a survivor after the cruel massacre.

The primary emotion involved here is bei-ai, which is embedded in the core imagery of the two zaju. As mentioned in the introduction, the core imagery of a Yuan zaju is usually summarized in its zheng ming (main title). So, it is appropriate to look at the zheng ming of the two zaju.

The zheng ming of Feng Yu Lan is an eight-character line -- Feng Yu Lan ye yue qi jiang zhou (馮玉蘭夜月泣江舟),¹¹⁰ a pathetic image literary meaning "Feng Yu Nan weeping on a free floating boat in a moon lit night." This zheng ming is very powerful since it links together several layers of metaphor. The moon is a metaphor of the female gender, the night is a metaphor of the wicked environment, and the free floating boat on the river is a metaphor of the fate of the family. As such, the last five characters of the zheng ming are a metaphor of the situation of the heroine. The two words ye (夜) (night) and yue (月) (moon) are placed in the center of the line, creating not only a metaphor of the suffering girl whose family is destroyed in the zaju, but also one that pictures the actual dramatic situation.

In Chinese culture and Chinese literature, both ye and yue are symbols of the female principle. So we have a

¹¹⁰ Zang Mao Xun, Yuan Qu Xuan, Vol.4, 1755.

double yin image. Indeed the twelve year old girl is not only weak but also innocent. In the beginning of the zaju, we are told that this is her first time ever stepping out of her house. So her passion is bei-ai, the feminine expression of sorrow, a sentiment that relates to the female principle.

The zheng ming of Feng Yu Lan coincides with the core imagery of the zaju, which appears at the end of section two. After the murderer Tu Xi Hsiang has gone, leaving behind a ship of dead bodies, Feng sings (rough translation):

Why is there a gale blowing at this time?
Loosening my ship, making it drifting away
Into the boundless water.
With my own eye I see my mother being kidnapped;
Hurting my heart, they killed my father and brother,
Leaving to me not even a servant.
Murderer! what enmity have you with the boatmen, that
You make them go to hell with my family members?
I want to shout but my breath gets stuck in my throat,
My bitterness cannot be expressed;
I want to leave the ship and escape but
It is drifting in the middle of the river,
Far away from land.
I cannot but live with these bloody corpses.
Oh! heaven!
Please pity this weak young girl.¹¹¹

怎又刮起這大風。把俺船吹去。又不知吹去何方可
著的個邊際無。眼睜睜放著娘親被他擄。痛煞煞把
俺兄弟爹爹都殺取。剛只一個家僮不留與。兀那駕
船的梢公和你有甚麼毒。也著他跟了俺一家兒入地
府。待叫來又被氣堵住咽喉叫不出苦。待走來又被
船打在江心走不上路。卻教俺守著這血泊裡屍骸怎
發付。哎喲天那你也憐見俺個沒倚靠的青春少年
女。

¹¹¹ Ibid., 1745-1746.

This song explains so effectively the passion of bei-ai that there is no need for further explanation.

The zheng ming of Huo Lang Dan--Feng Yu Xiang Sheng Huo Lang Dan (風雨像生貨郎旦)¹¹²--means, literally, that the wind and rain give birth to the itinerant woman singer of the huo lang style, or that the itinerant woman singer of the huo lang style is capable of giving a life-like portrayal of the wind and rain. Feng yu (風雨) (wind and rain) is a metaphor for trials and hardships. In Chinese, there is a saying "jing feng yu, jian shi mian," (經風雨, 見世面), which means, semantically, "see life and stand its tests." This saying clearly explains the situation of Zhang, the wet nurse, who becomes a sophisticated itinerant singer of the huo lang style after the family disaster.

Since the head of the family has been pushed into the river by the concubine's illicit lover, the wet nurse has lost her reliance. Being a poor woman lacking the means to raise Li's seven-year-old son, she must sell him to the rich imperial officer Yuan Yan. It should be noted that the wet nurse is a middle-aged woman whose feminine charm has long since withered. That is why she cannot sell herself to the officer and takes along her little master. This also explains why the role is taken by a fu den (associate main actress) instead of the zheng den (main

¹¹² Ibid., 1655.

actress), who usually portrays younger woman possessing either physical beauty or moral righteousness.¹¹³ Having nowhere to go, the wet nurse becomes the adopted daughter of the eye-witness to the sale, Zhang Pie Gu,¹¹⁴ an itinerant singer of the huo lang style. When Zhang, the wet nurse, runs for her life from the blaze, she complains about being exposed to the weather, but in section three, thirteen years later, she becomes a sophisticated human being, capable of supporting herself by performing narrative songs. She has seen the world and stood its tests. When she reappears in section three, her hand is holding a flag, signifying that she is an itinerant performer. On her back, she is carrying her foster father's ashes, journeying towards his homeland to bury him. As the Chinese saying goes, "Fallen leaves should return to their roots." To be buried in one's homeland is essential in Chinese culture, and is the wish expressed before his death by the old itinerant singer to his adopted daughter. Zhang has been travelling since his death. She observes the code of personal loyalty by bao en (報恩) (paying a debt of gratitude). This is an act of yi

113 This is not a rule. For example, the main actress in Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi (Zhang Qian kills another man's wife) is lustful and vicious. See chapter 5.

114 Zhang Pie Gu (張敝古) is the name of many kind-hearted old men in Yuan zaju. Sometimes, the role is even taken by the main actor, e.g., in section three and section four of Pen Er Gui (盤兒鬼) (The ghost of the pot).

qi (義氣) (justice). The very act of yi qi, together with her skill of performing the huo lang narrative songs, motivates the reunion of the separated Li family. The core imagery of the play, thus, is of the sophisticated Zhang, the woman itinerant singer, on her journey.

In Feng Yu Lan, six lives are lost, including all male members of the family. In the last scene of the play, despite the villain's being punished, and Feng Yu Lan's reunion with her mother, we cannot say that it is a happy ending. On the contrary, the tonality of the ending is certainly bei-ai. Even though the mother and the daughter have only been separated for a few days, we have in our mind the empathetic feeling that they have been separated for a lifetime. Indeed this cathartic experience is very common among survivors of disasters, where one familiar face, or even a familiar object, will cause tremendous emotion.

This cathartic experience of separation and reunion is very important in traditional Chinese drama. Indeed, bei-huan-li-he (悲歡離合) (sadness, happiness, separation, and reunion) is one of the twelve categories of zaju in Zhu Quan's (1378-1448) Tai He Zheng Yin Pu (The supreme harmony chart of correct sounds). Huo Lang Dan may be a good example of this category because its primary dramatic interest is in separation and reunion. So, unlike Feng Yu Lan which stresses the horror of the massacre and the piteous suffering of the heroine, Huo Lang Dan stresses

the bitterness of the destruction of the family.

At the end of section two we see the destruction of the family. The head of the family has been pushed into the river, his seven-year-old son is sold away, and the wet nurse becomes the adopted daughter of an itinerant singer. It is as if there is no hope for them to see each other again. But in the beginning of section three, we immediately see all of the family's living members. The grown up son, his father (he saved himself by holding onto a piece of wood), and the wet nurse appear one after another. The purpose of the author is very clear: the drama that follows is about the reunion of the family. Indeed, section three and section four are basically about this reunification process.

In section three the wet nurse meets Li on the road. Li has been degraded to the status of a laborer (he takes care of cows) but when he knows that the wet nurse has become an itinerant singer, he becomes enraged. He accuses Zhang of soiling the family name. Zhang resolves his accusation with sophistication. She explains to him that being an itinerant singer is not disgraceful; on the contrary, it is another authentic way of earning a living. In fact, compared with him, caretaker of other people's cows, she is doing very well. She even suggests to Li that he should come with her and she will provide his livelihood. He agrees. So they journey to the homeland of the wet nurse's adopted father. In section four we see how

Li not only accepts the wet nurse's offer, but also follows her way by disguising himself as a woman. This is symbolic in the dramatic context: a man has turned into a woman to earn a living!

The audience will watch the subsequent performance with a natural expectation: to see the reunion of the two old persons with the grown-up son--Chun Lang. The fulfilment of this expectation is very important in the Chinese psyche. If there is only separation without reunion, the audience will be greatly disturbed. This is, however, not because of the weakness of the Chinese people's heart, as some maintain, but due to the Chinese philosophic commitment to existential harmony. In fact, this might be a universal wish of humanity. The American poet Emily Dickinson once said, "If I can ease one heart in pain, my life will not be in vain." The audience always wants the separated family members to be reunited. So, skilful playwrights always manipulate the audience's interest by controlling the tension between separation and reunion. Section four of Huo Lang Dan is, perhaps, a reunion scene masterpiece.

In section four of Huo Lang Dan, we have the often mentioned jiu zhuan huo lang er (九轉貨郎兒) (the nine modulations of the hawker's song), where the story of the family disaster is retold in nine songs of the huo lang er style. This scene perhaps can be described as metatheatrical because it is self-referential: the

performer--Zhang--sings a narrative song that tells of her relationship with her audience--the long separated grown-up son of the family. When I first read this scene, I could not hold back my tears. The dramatic momentum of this scene is overwhelming to Chinese audiences, past and present.

The scene is stirring because, aesthetically, it combines the narrative, the dramatic, and the lyrical. Shortly before this scene, Zhang and Li, who is disguised as a middle-aged woman singer (a rare grotesque image in Yuan zaju) are summoned to perform in front of the qian hu (千户) (administrator of one thousand households), whom we know is the grown-up son of the family. He has received the title from his late adopted father. The juxtaposition is very sentimental. While the grown up son is rich and powerful, his father and the wet nurse are poor and grotesque. When the son offers a piece of roast meat to them, Li even suggests to the wet nurse that they should save the meat to enjoy it at home. This little touch, minute as it is, will certainly draw tears from many a sentimental heart. After thirteen years of separation, the family members finally come together, but they do not recognize each other. All this happens before our eyes. This makes the scene not only sad but bitter, even sour. Great emotional tension in the audience is generated. This certainly is the climax of the zaju.

The author makes the grown-up son express his longing

for his father and the wet nurse. Li coughs. This tightens the audience's emotions because the Chinese believe that if one's name is mentioned or if one is being thought of, one will cough.

The dramatic problem facing the author in this scene is to motivate the recognition. He solves it directly: the grown-up son has oiled his hand as he hands the roast meat to the wet nurse; he then carelessly cleans his hand with the indenture, the receipt of the selling of himself, and asks his biological father to take it away. In this respect, we might as well say that Li receives the indenture from the author! It might be regarded by naturalistic playwrights as a simpleminded treatment. This treatment, however, should be perceived as a convention, even a stylistic theatrical semiotic process.

The scene is symbolic. For example, one interpretation reads: it is the rich son's kindness towards the poor performers that causes the final reunion. Nevertheless, we must bear in mind that the drama of this scene is not in the discovery of the indenture but in the performance of the huo lang er.

The performance of the huo lang er, thus, is not only a retelling of the family disaster, but also an act with a purpose--to motivate the reunion of the separated family. The performance is in fact a communication process that is imbued with lyrical beauty because Zhang will try her best to trigger the passion of the grown-up son. Unlike her

previous performance, this is the first time she is performing in front of him. There must be some delicacy in her voice. From the audience's point of view, the grown-up son's recognition process coincides with its perception. This is also the first time the audience hears the songs; unlike the son, however, the audience witnessed the family disaster some time ago in sections one and two. Moreover, this is the end of the zaju, and structurally, this song is a summary of what has happened before. This is the lyrical portion of the play. Hence, in aesthetic terms, there are three different layers in the audience's reception: first, the phenomenological perception of the melody of the narrative song; second, the theatrical perception of the action on stage; third, the perception of the narrative song with respect to the memory of the dramatic text.

All these resonances make the scene exceedingly powerful.

Chapter 3: Bei-yuan: Lamentation for the Irreversible Loss

Of all the extant Yuan zaju perhaps Han Gong Qiu (Autumn in Han Palace), by Ma Zhi Yuan (1250?-1320?), is most comparable to Western tragedy. Its tragic quality strikes a responsive chord even in Western critics. "It is naked tragedy, in some ways more powerful for having so few embellishments, ornaments or digressions of any kind," says Henry W. Wells in The Classical Drama of the Orient.¹¹⁵ Critics in both East and West have cited this zaju as one of the most typical examples of Chinese tragedy. For example, it is included, together with Dou E Yuan (The injustice done to Dou E) and Zhao Zhi Gu Er (The orphan of Zhao), in the celebrated Zhongguo Shidai Gudian Beijuji (A collection of ten great Chinese tragedies, 1982).¹¹⁶ It is also included, as one example of Chinese tragedy, in Cyril Birch's Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century (1965).¹¹⁷ Wang Guowei regards it as tragedy.¹¹⁸ William Dolby says that

¹¹⁵ Henry W. Wells, The Classical Drama of the Orient (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965), 68.

¹¹⁶ Wang Jisi, ed., Zhongguo Shidai Gudian Beijuji (A collection of ten great Chinese tragedies), Vols. 1-2 (Shanghai: Shanghai Wenyi Chubanshe, 1982).

¹¹⁷ Cyril Birch, ed., Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1965).

¹¹⁸ Wang Guowei, "Song Yuan Xiqu Kao" (A study on the opera of Song and Yuan dynasties), in Wan Guowei Xiqu Lunwenji (Collective essays on Chinese opera by Wang Guowei) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1984), 85.

this zaju urges people to reflect on the question of Chinese "tragedy."¹¹⁹ And recently, Jiao Wen Bin, a major contributor to the study of Chinese tragedy, regards it as one of the four major Yuan tragedies, and gives a full discussion of it.¹²⁰

Unlike most Yuan zaju, which end, even if not happily, with an optimistic touch, Han Gong Qiu ends with a tonality which is sad, bitter, and pessimistic. The protagonist--Emperor Yuan--suffers not only from his irreparable separation from the imperial concubine, Wang Zhao Jun, but also from the recognition of his powerlessness in the face of foreign military pressure. Birch regards the play's tonality extremely crucial in understanding it. "Autumn in the Palace of Han (i.e., Han Gong Qiu) is tragedy justly famed for the portrayal in its closing scenes of the autumnal loneliness of an emperor," says Birch in his brief introduction to the zaju.¹²¹

Because of their proximity in theme and subject matter, Chinese critics usually treat Han Gong Qiu together with Wu Tong Yu (Rain on the paulownia tree), the love story of the Tang dynasty's Emperor Ming and Yang

¹¹⁹ William Dolby, A History of Chinese Drama (London: Paul Elek, 1976), 47.

¹²⁰ The others are Dou E Yuan, Zhou Shi Gu Er, and Wu Tong Yu (Rain on the paulownia tree). Jiao Wen Bin, Zhongguo Gudian Beiju Lun (On classical Chinese tragedy) (Xian: Xibei Daxue Chubanshe, 1990), 261-291.

¹²¹ Cyril Birch, Anthology of Chinese Literature, 392.

Guifei, his highest ranking imperial concubine. A Taiwanese scholar, Zhang Shu Xiang, classifies the two zaju as love tragedies and gives them detailed discursive analyses.¹²² Taking up the love theme, Feng Rui Long, a Hong Kong scholar, has applied Northrop Frye's theory of archetype to the two zaju.¹²³ For this chapter, however, instead of Wu Tong Yu, Guan Han Qing's Shuang Fu Meng (Dream of two on a journey) is discussed because it is more distinct from Han Gong Qiu. This is a study of the tragic dimensions of traditional Chinese drama, the analytical chapters serve more for illustration than for thematic categorization.

Like most Greek tragedies, both Han Gong Qiu and Shuang Fu Meng depict the suffering of persons of high standing. The main character in Han Gong Qiu is an emperor, the supreme ruler of the Han empire, yet, in the particular circumstance of the zaju, he must submit his beloved woman to another. The two main characters in Shuang Fu Meng are generals, the most powerful and renowned in Chinese history, yet they have been murdered because of the wicked plans of ordinary men and have become ghosts. The suffering of the emperor and the

¹²² Zhang Shu Xiang, Yuan Zaju Zhong De Aiqing Yu Shehui (元雜劇中的愛情和社會, Love and society in the opera of Yuan dynasty) (Taipei: Da An Chubanshe, 1988).

¹²³ Feng Rui Long, Yuandai Aiqing Beiju Yanjiu (元代愛情悲劇研究, A study on love tragedy of Yuan time) (Hong Kong: Hua Han Wenhua Shiye, 1992).

generals is undeserved. To an average audience member, what happens in the two zaju is unjust, should be otherwise. The emperor, surrounded by mediocre officials, recognizes his helplessness; the generals, powerful as they are, become powerless. The emperor cannot but retreat into melancholy, the ghosts of the generals can only take their revenge via the hand of their sworn brother.

If standard Western tragic terminology such as moral dignity, will, and conflict are used as yardsticks to measure the tragic quality of the two zaju, it will be seen that both have a strong flavor of tragedy that deserves detailed analysis.

Han Gong Qiu not only tells the sad story of an emperor, it involves the conflict between two nations, which pivots on the fate of the imperial concubine whose beauty and determination relate, in turn, to the fate of her motherland. While the Han Empire has no other means to resolve the national crisis but to submit, despite the emperor's reluctance, by offering the imperial concubine of the House of Han to the Mongolian Emperor Huhanya, the seemingly weak woman wilfully sacrifices herself to save the nation. She makes its fate her own. Her death is tragic and her image is sublime. To use Wells's words, in the zaju, "the moral dignity commonly associated with the Western conception of tragedy is achieved."¹²⁴

¹²⁴ Henry W. Wells, The Classical Drama of the Orient, 65.

Critics often praise Han Gong Qiu's simplicity and tonality (Wells, for example, calls it "a naked tragedy"), but the dramatic action of Shuang Fu Meng is even simpler. Its tonality is unique. While Han Gong Qiu's ending gives us the sense of total loss, and induces in us a taste of bitter pessimism, Shuang Fu Meng's ending gives us a glimpse of impossible hope, and induces an optimism that is sour. Perhaps that is why William Dolby cites the zaju when he explains the complicated problem of Chinese "tragedy." He says that the zaju "ends on a forward-looking note" because it suggests revenge for the two heroes. Yet the historical knowledge of the Yuan audience would have made them aware that "this revenge was actually embarked upon, and ended in national disaster, as is feared or predicted by Zhuge Liang in the play."¹²⁵

Nevertheless, the defeated heroes' simple action made Shuang Fu Meng one of the most powerful traditional Chinese dramas. The image of the powerless ghosts of two once super military heroes journeying into the dream of their adopted brother is certainly tragic. Normally, the Chinese use the term bei-zhuang to describe this image, for the ghosts of the heroes struggle against all odds to take revenge. In this chapter, it will be shown that the tragic dimension of this zaju lies between bei-yuan and bei-zhuang. Because of the zaju's threshold quality, a

¹²⁵ William Dolby, 47-48.

complete analysis of Han Gong Qiu will precede the discussion of Shuang Fu Meng.

The surface structure of Han Gong Qiu is a pathetic love story. In its four sections and opening wedge, it tells of the union and separation of Emperor Yuan and his imperial concubine Wang Zhao Jun, of the Han dynasty. The lovers meet in section one, cultivate their love and face a destructive crisis in section two, and separate in section three. Their love is, to use a Western cliché, gone with the wind, for their separation is involuntary, irresistible, and irreparable. In section four the playwright gives us, in superb poetry, one of the most beautiful scenes of lamentation in Chinese literature.

Because of the zaju's sad ending, Chinese critics use the phrase yi bei dao di (一悲到底) (tragic until the end) to describe it. This yi bei dao di treatment is extremely crucial for our understanding of the zaju because it is the "difference" in Chinese culture, a culture whose fundamental philosophical assumption is existential harmony. In Chinese narrative literature, happiness and sadness take turns, like the constant movement of the ocean's waves. As such, the structure of most Yuan zaju is usually parallel to the four-fold structure of traditional Chinese essay writing: qi-cheng-zhuan-he (起承轉合) (introduction, development, transposition, resolution). The last phase--he (resolution)--like the lid of a box, wraps everything in

an orderly state. In the old days, it seemed as though every playwright was obliged to neatly close the lid at the end of a play no matter how chaotic the dramatic movement had been, and no matter how logically improbable the resolution was. This kind of closing, in time, became more a convention than a dramatic treatment growing from the intrinsic necessity of the play. Yet Han Gong Qiu does not follow the convention. The author deliberately deviates from the tradition, leaving the audience's hearts quietly disturbed.

In order to express his tragic vision, the author breaks the boundary of historical truth: at the end of section three he lets the imperial concubine Wang jump into the boundary river between Han and the Mongols. This is not an ordinary suicide but a sublime gesture which forces us to reflect upon the tragic spirit of a defeated nation. In the play, this act enlightens the barbarian Emperor Huhanya, who understands that there is no purpose in his having brought enmity between the House of Han and his clan. He orders restoration of the alliance and the strengthening of the ties between the two countries.

According to historical records, the imperial concubine Wang did not attempt suicide. Instead, because of the lonesome and monotonous life in the palace, she eagerly married the Mongolian Emperor. We are told that she subsequently gave birth to a son and a daughter in a foreign land, and died happily. Therefore, the Yuan zaju's

image of Wang is an original creation. Like her historical model, who contributed greatly to international peace during the Han dynasty, the fictional Wang resolves an international crisis. While, by and large, the basic historical background remains similar, the spirit of the fictional character is elevated. The zaju derives from history but surpasses history. This proves that it is an imaginative work of the first rank. In this light, perhaps Aristotle would also praise Ma Zhi Yuan's bold alteration, for in chapter nine of Poetics, he stresses poetry's grip of the universal:

Poetry . . . is a more philosophical and a higher thing than history: for poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular. By the universal I mean how a person of a certain type will on occasion speak or act, according to the law of probability or necessity; and it is this universality at which poetry aims in the names she attaches to the personages.¹²⁶

The zaju discloses itself through its differences and its departures. By creating a Wang Zhao Jun who not only has received the love of the emperor but also voluntarily agrees to be married off to a barbarian emperor, the author has given a purpose to the heroine: to sacrifice herself in order to save her motherland. This purpose differs from that of the historical character in that it

¹²⁶ Aristotle, "Poetics," in S. H. Butcher, Aristotle's Theory of Poetry and Fine Art (New York: Dover Publications, 1951), 209.

combines the heroine's voluntary action with her involuntary passion. It is, therefore, tragic in all senses of the word. We witness only a short while before how the heroine, after ten years of isolation, finally experiences the positive value of her life: she receives the favor of the emperor and is elevated to the rank of imperial concubine Ming. Yet she must leave her lover while her passion is still burning. On the other hand, her lover, Emperor Yuan, despite his being the supreme ruler of the House of Han, and despite his deep passion for Wang, cannot change the compelling situation. No statesman has the courage to fight against the powerful Mongolian Emperor Huhanya. With "good" reasons, all urge the emperor to submit.

Emperor Yuan's is a double suffering. He suffers from the loss of his beloved and from his own helplessness. He does not act. He cannot. In his inaction, however, we see his tragic life. He is not "simply" an emperor, he is an individual who falls into a romantic passion; yet he is not an ordinary individual, he is an emperor, and he must endure his suffering with dignity. This inaction, ironically, is his act. This is also tragic in all senses of the word because his endurance is conscious, like an operation without anaesthesia.

We witness on stage the complete process of the love affairs. Two persons meet, fall in love, and are separated by external forces. Theirs is a mutual passion with which

a modern audience can freely empathize. Theirs is also a tragedy because the joys of their love are now being destroyed in front of their own eyes. While the destructive force appears to Emperor Yuan as a sudden blow, the audience knows right from the beginning of the zaju that it is inevitable. It is actually pre-ordained by the author, as reflected in the dramatic structure.

The wedge, perhaps, is the key for us to enter into the chamber of dramatic irony. In this wedge, which is more narrative than dramatic, the author has set up, before the appearance of the protagonist, a background which contains two intruding forces, one large and one small. The large one is Emperor Huhanya, the Mongolian military leader who has recently sent an envoy to the House of Han to demand the hand of the royal princess in marriage; and the small one is Mao Yen-Shou, who describes himself as "a man of a hawk's heart and a vulture's claw (為人鵠心雁爪，做事欺大壓小)，"¹²⁷ and who has been using women to corrupt Emperor Yuan. Against this background, Emperor Yuan appears. Immediately we recognize that he is a modest man without great vision because his only ideal is an apparent national peace. Although he has the virtue of modesty, and gives all the credit for the "peaceful" environment to his civil and military officials, that

¹²⁷ Ma Chih-yuan, "Autumn in Han Palace," trans. Liu Jung-en, Six Yuan Plays (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1972), 194.

judgment of the international situation is doubtful. From the way he listens to Mao Yen-Shou's suggestion that he select women from the kingdom to fill the palace, we know that his judgment of internal affairs is also doubtful. Therefore, before the first section of the zaju, we already have smelled something wrong, if not rotten.

The narrative monologue in Yuan zaju, thus, serves not only as a way of telling a story difficult to act, or of recapitulating past events, but also as a technique to create dramatic irony. Moreover, as the narrative monologue in Yuan zaju is actually performed by actors, i.e., dramatically realized, it is also an economical way to create mood, to establish scene, and to suggest dramatic action. For example, by juxtaposing in the wedge the entries of both emperors, the author creates in the audience's mind an immediate crisis. No sooner has the Mongolian emperor Huhanya entered with his tribesmen, than the Han emperor Yuan enters with eunuchs and serving maids. While the Mongol's powerful military impression is still strong, the House of Han's civil and highly feminine appearance must suggest that the House of Han is going to face a crisis.

The same rhythm reappears at the beginning of section two. Emperor Huhanya first enters to express his discontent with the House of Han's refusal of his demand for the royal princess. We are told that he is considering raising an army and invading the south. Then Mao Yen-Shou

enters. He is fleeing to the military tent of the Mongols to seek political asylum and revenge. This is because at the end of section one, Emperor Yuan ordered Mao's decapitation when he learned that it was Mao who spoiled Wang's portrait when she refused to bribe him. Mao decides to present to Emperor Huhanya the true portrait of Wang Zhao Jun, and to "persuade him to ask expressively for the woman in the painting. (著他按圖索要，不怕漢朝不與他。)"¹²⁸ Thus Mao becomes the agent of the conflict between the two nations.

We have learned in section one that when Emperor Yuan finally met Wang Zhao Jun after her having been kept for ten years in the chamber of the rejected, he immediately fell madly in love with her. We now see how Emperor Huhanya, attracted instinctively by Wang's beauty, immediately sends an envoy to the Emperor of Han to demand her hand in marriage. "If he refuses I shall send an army southward without delay and he will be hard put to it to defend his kingdom. (求索王昭君與俺和親。若不肯與，不日南侵。江山難保。)"¹²⁹ Because we understand very well the relative military strength of the two nations, we know that the stability of the House of Han is at stake. Against this background, the lovers appear. Undoubtedly, the more passionate they are on stage, the

¹²⁸ Ibid., 203.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 204.

more fearful and piteous the audience will be.

Let us take a closer look at section two.

The first three songs of the zheng mo (main actor) in section two are of utmost importance. They show Emperor Yuan's erotic passion towards Wang. They also show his blindness to the forthcoming crisis. Perhaps, despite his numerous sexual encounters with the eight hundred beauties of the Inner Palace, this is the first time he has really fallen in love. Wang Zhao Jun is not simply another beauty; she is the "One." The author must demonstrate to the audience this dramatic fact before he can proceed to the drama's crisis; otherwise there will be no crisis at all. If Wang is but another beauty who provides Emperor Yuan only with sexual enjoyment and pleasurable experiences, submitting her to the Mongols is not a loss. Hence, showing Emperor Yuan's passion becomes a dramatic necessity, an obligatory scene. The author seems to understand this very well, so in the second song he not only lets the emperor sing of the beauty, tenderness, and loveliness of his imperial concubine, but he writes lyrics to concretize their mutual love:

Everything that is hers is lovely,
In everything our thoughts are one.

. . .
Her form twenty years shaped in tenderness,
Our marriage destined for five hundred years.¹³⁰

他諸餘可愛。所事兒相投。

.....

¹³⁰ Ibid., 205.

體態是二十年挑剔就的溫柔。
 姻緣是五百載該撥下的配偶。

Emperor Yuan regards their marriage as an arrangement of fate. This expression of an individual in love is rare for an emperor.

Besides showing the nature of their love, the author seems to feel the heat of their burning passion. To lovers in union, time slips away unnoticed; to lovers separated, one moment is too long. The author seizes this precisely, and gives the following first line for Wang's entry:

Since the day I gained the Emperor's favour a month or more has suddenly gone by.¹³¹

自前日蒙恩臨幸。不覺又旬月。

To Wang, her time with Emperor Yuan passes "suddenly." To Emperor Yuan, one moment of absence is unbearable. Sick for Wang, he rushes back to her chamber from the middle of the court from which he has been absent for one month. Their love, thus, is true.

Just as any genuine passion is valuable, and the destruction of any valuable thing is sad, their forthcoming separation is pitiable. Because the absolute power of necessity is approaching, this separation becomes fearful. The author successfully arouses the tragic emotions of pity and fear in the audience's heart. The audience witness the destruction of a most valuable thing

¹³¹ Ibid., 204.

that emerged just a moment ago in front of their eyes. This treatment is intentional, for from time to time the author explicitly shows us Emperor Yuan's blindness. In the very first song of this section, Emperor Yuan sings:

Each season its measure of rain and dew,
A kingdom rich in hills and streams,
Officials loyal and well-employed,
No cares to unsettle happy sleep.
I worship one of snow-white teeth and eyes like stars,
The wasteful daytime I can hardly bear!
Some sickness now has overtaken me,
Part anxious for my realm and people,
Part languishing for lover and wine.¹³²

四時雨露勻。萬里江山秀。忠臣皆有用。高枕已無憂。
守著那皓齒星眸。爭忍的虛白晝。近新來染得些證候。
一半兒為國憂民。一半兒愁花病酒。

This is dramatic irony. The audience knows very well that foreign troops are not far away and that the Mongolian envoy is coming, but the protagonist still sings of "No cares to unsettle happy sleep. (高枕已無憂)" Emperor Yuan has been living in an illusion.

With this analysis in mind, and if we elevate the zaju from its surface story and consider it in its entirety, we can say that the dramatic action of the play is the process of recognition: Emperor Yuan recognizes his passionate love for the first time in his life; he recognizes also that his judgment of the political situation is wrong, and that he is really a helpless emperor. This explains why the zaju is a mo ben (male

¹³² Ibid., 205.

actor script) instead of a dan ben (female actress script) although the play originates in Wang Zhao Jun's story.

When the prime minister enters to report the demand of the Mongolian emperor, Emperor Yuan is enraged. The discontent he expresses certainly is also that of the author:

We maintain our troops for thousands of days to have them ready for just such a day as this. Is our court full of officers and officials for nothing? Who will defeat these foreign troops for us? Are you all afraid of swords and arrows? Can you not exert yourselves? How can you ask Lady Wang to go to appease a foreign emperor?¹³³

我養軍千日。用軍一時。空有滿朝文武。那一個與我退的番兵。都是些畏刀避箭的。恁不去出力。怎生教娘娘和番。

When the prime minister explains to him that the House of Han has neither well-trained soldiers nor generals brave enough to fight, and suggests to him that he sever his affections and surrender Wang Zhao Jun, Emperor Yuan expresses his sympathy for Wang,

She is still young, so young,
And there is none to save her.¹³⁴

他也他也紅妝年幼。
無人搭救。

This is more the outcry of a humanist than a lover. And from the fact that the whole court has betrayed Wang, he

¹³³ Ibid., 207.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 209.

recognizes that he is helpless,

In vain do I command three thousand companies of
troops,
The four hundred counties of the Middle Plain,
I can only wait to sue for peace.¹³⁵

我呵空掌著文武三千隊。中原四百州。只待要割鴻溝。

At this point, Wang Zhao Jun voluntarily steps out to resolve the crisis. She agrees to go to appease the Mongolian emperor and to prevent war.

From her words, we know that she has already decided to commit suicide because she uses the phrase "sacrifice my life for you [Emperor Yuan]." When she mentions the words "dang xiao yi si" (當效一死) (ready to give one's life for a cause), we should be able to see a glint of tragic triumph in her eyes--far-off, determined, and desperate. This is her secret. She is more than a beauty. She is a seemingly weak woman whose iron will stands the most difficult trial. Yet nobody in the scene knows of her determination. The prime minister is still busy explaining to Emperor Yuan that it is not they who are forcing Wang to go to appease the foreign emperor. He goes even further to mention that there have been instances since ancient times of nations falling because of beautiful women. Even Wang's lover--Emperor Yuan--does not recognize Wang's intentions. He is too involved in his sudden awareness of his helplessness,

¹³⁵ Ibid.

Whose position is like mine--Emperor with no
freedom!¹³⁶

誰似這做天子的官差不自由。

He sighs over his separation with Wang rather than over Wang's leaving for a foreign land. The author deliberately prolongs this sad tone by the lovers' farewell journey, a journey which occupies almost the entire third section. This journey is tragic because the lovers are journeying to their inevitable separation. Their union is doomed to end despite their passionate reluctance.

The destruction of his love, however, forces Emperor Yuan to reflect on the meaning of his existence. This reflection is what the author wants the audience to experience. That is why he does not end the play in the separation scene but devotes the entire last section to the lamentation. The protagonist, thus, gains a purpose in the tragedy which he might not have been able to achieve without the blow of the cruel separation. This purpose is also the tragic vision of the author. That is why he does not let Emperor Yuan know of the news of Wang's death until the end of the zaju. That is also why he does not create any ghost or spirit for her. In fact, there is no attempt to resolve or reunite the lovers, even in a dream. The dream scene where Wang reappears is exceptionally short. The heroine disappears in section four. Her loss is

¹³⁶ Liu Jung-en, trans., Six Yuan Plays, 212.

irreparable.

Having an awareness of his real existence, an awareness of his real position in the universe, and a recognition of his own blindness, the emperor retreats into a state of melancholy. This melancholy is the xi-he (dramatic kernel) of the zaju. The emperor is the victim of circumstances. He is an emperor yet he is helpless. He is a man yet he cannot act forcefully, decisively, in a manly way. His sadness intermingles with his discontent, which gives a bitter touch to his tragic emotion of bei-yuan.

From the zheng ming (proper title) of the zaju--Po You Meng Gu Yan Han Gong Qiu (破幽夢孤雁漢宮秋) (Awakening from a bitter dream a wild goose finds itself lonesome in the Autumn Han Palace)¹³⁷--we understand that the author really intends this scene to be the xi-he (dramatic kernel) of the zaju. Wang Zhao Jun has gone, leaving behind only her portrait, which Emperor Yuan has taken out to comfort himself in his love sickness.

It is a chilly night, the royal palace is absolutely quiet. Sleepless, Emperor Yuan contemplates in front of his lover's portrait:

Lady, you are like the Temple of the Bamboo Grove,
Half seen you disappear,
Leaving no more than your shadow behind.
Until I die,
As I shall live

¹³⁷ Zang Jin Shu, Yuan Qu Xuan, 13.

I shall do homage to you.¹³⁸

想娘娘似竹林寺不見半分形。則留下這個影。
影未死之時。在生之日。我可也一般恭敬。

He realizes that what he has lost is irreplaceable. His desire to reunite with his lover in a dream is in vain. "Where are you, my love, my love?" He cries, "Why does your spirit not appear to me? (那裡也愛卿。愛卿。卻怎生無些靈聖。偏不許楚襄王枕上雨雲情。)"¹³⁹ He expresses his bitter discontent at failing to have even a sweet dream with his lover. Finally, he falls asleep and dream of her. Like their love, his dream is short, bitter, and incomplete. No sooner has she appeared, than she is captured by a Mongolian soldier. He awakes, to find only the portrait. At this very point, when the lover is in his deepest melancholy, he hears the sounds of the wild goose, the symbol of parting in Chinese culture. The wild goose keeps on crying until the end of the zaju. The author employs eight songs for the protagonist to sing about his various emotions towards the wild goose, its cries, and the lonesome atmosphere.

The appearance of the wild goose is aesthetically superb. As a metaphor, it can be Wang Zhao Jun, Emperor Yuan, the House of Han, and any helpless individual who is separated from his group. As a theatrical symbol, it

¹³⁸ Liu Jung-en, Six Yuan Plays, 221.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

signifies deep autumn, a time of withering and decay. As a dramatic device, it triggers Emperor Yuan's emotions of sympathy, self pity, discontent, further longing for Wang, and his recognition of the environment:

In painted eaves the iron horses ring and ring,
 Within the palace the royal couch grows cold,
 Cold these watches of the night,
 Wind rustling in falling leaves,
 The candle dim, the Long Gate Palace quiet.¹⁴⁰

畫簷間鐵馬響丁丁。寶殿中御榻冷清清。
 寒也波更。蕭蕭落葉聲。燭暗長門靜。

He knows that his love is doomed, and he cannot help lamenting his loss. Even the wild goose is better than he, for it can fly away to search for his lost group but he cannot. He is locked in the decaying environment, letting his life drain away. Even the news of the death of his beloved does not stir him. His being is dead, gone with his beloved. This dramatic fact gives a tragic quality to his discontent which is almost existential, although he does not explicitly ask who he is. The scene is the best expression of bei-yuan in Chinese drama.

Differing from the yi bei dao di (tragic until the end) mood of Han Gong Qiu, Shuang Fu Meng's mood is more diverse. It combines sadness with hatred, and gives the heroes a sour taste of powerlessness as well as a sense of personal dignity.

The extant version is incomplete. There is no dialogue

¹⁴⁰ Liu Jung-en, Six Yuan Plays, 224.

and no stage directions. Although the incomplete text is relatively well preserved, and several good scholastic editions have appeared recently, the ambiguity in reading the zaju is exceptionally high. For example, as the singer of the lyrics is not specified, it is uncertain whether the lyrics in section one are assigned to Liu Bei, the commander in chief, or to his messenger. This, however, adds interest to study of the play because it enlarges the possibilities of interpretation. To facilitate the discussion, the zaju's content will be described first.

There is no wedge. As noted above, the singer of section one is ambiguous. According to the convention of Yuan zaju, the main actor will take up the singing part in each section. In section one, however, there are two different tones. The first two songs seem to be sung by Liu Bei, the commander in chief of the Shu Kingdom, and the remaining seven, by his messenger. Nevertheless, the lyrics provide a rather clear picture of the zaju's background: awakening from a bad dream that tells of calamities that have befallen his sworn brothers, Guan Yu and Zhang Fei, Liu Bei anxiously sends a messenger to search for them. The messenger rushes to their tents, only to find that they have been entrapped by some wicked traitors and been killed. He sings of the past heroic victory of the two generals.

Section two is sung by Zhuge Liang, the prime minister of the Shu Kingdom. In the first songs, he sings about

being puzzled by the adverse outcome of a divination and a strange phenomenon in the sky. The report of the messenger proves his interpretation: the two powerful generals have died. Although he feels a great loss, he decides not to report the news to Liu Bei, so as not to imperil morale.

The singing part in section three and section four is taken up by the ghost of Zhang Fei. In section three the ghosts of Zhang Fei and Guan Yu meet, share their sufferings, and decide to journey to the capital to enter their elder brother's dream.

In section four, the ghosts of the heroes reach the palace on the ninth day of the ninth month, the day of brotherhood. The beautiful decorations of the palace and the lively spirit inside sadden them. With a bitterly vengeful spirit, they enter the dream of their elder brother and urge him to take revenge for their deaths.

The dramatic action is very clear. It revolves around the news of the death of Zhang Fei and Guan Yu. To put it precisely, the dramatic interest lies in whether the news will reach Liu Bei. In section one, Liu Bei dreams about them and sends a messenger to search for them. The dramatic movement takes a twist in section two as Zhuge Liang orders the messenger not to report the news. Against this background, the appearance of the two ghosts in section three becomes a dramatic necessity.

To foster the action, the dead, in the form of ghosts, must act for themselves as though they were alive.

Powerless as they are, they must journey a long way back to the capital to enter into Liu Bei's dream. This action is pathetic normally, but in their case, it is certainly tragic. They used to be superheroes, and they won many battles in a courageous manner, yet they died in an ignoble way. Their suffering is almost unspeakably painful. But to die in this manner without taking revenge is even more unbearable. Revenge is their manly need, but, as ghosts, they cannot avenge themselves. That is why they are categorized here as bei-yuan instead of bei-zhuang, a dimension which suggests heroic struggles.

The xi-he of Shuang Fu Meng is certainly in sections three and section four when the two "superheroes" journey to the capital to enter the dream of their elder brother. Unlike Emperor Yuan in Han Gong Qiu, who accepts his fate blindly, Zhang Fei and Guan Yu do not accept theirs. They want to, indeed must, take revenge. Since Zhuge Liang has ordered the messenger to keep their death news secret, nobody will report the event to Liu Bei. The ghosts of the heroes thus become actors. They had once united as sworn-brothers to fight for a kingdom. Now their spirits will journey to the palace to reunite with their elder brother in his dream.

The dramatic movement of Shuang Fu Meng is very philosophical. It starts in the real world, shifts to a metaphysical space, and ends on the threshold of the real and the unreal. Dreams, astrology, and ghosts are

involved, creating on the stage an imaginary scene that is impossible and yet convincing. The imaginary scene is convincing because the emotions it arouses are real, and the agents of the action, although ghosts, manifest their complex passions humanly.

Their basic emotion is bei-yuan. They are failed heroes. The best they can do is to express their discontent. Their enemies are merely ordinary men. Their expressions, hateful as they are, cannot be described as protests, for they were only entrapped, not oppressed, and it is not heroic for a hero to protest against a man in the street.

When Zhang Fei first appears in section three, he sings of the unpredictability of his misfortune, and reminisces about his heroic past. As a hero, he is egotistical. That is why in the second song, when he sings of his past great military power, he uses the word wo (我) (I or me, depending on the syntax) twice, and in a very stressful syntax: "The man who did all that was I, I!

(那其間也是我，我！)"¹⁴¹ Yet, he continues immediately to sigh about himself: "this heroic I was entrapped by an ordinary man. (暮年折剄，今日向匹夫行伏落。)"¹⁴² If he had been defeated by some rival powerful general on the

¹⁴¹ Ning Xi Yuan, Yuan Zaju Sanshizhong Xingjiao (元雜劇三十種新校), A new edition of the thirty mixed-dramas printed in Yuan dynasty) (Lanzhou, China: Lanzhou Daxue Chubanshe, 1988), 3.

¹⁴² Ibid., 3.

battlefield, his feeling might have been different, for, like a sportsman, a hero should accept his defeat in fair play. Instead, he was killed while drunk by a traitorous fellow soldier. This was a humiliating way to die. How can a proud hero bear such humiliation? His name is contaminated. To put it precisely: he feels humiliated, not so much by his murderer as by the entire world. At this very moment, he sees his second sworn brother journeying past him. Being only a ghost, Zhang dares not approach his brother. He hides himself in a hell-cloud and observes. From his brother's shabby appearance, sad face, and tearful eyes, he deduces that his brother's fate is the same as his. He then comes forth to meet his brother's ghost. The two sorrowful entities reinforce each other's vengeful spirits. Remembering the glorious past, their egos are revitalized. They momentarily forget their ghostly identities. The atmosphere is imbued with a heroic spirit.

When the heroic tone falls, they once again recognize their humble condition. An acrid taste slips in at the very beginning of section four's first song. The sorrowful ghosts must have been restrained from entering their motherland by the gate keeper of hell. Zhang Fei sings (rough translation):

Our fatigue is in vain,
We have suffered for nothing.
Being ghosts we cannot enter our own country.
We were killed by three traitorous officials,

Not even one savior comes from our household.¹⁴³

枉劬勞，空生愛，死魂兒有國難投。
橫亡在三個賊臣手，無一個親人救。

They resentfully accept their fate. "Oh! Being ghosts, we have lost the freedom of men! (元來這做鬼的比陽人不自由!)" Zhang Fei cries, his tears pouring down.

When they finally enter the palace, they recall their past glory, especially that day when they celebrated their elder brother's birthday. That day is the ninth day of the ninth month, the Chinese day for brotherhood. The contrast between the past joy and the present sorrow is painful. They see the beautiful rhythmic movement of the greenish water, they smell the penetrating scent from the jade palace. Yet their boots make no sound on the tiles. This makes them face once again the fact that they are dead:

Oh! Have I really died?
Have I really died?
But I still can hear the sounds of
The silver arrow and the water clock.¹⁴⁴

元來咱死了也麼哥，
咱死了也麼哥，
耳聽銀箭和更漏。

Their egos are hurt deeply. The space they are dwelling in is between the real and the metaphysical. They see a world they no longer belong to. They cannot physically interact

¹⁴³ Ibid., 4.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 5.

with the real objects in this world although they can sense them. This sense of loss, so real and so strong, is more unbearable than death. They become very humble, and do not have the courage to approach their elder brother, Liu Bei. When they see him lying on the sick bed, they even step back. This treatment is very important. Even without the prose dialogue, we can deduce from the highly suggestive lyrics that the two ghosts must be afraid of adding a burden to their brother, whose sickness, as the audience knows, is due to the ominous dream at the beginning of the zaju. Nevertheless, they stay inside the room, observing with longing eyes. When they see that their sworn-brother is thinking of them, they want to enter his dream to express their misfortune, their discontent, and their wish for revenge. Yet, because there are officials and maids surrounding their elder brother, they must keep waiting frustratedly until all have gone, and until their brother has fallen into sleep. The waiting scene is superb. It beautifully depicts the complicated emotions of the two humble heroes. It is not until almost dawn that they can finally enter into their brother's dream.

Chapter 4: Bei-Fen: Protest with Invincible Will

It is said that the Chinese are a modest and cultivated people. According to the Confucian principle of zhong yong zhi dao (中庸之道, the doctrine of the mean), everything done and every feeling expressed should always be moderate, never going too far. This observation regarding the Chinese national personality is generally correct. For example, when we think of the Western aesthetic concept of the sublime, we usually relate it to an image of great force and mighty power; on the other hand, when we apply the concept to a Chinese context, we normally link it to loftiness, modesty, solemnity, and righteousness. Based upon the Chinese people's national personality of modesty, the Chinese aesthetician Chu Kwong Tsien maintained that there was no tragedy in traditional Chinese drama because tragedy is an expression which depicts the extreme. Needless to say, theoretical adventure, no matter how far it goes, and no matter how beautiful its map is, is an interpretation which, at best, only approximates the real landscape. Extreme expressions have been haunting the Chinese soul since the ancient times.

The two zaju discussed in this chapter are extreme dramatic expressions. In Dou E Yuan (The injustice done to Dou E), a weak young widow expresses prophesies with so strong a will that it can find equivalents only in powerful mythological heroes. In Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui

(Burning Jie Zi Tui alive), an ordinary civil officer shows his dignity so stubbornly that even the king cannot soften it.

Both zaju are regarded by Wang Guowei as beiju in his Song Yuan Xiqu Kao (A study of Song and Yuan opera, 1912). To Wang, Dou E Yuan (together with Zhao Shi Gu Er) is a great tragedy, comparable to the best examples in the world. In his brief but insightful commentary, he says that, although the calamity of Dou E Yuan involves the exertions of villains, the protagonist's action is voluntary.¹⁴⁵ This is, as students of tragedy will agree, a sophisticated view drawing upon modern Germanic philosophies which stress the importance of the will in tragedy.

There is one common spirit in both zaju: protest by the insulted and the injured. The protest, contrary to the commonly assumed Chinese national personality, is not moderate. Although the protagonists are relatively weak in physical strength, the strength of their expressions, whether emotional or rational, is extremely strong. To describe it with yin-yang terminology, both protagonists are yin in ti (body) and yang in yong (expression). This situation is tragic because it inevitably leads to the destruction of the protester's physical being.

¹⁴⁵ Wang Guowei, Wang Guowei Xiqu Lunwenji (Collective essays on Chinese opera by Wang Guowei) (Beijing: Zhongguo Xiju Chubanshe, 1984), 85.

The protester, however, is only the carrier of the will which is the real motivative force of the protest. Just as the stronger the candle's flame, the sooner its extinction, the stronger the protagonist's will, the greater his destruction. In the core scenes of both zaju, the protagonists are killed brutally, but their dignity survives as pure will. In what follows, I will show that this pure will is what we call bei-fen in Chinese culture.

Injustice is one of the basic themes in Yuan zaju. Among the extant zaju which deal with the theme, Guan Hanqing's (1241?-1322?) Dou E Yuan is perhaps the most powerful. This is because the injustice it denounces is not the mischief done by only one or two wicked persons. The play accuses the entirely corrupt social environment. Fewer people, however, regard Di Jun Hou's (12??-13??) Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui as a zaju dealing with injustice. If we see injustice in its broad sense, however, it can also be understood as a drama dealing with this theme. Although the injustices done to the protagonists of these zaju are different, the subjective pain they bring are similar.

The type of injustice done to the young heroine is called in Chinese yuan (冤), which is usually concerned with false accusation; the injustice done to the Confucian scholar is gu (屈) (wrong, or unjust treatment). Interestingly enough, in Chinese there is a term which combines these two ideas: yuan-gu (冤屈). Perhaps we can use analogies from ancient Greece to illustrate the term.

Whereas Athens' verdict on Socrates is yuan, "the unjust award of the arms of Achilles" is gu to Ajax.

The dramatic interests of the zaju are different. Dou E Yuan discloses the discontent of the oppressed; Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui depicts the morality and dignity of a Confucian civil officer. Dou E is a young woman whose life is a story of multiple misfortunes. Her mother dies when she is three. Her father is so poor that he has to sell her at age seven to richer family as its tong yang xi (童養媳), daughter-in-law-to-be. Her young husband dies after they have been married only two years. . . . Ultimately, without having done anything wrong, she is sentenced to death. The injustice done upon this weak woman is so great that she becomes enraged, suffering extraordinary agony. On the other hand, Jie Zi Tui is a mature Confucian scholar striving with all his might to serve his prince. When what he has done, crucial as it is for the survival of his master, and cruel as it seems to the eyes of common men, is forgotten, he retreats to the mountain with his mother. He feels deeply humiliated. He faces his injustice with a stubborn will that expresses his quiet agony.

The life-dramas of the two protagonists evolve in contrary ways. Dou E has done nothing but injustice falls upon her: Jie Zi Tui has done all he can but injustice also falls upon him. The dramatic movements of the two zaju, thus, also assume complementary forms.

By choosing Dou E as his heroine, Guan Hang Qing

embodies in the zaju the concept of total injustice. In the wedge, Dou E is only an innocent young girl of seven. Being a member of the lower stratum of society, she does not have any power over others. What she wants is to live quietly with her scholar father. But she cannot. Her father sells her away in order to raise money to go to the capital to attend the imperial examination. Like many poor young girls in old China, Dou E spends her childhood with her mother-in-law. With respect to the ethical system in traditional Chinese society, this is not an injustice because she has a place to live in, and will be the future wife of the young boy in the family. In this respect, the death of her husband after they have been married two years is only a misfortune. She becomes a widow at seventeen. All she wants now, is to observe her widowhood and to live peacefully with her mean mother-in-law. This is not very ambitious; it is just and justifiable. But she fails. This failure is the background of the tragedy's upward movement. In section one and section two the dramatist unfolds before our eyes a scroll of injustice that is unbearable but highly probable: a wicked local physician, Doctor Lu, attempts to murder Dou E's mother-in-law in order to avoid repaying a sum he has borrowed from her. The rescuers, Donkey Zhang and his father, are even more wicked; they force the two women to marry them, and get all the money from the old one. Without any attempt to fight back, the mother-in-law surrenders. Only

Dou E remains to fight against the male oppressors. This, however, is only the beginning of the injustice she suffers.

To make Dou E yield to him, Donkey Zhang tries to murder her mother-in-law with poisoned soup. The old woman does not drink the soup; Zhang's old father does. He dies. Zhang accuses Dou E of murder and demands that she marry him to exchange for her leaving un-trial. Dou E refuses and the case is brought to court. The judge is a fool.¹⁴⁶ He tries to make Dou E confess to false charges under torture. The weak woman stands the physical pain. Nevertheless, she confesses when the judge threatens to beat her old mother-in-law. Weak as her body is, it bears tremendous physical pain. Dou E has an iron will. Unfortunately, she has a weak heart. She cannot stand knowing that her mother-in-law will be beaten. Bertolt Brecht would comment that this is the seduction of kind-heartedness.¹⁴⁷ Whether this is seduction or not, Dou E is sentenced to death.

Dou E fails in her desire to live peacefully. It is, however, not her personal failure. It is, instead, the failure of the surrounding environment. Dou E cries:

¹⁴⁶ The role is actually taken up by a chou (丑) (the comic actor), and he acts out some standard comic conventions when he enters. Theatrically, this treatment gives a comic touch; dramatically, however, it triggers the emotion of fear in the audience, for they know that Dou E is going to meet this judge.

¹⁴⁷ At the end of act one, The Caucasian Chalk Circle.

Without knowing I have violated the laws of the land,
 Without any defence I am to meet with this punishment.
 I cry Injustice! let Earth be moved, let Heaven
 quake!¹⁴⁸

沒來由犯王法。不提防遭刑憲。叫聲屈動天驚地。

Dou E is angry. Her anguish drives her to become a discontented ghost. It should be noted that what she condemned is not any particular person. Because it is the whole system that betrays her, her condemnation cannot but be the condemnation of Heaven and Earth. In section three, the core scene of the zaju, when she is on her way to the execution ground she cries aloud, accusing Heaven and Earth:

Heaven and Earth!
 It is for you to distinguish between right and wrong,
 What confusion makes you mistake a villain for a
 saint?
 The good suffer poverty and want, and their lives are
 cut short;
 The wicked enjoy wealth and honor, and always live
 long.
 Heaven and Earth!
 You do but fear the strong and cheat the weak,
 You too take the boat the current favors.
 Earth! you cannot distinguish good and evil, can you
 yet be Earth!
 Heaven! who mistake the fool for the sage, you are
 Heaven in vain!¹⁴⁹

天地也只合把清濁分辨。可怎生糊突了盜跖顏淵。
 為善的受貧窮更命短。造惡的享富貴又壽延。
 天地也做得箇怕硬欺軟。卻元來也這般順水推船。

¹⁴⁸ Kuan Han-ch'ing, "The Injustice Done to Tou Ngo," trans. Liu Jung-en, Six Yuan Plays (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1977), 139.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 139-140.

地也你不分好歹何為地。天也你錯勘賢愚枉做天。

This is Dou E's condemnation. This is the tragic protest of an invincible will. It is also the dramatist's condemnation because he sees in the phenomenal world the cruel reality of total injustice. The tragic dimension of the zaju is bei-fen. Its dramatic interest, thus, is not in the suffering of Dou E but in the cause and nature of her suffering, in her recognition of, and reaction against total injustice.

When one's sufferings have stirred one's heart agitatedly enough to give rise to an emotion similar to hatred, one's feelings are in a state of bei-fen. This emotion is usually related to tremendous strength and a powerful will.

Within the tragic dimensions of bei-fen, Dou E becomes a new being. She is both human and superhuman. On her death journey, she shows her womanly tenderness; before she is beheaded, she becomes a demi-god, enraged. She asks the executioner to go through the backstreets because she fears that in the main street she may be seen by her mother-in-law. She explains to the executioner that she does not want to break the old woman's heart. This is a consideration which grows out of love. Yet, when her weeping mother-in-law steps forward at the execution ground to bid her farewell, Dou E is as calm as a Greek statue. She soothes the old woman:

Mother, do not weep and wail any more,
 Nor be distressed or bitter.
 It is only that I, Dou E, was born when neither season
 nor fortune were mine.¹⁵⁰

婆婆也再也不要啼啼哭哭。煩煩惱惱。怨氣衝天。
 這都是我做寶娥的沒時運。不明不闇。負屈銜冤。

She faces her death with a dignity that equals the most dignified of Greek tragic heroes. Certainly, she is a new being.

Like all transformations, that of Dou E's being has given her a surging momentum. Her recognition of the world's total injustice, her agony, calmness, and courage elevate her to the mythical domain. At the end of section three, she makes three superhuman prophesies. She has assumed a will power that makes her believe that she is able to communicate with Heaven. As the land is a corrupted land, she does not want even one drop of her blood spilled on the ground. She asks the prison governor to grant her a clean mattress to stand on and a long strip of thin white silk to be hung from a lance so that when the sword strikes and her head falls the blood will flow up into the strip of white silk. She is so sure of her will power that she prophesizes that even in the very height of summer, when she dies Heaven will send down a winter snow three feet deep to cover her corpse, and that for three years to come the county shall suffer a drought.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 142.

Though Dou E does not believe in human society any more, she holds a strong belief in Heaven. When the prison governor asks someone to strike her mouth for threatening the curse of drought, she sings:

You say nothing is to be expected of the Lord of
Heaven,
That there is no pity for the human heart.
You cannot know the Emperor of Heaven will fulfil
Man's wishes.

All because you officials have no care to see justice
done,
And anyone who has a mind to speak is forced to hold
his tongue.¹⁵¹

你道是天公不可期。人心不可憐。不知皇天也
肯從人願。……這都是官吏無心正法。使百姓
有口難言。

This is an expression of the emotion of bei-fen. With this emotion, Dou E is not going to suffer in silence. She decides to make the world ring with her protests.

After she has died, the "impossible" prophecies are realized. This, however, is highly probable in the dramatic context. In Aristotle's terms, these are convincing impossibilities because they are natural outcomes of the zaju's tragic movement. The playwright has shown us the tremendous injustice done to Dou E in section one and two. He has also shown us the tremendous will and sublime dignity she has developed before she dies in section three. Therefore, it is dramatically convincing that her mythical prophecies come true.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 143-144.

There is a Chinese saying "bei fen chu zhi ren (悲憤出詩人)," which means: tragic agony gives birth to the poet. Poetry being the imaginative creation of words, a dramatic character in tragic agony will voice the most unusual words that outwit our imagination. The playwright, having aroused the audience's tragic emotion of bei-fen, imparts to it a poet's mind: it accepts any imaginative verbal creation.

In Dou E Yuan we see the transformation of a woman, in Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui we see the stubbornness of a man. The weak and tender Dou E finds herself betrayed by society; the righteous and modest Jie Zi Tui finds himself ill-treated by the king. Whereas Dou E is condemned to death without doing anything wrong, Jie Zi Tui is burned alive for doing rightful things. Dou E voices her protest aloud; Jie Zi Tui expresses his discontent in "great" silence. Yet without saying a word, he expresses a protest that has become legendary. The Chinese regard him as one of the most righteous, strongest willed men.

Since Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui is relatively unknown in the West, and there is not much discussion of it among Chinese scholars, a description on its content will precede its analysis.

Like most Yuan zaju, Hu Shao Jie Zi Tui has four sections and one wedge. It differs from other zaju, however, in the wedge's position, which lies between sections three and four. This rare positioning is both

dramatically and theatrically significant. Dramatically, it is the turning point of the action, and it reveals Jie Zi Tui's moral purpose. Theatrically, it solves a difficult problem in performance, for the zheng mo (male main actor) plays up three different roles in the zaju. In section one, section three, and the wedge, he acts up the title role, Jie Zi Tui; in section two, he is a loyal imperial officer; and in section four, a woodcutter. If the wedge is not placed where it is, the scene where Jie Zi Tui decides to retreat to the mountain will either be moved to the end of section three or to the beginning of section four. Both would be unsatisfactory as they would make the dramatic movement too dense in the first case and, in the second, make the zheng mo reappear too soon within the same section.

The main dramatic content of section one is Jie Zi Tui's remonstrance to the king. Jie Zi Tui is a mature government officer. His personality remains unchanged throughout. Being trained in the Confucian tradition, and being a jian yi guan (諫議官), government officer who makes remonstrances to the king, he sighs for the corruption of the palace. Therefore, unlike Dou E, Jie Zi Tui has a very clear purpose at the beginning of the zaju: the king has corrupted the palace, and Jie Zi Tui wants the king to observe the good traditions of the ancient saints. Before Jie Zi Tui enters, the king has banished his queen and the crown prince in favor of the imperial

concubine Li and her son for whom the king has built gorgeous ceremonial platforms and entertaining palaces. Seeing that no one in the court has the courage to remonstrate with the king for wasting people's money and labor, Jie Zi Tui laments for the corruption of the court, and admonishes the king. When he has done all he can and the king still does not listen, he resigns. To Jie Zi Tui, this is the proper attitude. He quotes Confucius, "When the country is ruled properly, work for it; when the country is ruled improperly, retreat from the scene." (天下有道則見。無道則隱。) In the last song of section one, he sings of the forthcoming catastrophes and warfares, creating great dramatic tension.

In section two, Jie Zi Tui's prophecy comes true. The imperial concubine motivates the king to condemn to death the crown prince, Shen Sheng. Threatened by this, Shen's younger brother, Chong Er, escapes. The king assigns the chief imperial officer (one of the main actor's roles) to bring a sword, a rope, and a bottle of poison to Shen Sheng so that he may choose one with which to kill himself. The main action of this section focuses on the psychological action of the imperial officer, Wang An. In the first song, he expresses his discontent with the king for his not being able to resolve the wicked suggestion of the imperial concubine. To ensure the death of Shen Sheng, the imperial concubine sends another officer to the scene. This creates an immediate dilemma for Wang An: if he lets

his young master go, he himself will be punished to death; if he lets his young master kill himself, he will be condemned by generations to come. When he has learned the background to the story from Shen Sheng, he shows his sympathy for his young master. From the brief stage directions we learn that he has decided to kill himself with the sword, which Shen Sheng seizes and uses to cut his own throat.

Section three takes place half a year after Jie Zi Tui has resigned. He has been living peacefully with his elderly mother, his wife, and his son in the countryside. His grown-up son, Jie Lin, however, still wants to serve the king. While Jie Zi Tui is explaining to his son the difficult political situation, Chong Er appears, horrified. Chong Er has been running for his life following the palace calamity (both his mother and his elder brother have died). No sooner does he reach the Jie's house, than imperial concubine's brother enters. He passes the imperial sword to Jie and orders him to hand over Chong Er's head immediately. Taking this as his chance to serve the country, Jie's son offers his own head as a substitution. He suggests that his father boils his head until it becomes indistinguishable before handing it over, and then cuts his own throat without hesitation. Jie Zi Tui then helps Chong Er continue his escape to the kingdom of Chu to seek for help. They meet extremely bad weather on their way, and after several days journeying in

a snow storm, exhaust all their food. Jie cuts off his own flesh for Chong Er to eat. Luckily, they meet a government official of the kingdom of Chu, who agrees to bring Chong Er to the kingdom. Jie tells Chong Er that he (Jie) has to take care of his elderly mother, and does not follow him.

The wedge: after Chong Er takes his revenge and becomes king of the kingdom of Jin, he gives credits to all his officers but forgets to honor Jie Zi Tui. Jie writes a "Dragon Snake Song" to express his discontent, and returns home to wait for the king's answer. His mother, however, suggests that he retreats to the mountain, for the fame of ten thousand years is better than the flourishing of one life. Jie Zi Tui decides to move to the mountain.

Section four begins with the entry of Chong Er. He has recognized his forgetfulness and has sent a messenger to invite Jie to work for him. Jie refuses. Chong Er burns the mountain to urge Jie Zi Tui to descend, but Jie remains adamant. A woodcutter comes off the mountain and reports the conflagration and Jie's death. He expresses his anger towards the king.

The core scene of Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui is undoubtedly section four. Although the protagonist does not appear, his iron will is still strongly felt and fully expressed. The power of the scene, in which a righteous man and his elderly mother are burned alive, however, derives from Jie Zi Tui's absence. His absence is both dramatic and

phenomenological. The king cannot force him out, and he does not appear on stage. Yet this is the best way to express the theme of bei-fen. It is a paradox. Since the audience cannot see him, it actually feels Jie Zi Tui's stubbornness. On the other hand, if the author let him appear to sing of his feelings, whether of fear, hatred, or sadness, the result would be unsatisfactory, not because his emotions are too complex to express but, rather, because it is inappropriate for him to express his feelings himself. As modesty is a virtue to be praised by others, Jie Zi Tui's stubborn will is best suggested or reported by another. In fact, it would be thematically faulty if Jie Zi Tui's unhappiness were expressed by himself, for Jie is a Confucian scholar and his act is one of silent protest. The image of Jie Zi Tui being burnt alive is, however, potent despite his absence.

Aesthetically, it is very difficult to describe the fire via Jie Zi Tui's words. On the empty zaju stage, the scene is created by the actor's verbal description and stylized conventions. Since he believes in ning si bu qu (寧死不屈, death before surrender), he should be fearless, and he would not describe the conflagration with a tone of terror. On the other hand, the terrible scene is capably described through the words of the woodcutter. When the woodcutter first enters, he is in a state of extreme terror. The script notes that he should perform the convention of huang fang (慌放, release of flurry). In the

first songs he sings of the killing flame, the thick smoke, and the horrible sounds of burning. Then he expresses his luck at having escaped the conflagration. He thanks the god of smoke and fire for having saved his life. This is very important thematically. Later, when the king asks him why he is able to escape from the fire, he sings his third song, which expresses the good wishes of the common people (rough literal translation):

I have been staying near the dwelling place of tigers
and wolves for thirty days,
Every day I work hard, exhausting myself cutting and
gathering wood,
So that my wife and young children may live
comfortably.
I don't know why you laugh at the retired government
officer,
Inside that thick smoke and powerful flame he has
become ashes.
You ask why this woodcutter has the luck to be able to
escape?
It is because that Heaven is just and never betrays
this hard working man.¹⁵²

小人向虎狼叢裡過了三旬，每日負力擔柴捆，交俺稚
子山妻得安頓。我不知你笑那深山裡玉堂臣，他在那
濃煙烈焰裡成灰燼。為甚俺這樵夫得脫身？無是他皇
天有信，從來不負這苦辛人。

These lines express a basic Chinese ethical principle. In the woodcutter's mind, his relationship with Heaven is in harmony so that he is protected by Heaven. He has worked hard and thus is saved. The audience will notice immediately that his case is in sharp contrast to that of Jie Zi Tui. Through this the author subtly expresses the

¹⁵² Ibid., 402-403.

injustice done to Jie Zi Tui.

Besides being dramatically indispensable as the messenger, and thematically important as a contrast to Jie Zi Tui, the woodcutter is also symbolically significant as a sign. The woodcutter represents the common people. Through his mouth the playwright not only reports the eye-witness account of how Jie Zi Tui sticks to his principles even in the face of death, but also expresses the anger of the people concerning the king's injustice and cruel deeds. From the fourth to the sixth songs, the woodcutter explains and recapitulates the things that Jie Zi Tui and his son have done to save the king, and how the king is unjust. "On the one hand, let go the water; on the other, ignite the fire. (一頭放水水浪滾，一頭放火把火光焚。)"¹⁵³

This is the complaint of the common people. After he has voiced this unhappiness, a strong wind comes to "fan the fire." The woodcutter is now agitated, and in a state of bei-fen, which transforms him from an ordinary woodcutter to a man with a tragic consciousness. He shows his empathy toward Jie's undeserved suffering. In the last song, he accuses the king of cruelty:

There is no reason for you, king of Jin, to burn alive
a meritorious officer,
You have done this wrong and generations to come will
talk about it.
They will think that even the king who tried to kill
Zhao Dun,
When compared with you, the present king, is not so

¹⁵³ Ibid., 403.

cruel.¹⁵⁴

不爭你個晉文公烈火把功臣盡，枉惹得萬萬載朝廷
議論。常想趙盾捧車輪，也不似你個當今帝主狠！

The woodcutter's accusation is no less forceful than Dou E's protest to Heaven, although Dou E's outcries are louder. The psychological distance between Dou E and Heaven is greater than that between the woodcutter and the king but the physical distance of the latter pair is much closer. The proximity gives the scene a great tension.

From the dramatic structure of Dou E Yuan, we know that what the playwright intends is to demonstrate to the audience that suffering is not a matter of blind fate. He also wants to show the indestructible will of the supposedly weak. That is why all the injustice done to Dou E is depicted in the first half of the zaju only. In section three we see the most striking condemnation of injustice, and in section four we see Dou E's ghost actively motivating the final resolution of the injustice. The condemnation and the resolution of the injustice are indispensable parts of the dramatic action. It should be noted, however, that the final section is not just a resolution of the play, where moral or poetic justice is achieved. To see the last section of the zaju simply as a means to promote good and punish evil will miss the mark. Dramatically, the last section is the action of the will, the tragic will of bei-fen. Without it, the movement is

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 404.

not completed.

The tragic vision of Jie Zi Tui, similarly, is not to depict the sufferer and his suffering, but to depict his dignity. In quiet determination, Jie Zi Tui expresses his mighty anger. "Ning wei yu sui, bu wei wa guan

(寧為玉碎，不為瓦全。)," rather be a shattered vessel of jade than an unbroken piece of pottery: his silence is one of the loudest outcries in Chinese history. By making him disappear physically on stage, the playwright has resurrected Jie Zi Tui in the form of a spirit. This spirit is the tragic spirit of bei-fen. Its momentum is strong enough to motivate the lower stratum of society to condemn the supreme ruler.

Chapter 5: Bei-zhuang: Heroic Action Against the Odds

The spirit of bei-zhuang is highly regarded in Chinese culture. As early as the Western Han dynasty (B.C. 206-24 A.D.) the "Grand Historian" of China--Sima Qian--had written many prose records in which this spirit was embedded. The stories of Jing Ke and Xin Ling Jun, cited in chapter one, are taken from Sima Qian's Shi Ji (史記, Records of history), which, without doubt, is itself a product of the spirit of bei-zhuang. It reflects its author's great deliberation. Although Sima Qian suffered from the undeserved punishment of kongxing (宮刑), a punishment done to the penis, for his saying good things to a general who surrendered to a foreign country, he endured the humiliation and physical pain to finish this first general history of China.

The most often cited traditional Chinese drama described by Chinese critics as bei-zhuang is Zhao Shi Gu Er. Wang Guowei places it alongside the great tragedies of the world. It is well-known not only among critics, but also among the Chinese people, for its adaptations appear in many styles of Chinese opera.¹⁵⁵ And it is not only well-known in China, but also in the West.

Zhao Shi Gu Er was the first Chinese play translated into a European language. It greatly influenced the Western intelligentsia after its introduction into the

¹⁵⁵ Perhaps the Peking opera and the Cantonese opera versions are the best known.

West in the mid-eighteenth century. It can be inferred that the play, or at least its plot, was pretty well-known in Europe at that time, a time when European intellectuals awoke from a long period of darkness, motivated by the Renaissance rebirth spirit, and searched anxiously elsewhere in the treasure of world culture to cultivate their own. For example, Voltaire, the French philosopher of the Age of Enlightenment, was inspired by the story to write one of the most successful eighteenth century plays of the Comedie Francaise: L'Orphelin de la Chine.

Voltaire's play, a great hit, was first performed on August 20, 1755, and remained in Comedie Francaise's repertoire until 1833,¹⁵⁶ given altogether 190 shows, a great number at that time.¹⁵⁷ In his preface to the play, Voltaire mentions that he "took the first hint of this tragedy some time since from reading The Orphan of Tchao, a Chinese tragedy, translated by Father Bremare."¹⁵⁸ From the account in his preface, it is no doubt that the original of the abridged translation is Ji Jun Xiang's Zhao Shi Gu Er.¹⁵⁹ Voltaire also mentions that Metastasio

¹⁵⁶ Henry Carrington Lancaster, French Tragedy in the Time of Louis XV and Voltaire (1715-1774), Volume two (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1950), 410.

¹⁵⁷ Lancaster, 625-629.

¹⁵⁸ Voltaire, "The Orphan of China," in The Works of Voltaire, trans. William F. Fleming (New York: E. R. Du Mort, 1901), 174-237.

¹⁵⁹ According to Henry W. Wells, the translation was

anticipated him in dramatizing the Chinese story.¹⁶⁰

The story of Zhao Shi Gu Er goes back to the last decade of the seventh century B.C. The zaju derives from the historical accounts of Zuo Zhuan (左傳, Chronicles of Zuo) by Zuo Qiu Ming of the Zhou dynasty (1111-256 B.C.) and Shi Ji (Records of history) by Sima Qian (145-c.86 B.C.).

If tragedy means death, Zhao Shi Gu Er (The orphan of the family of Zhao) is certainly the most tragic of Yuan zaju. Five lives are sacrificed during the main action, which is preceded by a massacre of the Zhao family's three hundred members.

The action of the play lasts twenty years, embracing three generations. It starts with the forced suicide of the last member of the Zhao family, the fuma (emperor's son-in-law) Zhao Suo. The only remnant of the family is the baby in the princess's womb. The dramatic interest of the zaju, thus, is pivoted upon how to save the baby so it

included in a general history of China, Description de la Chine, edited and published by Father Du Halde in 1735; and two English translations (1736, 1741) of Du Halde's book contained two anonymous versions of Premare's translation; and, inspired by the story, William Hatchett wrote a sentimental English drama, The Chinese Orphan: an Historical Tragedy, Alter'd from a Specimen of Chinese Tragedy in Du Halde's History of China, intersper'd with Songs (1741). Henry W. Wells, "Chinese Plays and their Translators," The Classical Drama of the Orient (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1965), 4.

¹⁶⁰ The plot of Metastasio's (1698-1782) opera Eroe Cinese is different both from the Chinese original and from Voltaire's version. Lancaster, 407.

may grow up to avenge the family, which is being brutally massacred by a tyrannical general. In the process of saving the surviving little orphan, his mother (the princess of the Kingdom of Jin), an official under the command of the cruel general, and a retired official, all willingly, bravely, and dignifiedly sacrifice their lives. In one dramatic scene, a physician sacrifices his own baby son as substitution for the orphan, who is adopted by the cruel general himself. Twenty years later, when the orphan learns of his real identity from the physician, he takes revenge for his family without hesitation.

Compared with Zhao Shi Gu Er, Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi (Zhang kills his sworn brother's wife) is relatively unknown in the West. There is not much attention given to it even by Chinese critics and theatre workers. Perhaps it is its subject matter which makes it not very popular in contemporary Chinese opera. It is based on an actual murder case of the Tang dynasty (618-907), in which a man killed his illicit lover when she tried to murder her drunkard husband. He subsequently confessed his crime to save the life of the cuckold who had been wrongly accused of murdering the malicious woman. The story was very well-known in the Tang dynasty and the Song dynasty (960-1279). Preceding the zaju, it had already inspired at least one biographical story, Feng Yan Zhuan (馮燕傳, The biography of Feng Yan), one narrative poem, Feng Yan Ge (馮燕歌, The ode of Feng Yan), and one serial song, Shui Diao Qi

Bian (水調七遍, The Seven Water Tone).¹⁶¹

It is interesting that the anonymous playwright of the Yuan zaju has changed the name of the protagonist from Feng Yan to Zhang Qian because "Zhang Qian" is the name of the conventional policeman in most Yuan zaju. The zaju also changes one fundamental dramatic fact: there is no actual adultery involved. In all other narratives, the adultery is explicitly stated. Some lines in the serial song version are even erotic. Whether or not there is actual adultery involved, however, the particular turning of the murder, and the subsequent confession of the protagonist have made his biographers regard him as a yi shi (義士), a man of justice.

Sacrificing individual belongings, including life, to serve a greater ethical cause is the common dramatic interest of the two zaju. The super-objective of Zhao Shi Gu Er--to save the orphan--triggers a series of sacrifices. As for Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi, the act of sacrifice is more complicated. Perhaps we can say that the protagonist has sacrificed his possibility of escaping from his punishment.

The Zhao's family-calamity weights the survival of the orphan with ethical necessity and destiny; Zhang Qian's code of brotherhood makes him obliged to kill his sworn

¹⁶¹ The texts of these works can be found in Wang Pi Jiang, ed., Tang Ren Xiaoshuo (唐人小說, Short stories of the Tang dynasty) (Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1988), 198-202.

brother's wife in the first place, and confess his crime in the second. Both zaju pivot their dramatic action on the concept of yi (義, justice, righteousness) or dao yi (道義, morality and justice). It is this code of yi or dao yi which makes the sacrifice a convincing dramatic necessity. That is why Zhao Shi Gu Er's title in the Peking opera version is Ba Yi Tu (八義圖, The depiction of eight righteous persons), and why the biographer of the hero of the original story of Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi called the hero a yi shi (義士), a righteous person, even though he had committed adultery with the woman he killed.

With the code of yi in mind, everyone in Zhao Shi Gu Er is ready to take up the cudgels for a just cause. Because the personae involved are struggling with a power whose strength is much greater than theirs, the dramatic movement is imbued with a spirit of bei-zhuang. They are struggling against the odds. The survival of the orphan means not just the saving of a life. In the zaju's ethical context, it is a dramatic necessity because it makes the revenge authentic. As explained in the introduction, the orphan of the family of Zhao is actually a dramatic symbol whose survival implies the survival of the spirit of the Chinese. What they strive for is the justice of the Tao--the way of the universe (or in Western philosophy, nature). If the orphan is executed, even though the cruel general is subsequently punished, Tao is still not yet accomplished. That is why it is justifiable for the

physician to substitute his own son to save the orphan of Zhao. This explains also why the series of sacrifices is a dramatic necessity as well as an ideological indispensability.

Zhao Shi Gu Er is a powerful zaju both in its content and in its dramatic structure. Due to their emotional intensity and dramatic tension, many scenes have now become classics in Chinese opera. Through the long narrative monologue of the cruel general, Tu An Jia, and the forced suicide scene in the wedge of the last member of the Zhao family, the dramatic purpose is well established at the beginning of the zaju. The audience can almost feel the urgency and delicacy of the situation right at the beginning, and will thus watch the action with a much greater fear than that experienced in watching a horror drama. It seems as though the playwright has an intuitive understanding, even a theory, of the tragic emotions of pity and fear, for in two core scenes, he excellently arouses the audience's tragic emotions with ease.

At the beginning of section one, the Zhao family's only remnant is the baby the princess is bearing. From the mouth of the cruel general, who first enters, we know that he has put the princess under house arrest, and plans to kill the baby shortly after it is born.¹⁶² To safeguard

¹⁶² Because he cannot kill the pregnant woman. She is a princess.

his plan, he has sent General Han Que to keep guard at the gates and to search all those coming out from the princess's house. "Anyone attempting to smuggle out the Orphan of Chao (i.e., "Zhao" in pinyin) will have his whole family put to the sword, not one member of his nine generations shall be spared. (若有盜出趙氏孤兒，全家處斬，九族不留。) 163 "

The malicious plan of Tu An Jia makes the dramatic purpose of saving the orphan almost an impossibility. When the princess enters with the baby, she expresses her sorrow in a poem:

All the sorrows of man
Are gathered in my heart,
Like the rain of an autumn night
Each drop a note of grief. 164

天下人煩惱，
都在我心頭，
猶如秋夜雨，
一點一聲愁。

Being put under house arrest, the princess has lost her contact with the external world. All family members of the Zhao family are dead, and there is nobody to help her save the orphan except one retainer, the physician Cheng Ying, who might also have been killed if his name had appeared in the list of family members.

163 Chi Chun-hsiang, "The Orphan of Chao," in Liu Jung-en, trans., Six Yuan Plays (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin books, 1977), 48-49.

164 Ibid., 49.

Although his is not a singing part, the physician, Cheng Ying, is the most crucial role in the zaju, for he is the agent of the dramatic action. He helps the princess smuggle the orphan out of the house, substitutes his own son to save the orphan, acts as the boy's biological father, and unfolds¹⁶⁵ the family calamity to the grown-up orphan.

The scene in which he smuggles the little baby by means of his medicine chest certainly arouses great emotion in the audience. The gate keeper, General Han Que, is not a fool (he is played up by the zheng mo, the main actor), and, from the strange behavior of Cheng Ying, he deduces that there must be something wrong. Perhaps it is appropriate to quote from the scene:

Cheng Ying goes out of the gates.

Han Chueh:¹⁶⁶ Bring back that man with the medicine chest.
Who are you?

Cheng Ying: I am a village physician. My name is Cheng Ying.

Han Chueh: Where have you come from?

Cheng Ying: I have been preparing some medicine in the house of the Princess Royal.

Han Chueh: What medicine?

Cheng Ying: Some tonic for Her Royal Highness.

Han Chueh: What have you got in that chest?

Cheng Ying: Herbs.

Han Chueh: What herbs?

Cheng Ying: Chie keng for coughs, liquorice root,

¹⁶⁵ He literally discloses the story to the orphan by painting the story on a scroll, and unfolds it to him.

¹⁶⁶ I copy the spelling from the book. "Han Chueh" in the quotation is "Han Que" in the pinyin system.

peppermint and others.

Han Chueh: What else have you got hidden there?

Cheng Ying: I haven't anything hidden there.

Han Chueh: Very well, go along. [Cheng Ying goes.] Cheng Ying, come back. What have you got in that chest?

Cheng Ying: Herbs.

Han Chueh: What else have you got hidden there?

Cheng Ying: I haven't anything hidden there.

Han Chueh: Go along then. [Cheng Ying goes.] Cheng Ying, come back. You must have something mysterious hidden there. When I let you go, you go like an arrow from the string of a bow; but when I call you back, you come like a piece of fur dragged over a rug. Do you think I don't know you?¹⁶⁷

〔正末云〕小校。舉回那抱藥箱兒的人來。你是甚麼人。〔程嬰云〕我是箇草澤醫人。姓程，是程嬰。〔正末云〕你在那去來？〔程嬰云〕我在公主府內煎湯下藥來。〔正末云〕你下甚麼藥？〔程嬰云〕下了箇益母湯。〔正末云〕你這箱兒裡面甚麼物件？〔程嬰云〕都是生藥。〔正末云〕是甚麼生藥？〔程嬰云〕都是桔梗、甘草、薄荷。〔正末云〕可有甚麼夾帶？〔程嬰云〕並無夾帶。〔正末云〕這等你去。〔程嬰做走正末叫科云〕程嬰回來！這箱裡面是甚麼物件。〔程嬰云〕都是生藥。〔正末云〕你去。〔程嬰做走正末叫科云〕程嬰回來。你這其中必有暗昧。我著你去呵。似弩箭離絲。叫你回來呵。便似繩上拖毛。程嬰，你道我不認的你哩？

Three times General Han Que lets Cheng Ying go but asks him to come back no sooner than he has rushed away. This is intense drama. It evokes fear and pity. Because the playwright has created in the audience's mind the point of view of the Zhao family, the audience will watch the scene with sympathetic eyes. They fear that Cheng Ying's mission will unfortunately be discovered. When they see Cheng Ying's flurried behavior and Han Que's suspicious attitude, their hearts are stirred.

The dramatic interest of the scene, however, is not in

¹⁶⁷ Liu Jung-en, Six Yuan Plays, 52.

whether the baby is exposed. Rather, it is in the attitude of the gate keeper towards Cheng Ying's mission. That is why the playwright shows us directly that the gate keeper does discover the baby in Cheng Ying's medical chest. Before he orders Cheng Ying to open the chest, Han Que has already guessed correctly that the orphan is inside. So he asks his soldiers to leave them alone before he opens the chest. From this we know that he already has the intention of letting Cheng Ying escape with the baby. But why does he still open the box? Because of his inclination towards yi (justice), because of his desire to make sure that the orphan is saved, and because of his ren-xin (仁心), humane heart.

Whereas all other characters in the zaju, including even the orphan's mother, regard the baby only as a means for the Zhao family to take revenge against the cruel general, Han Que shows a human touch. When he sees the baby inside the medical chest, he sings:

With bright shining little eyes he tries to make me
out,
So quiet in the chest he seems to swallow every sound,
So tightly bundled he can scarcely stretch his legs,
So narrow how can he even turn onto his side?
These are not the conditions for becoming a man;
Indeed becoming a man is not to be his condition.¹⁶⁸

見孤兒額顱上汗津津，角頭乳食飲。骨碌碌睜一雙小眼
兒將咱認。悄促促箱兒裡似把聲吞，緊綁綁難展足，窄
狹狹怎翻身？他正是：成人不自在，自在不成人。

168 Ibid., 53.

He tells Cheng Ying that he is a dingtian lidi de naner (頂天立地的男兒, literally, a man whose head touches the sky and whose feet stand on the ground; semantically, a man with an indomitable spirit), and he certainly will not hand over the orphan. He even explicitly expresses that the baby should be saved to avenge the family calamity. And when Cheng Ying returns to express his doubts to him, Han Chueh cuts his throat to make Cheng Ying leave in peace. Certainly he is a man of his word. He is a man and he acts manly. His is a deed of bei-zhuang.

Compared with General Han Que, Cheng Ying is not a hero, either in social status or in character. Even though he is willing to sacrifice himself to the noble cause, he acts with a touch of womanish fussiness. The treatment of his character, however, makes the zaju a greater work than it would be if his character is too heroic. From the deviation of Cheng Ying's character in the Yuan zaju to Sima Qian's Shi Ji (Records of history),¹⁶⁹ we can say that Ji Jun Xiang intentionally treats Cheng Ying as a common man. Through this characterization the author expresses his tragic vision. Without Cheng Ying, it is impossible to save the orphan. Since he is only a common

¹⁶⁹ In Sima Qian's Shi Ji, Cheng Ying acts magnanimously. After the orphan of the Zhao family has taken revenge, he commits suicide in order to join all those who have sacrificed their lives for the cause. He explains that he should have died, since they have died so that he could live on to serve the cause. He must die after the goal has been achieved.

man, so, logically, without the common man as agent the dramatic purpose cannot be fulfilled. Yet, important as he is, it should be noted that, Cheng Ying's common man womanish behavior has unnecessarily caused the suicide of two persons, the princess and General Han Que.

The dramatic tension does not loosen with the escape of Cheng Ying; rather, from the perspective of the common people, the situation becomes more urgent. At the beginning of section two, when the cruel general Tu An Jie learns that both the princess and General Han Que have committed suicide, he decides to forge a royal decree to have all the new-born children between one month and six month old collected and killed. He makes himself an enemy of the people.

The cruel order poses a difficult problem for Cheng Ying, who has already escaped the city, and who, as will be seen, has transformed himself from a co-agent to an actor.

Cheng Ying decides to hand over his own baby son as a substitute for the orphan in order to save the lives of all the babies of the country. He brings the orphan to Gong Sun, a retired government official who has been residing in Tai Ping Village. The role of Gong Sun is taken up by the zheng mo (main actor) in sections two and three. A righteous person, he sings upon entering of his discontent with the present political situation, his gratitude for his present peaceful life, and his gratitude

for his luck:

If I had not drawn back my feet from the torrents,
I might well have had my head shorn in the market-
place.¹⁷⁰

若不是急流中將那腳步抽迴，
險些兒鬧市裡把頭皮斷送。

Yet when he knows of Cheng Ying's plan of substitution, he suggests that it should be he, an old man, to sacrifice himself for the cause. He reasons with Cheng Ying:

It will take twenty years before the little one is able to avenge his parents. If you live another twenty years you will be only sixty-five. If I live another twenty years, that will make me ninety, will it not? Whether I shall be alive or dead then who can say, but how am I going to be able to see the Chao family avenged?¹⁷¹

這小的算著二十年呵，方報的父母讎恨。你再著二十年，也只是六十五歲，我再著二十年呵，可不九十歲了。其時存亡未知，怎麼還與趙家報的讎。

He suggests that Cheng Ying leaves his baby son with him, and goes to tell Tu Au Jie that he has hidden the orphan in Tai Ping Village. When Cheng Ying shows his doubts, he replies with determination. Unlike Cheng Ying, whose mind, like all common men's, will never be at peace and always be suspicious, the retired official is not only righteous but he is a man. Once he has spoken he will keep his word.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 56. As we have seen in the last chapter, this echoes Jie Zi Tui's Confucian philosophy of retreating to the country side when the nation's politic is chaotic.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 59.

He does. And it makes section three one of the most dramatic scenes in Yuan zaju. Cheng Ying goes to see Tu An Jie, and tells him that the orphan of the Zhao family is at Gong Sun's house. The playwright does not make it too straightforward. He has the general show his doubt by letting him question Cheng Ying's motivation for telling him the "truth." Cheng Ying's reply is full of worldly wisdom:

Indeed there is no enmity between Kung-sun (i.e., Gong Sun in the pinyin system) and myself. I only do this because of your proclamation and because you say you will kill all the children in your headquarters. I want to save the children. And there is another reason too. I am forty-five and my wife has just given birth to a son who's not yet a month old, and we've been forced to hand him over. But if my child dies, my whole family will die with him. And I know if you have the Orphan of Chao the children of the kingdom will be spared and nothing will happen to my son. It's for this reason I have come to inform.¹⁷²

我小人與公孫杵臼原無讎隙，只因元帥傳下榜文，要將晉國小兒拘刷到帥府，盡行殺壞。我一來為救普國內小兒之命，二來小人四旬有五，近生一子，尚未滿月，元帥軍令不敢不獻出來，可不小人也絕後了。我想有了趙氏孤兒，便不損壞一國靈，連小人的孩兒也得無事，所以出首。

Cheng's reasoning is so well thought out, and yet so true to his common man status, that even the cruel general laughs. He accepts Cheng's reasoning, and rushes immediately to seize the old man.

Against this background, Gong Sun enters. He is

¹⁷² Ibid., 62-63.

waiting for the cruel general, an indomitable force. He is also waiting for his own doom, an approaching necessity. The first song of section three is indeed very tragic:

I see a cloud of warlike dust flying the bridge across
the stream.
It must be them, that horde of murderers of the loyal
and good;
Soldiers in battle array deployed in perfect rank,
Their swords and lances sparkling in a line.
I see the time has come for me to die today,
Nor shall I escape the punishment of a beating from
their rods.¹⁷³

我則見蕩征塵飛過小溪橋，多管是損忠良賊徒
來到。齊臻臻擺著土垠，明晃晃列著槍刀。眼
見的我死在今朝。更避甚痛答掠。

This is the crystallized tragic image mentioned in the preface: a wounded man standing against an approaching tempest, forcing his gaze upward to the darkening sky.

Just as the dramatic interest of section one is not on the success of Cheng Ying's smuggling the orphan out, the dramatic interest of this section is not on the success of Cheng Ying and Gong Sun's plan. Rather it is on their proximity to failure. The guan mu (treatment of plot) of this section is very striking but at the same time psychologically convincing. The tragic emotions of pity and fear reach their climax in this zaju, perhaps the best of Yuan zaju.

The cruel general is a suspicious person, he knows Gong Sun's righteous personality very well. If Gong Sun

¹⁷³ Ibid., 63.

hands over "the orphan" without hesitation, their plan will be a failure. So, dramatically, Gong Sun must deny that he has kept the orphan in his house. He even expresses his hatred to Tu An Jie, in order to make the cruel general believe that the orphan is in his house, which is, as revealed in section two, his and Cheng Ying's wish. For this, however, the old retired official must suffer physical torture, and he must endure the great pain with persistence.

To give both Cheng Ying and Gong Sun more human touches, the playwright adds some delicacy to the scene. He lets the cruel general ask Cheng Ying to hit Gong Sun, who, in pain, almost loses his mind and tells the truth. Cheng Ying is terrified; his legs are trembling. The dramatic interest of this treatment is on the juxtaposition of the voluntary and involuntary actions. To hit his partner in the plot to save the orphan is certainly an involuntary action for Cheng Ying; yet if he does not pretend to hit the old man voluntarily, their plan might be exposed, and if he hits his accomplice too hard, his accomplice might be enraged. This is a trying scene for both characters and for the actors impersonating them.

At the height of the scene, a soldier finds the substitute baby and brings it out. Then comes the most tragic moment. We not only see the cruel general physically kill the baby on stage but also see how Cheng

Ying bitterly conceals his emotion. And we not only see the baby's biological father hide his sorrow, but also see his accomplice, Gong Sun, suppresses his sympathy. The success of their plan, a requiring servitude to a higher ethical cause, means unhappiness. It brings bitterness and deep sorrow. This emotional complexity cannot simply be described as pathetic. Their plan perhaps can be described as a tragic triumph. When Gong Sun sings of the dying baby, our feeling towards them is more than sympathy:

Ah,
to see the infant lying in a pool of blood
I tremble and shudder,
Today no more than ten days old.
When the sword thrust how he must have begged to be
spared.
I see it is like boiling oil poured on the heart of
Cheng Ying,
Yet he dare not let his tears fall before all.¹⁷⁴

呀！見孩兒卧血泊。那一個哭哭號號，這一個怨怨焦焦，
連我也戰戰搖搖。直恁般做作，只除是沒道。呀！
想孩兒離褥草，到今日恰十朝。刀下處怎耽饒……見程
嬰心似熱油澆，淚珠兒不敢對人拋。

In outrage, Gong Sun expresses his great discontent to Tu An Jie, dashes his head against the steps, and dies. Tu An Jie regards Cheng Ying as his henchman and adopts "Cheng's baby" (i.e., the orphan of Zhao) as his future heir.

Section four and section five take place twenty years later. The orphan of the family of Zhao has grown up, proficient both in martial arts and in literature. The dramatic interest of the action is now shifted to how

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 67-68.

Cheng Ying discloses everything to the grown up orphan. In this respect, section four is dramatically interesting, but the short section five, in which the orphan takes revenge, becomes a piece that does not fit. Some scholars say that section five might be an addition of later times, for there are only four sections when the zaju was printed in the Yuan dynasty, and the lyrics of section five are not as good as those in the other sections. It is not necessary to pursue this discussion here.

While the yi in Zhao Shi Gu Er involves the struggle with a powerful statesmen, that in Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi (Zhang Qian kills his sworn-brother's wife) remains in the domain of personal loyalty. Yet the nature of yi in the latter's code of brotherhood is no less significant than the former's code of justice because brotherhood is one of the most basic codes of justice in China, and the action which springs from the spirit of yi is sacrifice.

In terms of psychological action, Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi is even more complex, or more modern, considering its subject matter of erotic desire, adulterous seduction, and civilian murder. In some respects, the zaju is very similar to Buchner's Woyzeck. Both are based on a real case of murder of an adulterous woman, and the murderer is a member of the lower stratum of society. In the last scene of the zaju, when the protagonist is about to be executed, the atmosphere is full of the spirit of bei-zhuang. Out of justice, the man leaves his elderly mother

in the world to die for a just act he has done. Zhang Qian is a man, and he acts manly. As the zaju is relatively unknown in the West, I will first give a description of it.

The wedge. The poor Zhang Qian and a rich man become sworn brothers. Zhang expresses his gratitude to the rich man for his not avoiding the poor.

Section one. While the rich man is away in a distant land to collect money, his wife, Zhang Qian, and Zhang's mother go to his ancestral tomb. The woman uses a trick to send away Zhang's mother, and explicitly seduces Zhang Qian. Although their dialogue is missing, from Zhang Qian's lyrics it can be inferred that she must be very insistent, and there must be some ambiguities. Finally, to escape from the woman's harassment in the open space, Zhang Qian pretends to accept her offer and asks her to go home first.

Section two. Back home, the woman has prepared wine and food, hoping to have a good time with Zhang. That very evening, the rich man unexpectedly returns and asks the woman what the food is for. The woman makes up some reasons. The rich man asks somebody to invite Zhang to come over. Zhang does not believe that the rich man has returned. The rich man himself goes to invite Zhang. When the rich man asks about family matters, Zhang does not tell him about his wife's sexual passion. He hopes the woman will control herself after her husband has returned.

The wife makes the rich man drunk and actively pursues her sexual attraction for Zhang. Zhang tries to leave. She stops him. When he hesitates, she tries to kill her husband. Zhang takes the sword and kills the woman.

Section three. The local court sentences the rich man to death. He is sent to the Kai Feng regional court. Judge Pao shows his doubts about the case. On the other hand, Zhang is greatly disturbed by what he has done. He practices divination and drinks a lot of wine. When his mother tells him that the murderer is caught, Zhang becomes agitated. And when his mother tells him that the rich man has been sentenced to death, he rushes to the court. Zhang cannot bear seeing his sworn-brother being beaten in the court. He steps forward and confesses. He asks his sworn brother to take care of his mother.

Section four. At the execution ground. Zhang's sworn-brother comes to see him off. Many people, weeping, surround the ground. They all think that Zhang is acting as the rich man's substitute, and accuse him of having no heart for his elderly mother, who appears at the end of the zaju. There is no indication of whether Zhang is finally executed.

Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi's structure is symmetrical. It involves two acts. The first one appears in the first half of the zaju, the second one, in the second half. The placement of the two acts is very interesting. Zhang Qian kills the lustful wife of his sworn-brother at the end of

section two, and he confesses at an early point of section three. The zaju's dramatic interest, thus, is not only in the killing and the confession, but in some other aspect. This other aspect, however, is also not the psychological struggle of the protagonist because the playwright does not prolong it. Although the author does spare several songs for Zhang to express his psychological torment, the author does not emphasize it.

What then is the dramatic interest of the zaju? Perhaps we can grasp it phenomenologically by asking ourselves: what do we see after the protagonist has committed his act of confession? By asking ourselves this question, we immediately see a new light in the zaju. For after Zhang has confessed, the physical action on stage quiets down. What is left is basically one thing: the expression of emotions.

As explained earlier, in Yuan zaju, when the author wanted to say something, he would say it through the songs. In terms of dramatic action, the zaju might have been ended in the middle of section three when Zhang Qian steps forward to confess. Yet it does not end there. After Zhang has confessed (in the seventh song), and has explained to Judge Pao everything (eighth to tenth songs), the author uses six songs for Zhang Qian to communicate with his sworn-brother. Through these songs, his character begins to shine. He is a condemned prisoner, yet he tenderly suggests that his sworn-brother does not worry

about him but take good care of himself instead, and not let his elderly mother know of the case. In the twelfth song, Zhang Qian expresses the unpredictability of his fate (rough translation):

I am used to seeing others being beaten,
 Today is my turn.
 I thought our brotherhood would be everlasting,
 It is broken, all of a sudden, like dissolved ice.
 It was only a year ago that we were sworn-brothers,
 We swore that we will cut our throats for the other,
 and my promise will be fulfilled very soon, my
 dear brother.
 Teardrops falling on my cheeks, for I
 See myself being cut into two halves,
 Today, or tomorrow.¹⁷⁵

我往常時看別人答杖徒流絞，今日個輪到我繃扒吊
 拷，指望咱弟兄情，如陳雷膠漆有誰學，登時間瓦解
 冰消。當初一年結義知心友，誰想咱半路裡翻騰做刎
 頸交。淚不住腮邊落，眼見的一刀兩段，知他是明日
 今朝！

The lyrics are not good, and my translation is even worse. Yet, we can still feel the sorrowful sentiments of Zhang Qian. He has done a deed out of the code of brotherhood. This deed, ironically, breaks their physical bonds. The term wen jing jiao (刎頸交, literally, friends who will cut their throats for each other; semantically, very close friend) is certainly ironic. Because Zhang Qian is a close friend of the rich man, Zhang Qian kills the man's lustful wife for him and confesses. This close friendship, ironically, generates an action which ends their friendship. There is also a taste of bitterness in the

¹⁷⁵ Ning Xi Yuan, Vol.2, 219.

song, for Zhang Qian the policeman is now Zhang Qian the death prisoner.

The author uses one set of songs to end the scene. In the first song, Zhang Qian sighs for his short relationship with his sworn-brother. He asks his sworn-brother to make libations and burn ritual money for him after he has died. In the second, he asks his sworn-brother to take care of his old and sick mother. He cries when he mentions this. The third song is very important. Zhang Qian expresses his idea of fate, feeling no qualms about what he has done. In the last song of the set, which is also the last of the section, Zhang once again becomes emotional (rough translation),

Brother!
My death is approaching,
There is no way for me to return.
I have neither paid you back for your goodness,
Nor can I serve my seventy-year-old mother to the end
of her days.¹⁷⁶

哥哥！我死去路途多，回來的路兒少。俺哥哥行半星兒
恩義不曾報，我有七十歲的親娘侍奉不到老！

From the above description, we can see clearly that the dramatic interest of the zaju is related to the conflict between filial duty and dao yi (code of brotherhood).¹⁷⁷To

¹⁷⁶ Ning Xi Yuan, Vol.2, 220.

¹⁷⁷ Students of Japanese theatre will notice the similarity of this conflict with that between ninjo (human feelings) and giri (obligation) in kabuki and joruri. See Donald Keene, "Introduction," Major Plays of Chikamatsu (New York: Columbia University, 1990), 33-35.

put it correctly, it is about the subjective feeling of a righteous man regarding the conflict. Poor as he is in wealth, and low as he is in social status, Zhang Qian's personality is admirable. His deeds deserve praise.

Since the dramatic interest of the zaju is about the subjective feeling of a righteous man concerning the conflict between filial duty and the code of brotherhood, the dramatic action must revolve around Zhang Qian and both his elderly mother and his sworn-brother. That is why only these three characters appear in the wedge, although the lustful wife plays a crucial role in the beginning of the dramatic action. In the wedge, the two men swear in front of Zhang Qian's elderly mother, and do the convention of jie-yi (結義) (becoming sworn brothers). At the execution ground, at the moment of execution, both Zhang's elderly mother and his sworn brother reappear.

After locating the dramatic interest of the play, it can be immediately understood why the author has pushed the confession scene to as early a place as possible. In doing so, he leaves more space for his xi-he (dramatic kernel), which is section four, a scene of bei-zhuang.

Section four takes place at the execution ground. Zhang Qian first enters. In the first song he uses the white tiger as a metaphor for himself; certainly, he regards himself as a man whose yi qi (義氣, the spirit of righteousness) surpasses all sworn-relations. This tone is heroic. Zhang Qian journeys to his doom with a dignity

that is rare for his class. Then his sworn-brother enters, bringing him the chang li fan (長離飯, meal of eternal separation) and the yong bie bei (永別杯, the wine of never reunited parting). This guan mu (plot, or treatment) is very important in Chinese opera in general and in this zaju in particular. In the first place, it is shameful to be executed in the public gaze, yet the rich man fulfils his obligation as a sworn-brother. He steps out to share the shame with Zhang Qian. In the second place, there have been rumors saying that the rich man is the real murderer but he asks Zhang Qian to substitute for him. Bringing the last meal to Zhang, the rich man not only reinforces the rumor but also places himself directly before the hateful eyes of the onlookers. In front of the public, however, the sworn brothers have a very intimate moment, perhaps the most intimate one in the zaju. Zhang Qian frankly gives advice to his sworn-brother: reduce drinking, work hard to avoid gossip, and, if he is to marry again, find a woman with good personality.

This most tender moment of the zaju is intruded upon by the cruel order of the execution officer. The moment has come. Suddenly our protagonist is aware that he is surrounded by a weeping crowd, old and young. Yet they do not cry for him because when they see him they express no sympathy. This hurts him. Zhang Qian knows very well that he has done a justifiable act, yet all the people in the world have misunderstood him. From their eyes, he believes

that they are accusing him of leaving his elderly mother behind to die for a murderer. Actually, they are crying for Zhang Qian's mother. They say that Zhang Qian's bad name will be cursed by generations to come. The emotions involved in this scene are very complicated. To the audience, who has been following the zaju's dramatic movement and has assumed Zhang Qian's perspective, this scene is unbearable. Zhang Qian's situation is most piteous, and yet most admirable. It is also very fearful. If out of justice an ordinary man can meet his doom in such a way, anyone will be entrapped easily by this so-called "justice." The scene's atmosphere is bei-zhuang.

At this climax of the bei-zhuang atmosphere, Zhang Qian thinks of his unfinished filial duty. While the execution officer is pushing him to the execution spot, Zhang Qian thinks of his sick elderly mother. At this very point, the last straw breaks the camel's back. Zhang Qian's elderly mother enters. At the final moment of his life, both Zhang Qian's biological mother and his sworn-brother stand close by him. The three characters thus frame the zaju neatly. Although the incomplete text ends here, we can deduce that Zhang Qian might be spared because his presence is structurally significant. Whether this is true or not, however, is not important in our discussion.

Chapter 6: Tragedy East and West

From chapter 2 to chapter 5, this study has applied the four tragic dimensions derived in chapter 1 to analyze eight Yuan zaju. Although the four dimensions are related to the tragic spirit, a concept used by many critics, the issue of whether the zaju are tragedies has not been explicitly discussed. However, the applicability of the four terms, bei-ai, bei-yuan, bei-fen, and ben-zhuang, to traditional Chinese drama, has been shown.

The discussion focuses on the zaju's dramatic interest and core imagery. Naturally, it revolves around tonality, a concept related more to mood and atmosphere. Therefore, act and purpose, two key terms of dramaturgical analysis, are placed within a larger context which includes the scene and the emotional effect. The discussion takes this shape because traditional Chinese drama combines the dramatic with the narrative and the lyrical.¹⁷⁸

Now the basic shape of traditional Chinese drama's tragic dimensions has been established, ontological questions concerning these zaju should be addressed: what are these plays? what are their values?

Ethical Burden vs. Tragic Fate

Greek tragedy reflects the transition of a society ruled by the mythical order to one ruled by human

¹⁷⁸ For a discussion of the organic structure of Yuan zaju, see appendix 2.

beings,¹⁷⁹ Yuan zaju, being born at a later time in Chinese history, reflects a civilized society already burdened with an ethical system. This ethical system had been shaping the consciousness of the Chinese people for more than one thousand years. It was disregarded and discharged by the new Mongolian ruler.

When we read Greek tragedy, we experience, with the help of our imagination, a haunting spirit--the heroic spirit of Greek mythology; when we read Yuan zaju, we feel a mega-machine of an ethical system at work. In the particular historical context, when the Han people were "insulted and injured" by the new regime, this mega-machine was progressive.

The basic vision of Yuan zaju draws heavily from the oppressive historical condition. The primary difference between Yuan zaju and Greek tragedy is in the source of the tragic calamity.

The predominant force in Greek tragedy is fate. Different tragedies may vary in their tonalities, and different poets may grasp different tragic visions, yet action is fated across the board.

The Yuan zaju in this study show clearly that it is some rotten social force that causes the sufferings of the protagonists. In Aristotle's terminology, we may say that the efficient cause of the human sufferings is within

¹⁷⁹ Aeschylus's Oresteia trilogy illustrate this very well.

humanity.

The Chinese people have a fatalism of their own; their fatalism is more pragmatic than metaphysical. Chu Kwang-Tsien, the Chinese aesthetician who thought that tragedy and Chinese philosophy were incompatible, defines fatalism as a way to rationalize suffering. In one paragraph, Chu explains why the Chinese do not immerse themselves in abstract metaphysics "and refuse to grapple with any ultimate problem the solutions of which do not seem to them to have any obvious direct bearing on practical life."¹⁸⁰ Because of this pragmatism, the Chinese conception of fate is not mysterious:

When a man consoles his friend who has lost a child by saying "it is Fate," he means really: "Be more cheerful, do not worry so much about it." Trace anything back to Fate, and there is an end of the matter and occasion for further anxiety. The Chinese really do not trouble themselves much about Fate, nor do they find anything in it that is unnatural or questionable. The misery of the virtuous and the prosperity of the wicked do not give them much alarm; they accept it as Fate has ordained.¹⁸¹

Chu concludes that "with such ethical convictions, the Chinese naturally do not feel very deeply about the tragic side of life."¹⁸² To him, the Chinese will "accept what is given with contentment,"¹⁸³ and "drama in China is almost

¹⁸⁰ Chu Kwang-Tsien, The Psychology of Tragedy, 208.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid., 207.

a synonym for comedy."¹⁸⁴

Although the dramatic analyses of this study show clearly that Chinese drama is not a synonym for comedy (the emotions involved in the eight zaju are more inclined to tragedy than to comedy), it is undeniable that this sense of tragic fate, mysterious and chaotic, cannot be found in Yuan zaju.¹⁸⁵

Greek tragedy is suffused with an enigmatic atmosphere. It seems that some secret cause, beyond man's reach, is pressing against humanity. Many critics see this as the "essence" of tragedy. George Steiner, for example, says that tragedy is not only irreparable, but also mysterious:

Tragic drama tells us that the spheres of reason, order, and justice are terribly limited and that no progress in our science or technical resources will enlarge their relevance. Outside and within man is l'autre, the "otherness" of the world. Call it what you will: a hidden or malevolent God, blind fate, the solicitations of hell, or the brute fury of our animal blood. It waits for us in ambush at the crossroads. It mocks us and destroys us. In certain rare instances, it leads us after destruction to some incomprehensible repose.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., 208.

¹⁸⁵ Logically, however, Chu's argument is not entirely valid. He mixes up two terms: tragedy as a concept and tragedy as a cultural form. As a man may desire to live happily but meet some calamity, a people's philosophy may not be compatible with the metaphysics of tragedy yet its culture may produce some works that are tragic.

¹⁸⁶ George Steiner, The Death of Tragedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 8-9.

The fate of many tragic heroes in Greek tragedy justifies Steiner's claims. Although reluctantly, the elder son of Oedipus, Polyneices, follows his pre-ordained fate in Oedipus at Colonus. He is stripped by his younger brother of place and kingship. Having been banished, he goes to the Dorian land, asks Adrastus as his father-in-law, and forms an expedition of seven troops of spearmen against Thebes, his motherland. What he wants to get is justice. He dashes to Colonus for Oedipus because he has heard that those Oedipus blessed shall come to power. Unfortunately, the senile Oedipus reacts with utmost stubbornness because he regards Polyneices as one of those who contributed to his sufferings:

You cannot take that city. You'll go down
All bloody, and your brother, too.

. . .
I here pronounce for you: that you shall never
Master your native land by force of arms,
Nor ever see your home again in Argos,
The land below the hills; but you shall die
By your own brother's hand, and you shall kill
The brother who banished you. . .¹⁸⁷

After hearing what his father says, Polyneices accepts without a single word of pleading. Uncomplainingly, he accepts his fate; silently, he goes away. He may not speak of Oedipus' curse to anyone, nor may he withdraw the

¹⁸⁷ Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus, trans. Robert Fitzgerald, in The Oedipus Cycle (San Diego: Harvest/HBJ Book, 1977), 151.

troops. He knows that "he must go silently to meet this doom."¹⁸⁸ What he asks for, from his sisters, is that they do not dishonor him in death, and give him a grave that will quiet him. Antigone tries to persuade him to withdraw his troops to Argos as soon as he can but he replies to her, with no less stubbornness than that of Oedipus, that the dark road is before him and he has to take it.

Polyneices accepts his fate. He puts his will under fate's supremacy, and voluntarily suffers. His tragic vision suggests the helplessness of human beings in the face of necessity.

Chu Kwang-Tsien also stressed this point in The Psychology of Tragedy. Unlike religion, says Chu, tragedy

feels strongly that there is something in the universe which is neither intellectually explicable nor morally justifiable. The image of this "something" holds the tragic poets in awe and wonder; and it is this feeling of awe and wonder in the presence of what is neither intellectually explicable nor emotionally justifiable, that we call "the sense of Fate" in Tragedy.¹⁸⁹

Chu's idea of tragedy is very Melvillean. The "something" in his formulation is equivalent to Moby Dick, the killer whale in the novel of the same title, written by the nineteenth-century American novelist, Herman Melville.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 152.

¹⁸⁹ Chu Kwang-Tsien, The Psychology of Tragedy, 203-4.

¹⁹⁰ Herman Melville, Moby Dick (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).

Moby Dick is a haunting image of the invincibly destructive force contingently approaching humanity. This "image" is metaphysical. Its conceptual center is chaos, moving constantly, and moving mysteriously. Tragedy sees this chaos and faces it; religion and philosophy try to resolve this chaos in neat dogmas or logic. Hence, "when a people or an individual is satisfied with a religion or a philosophy, the need for Tragedy would disappear." To Chu, the Chinese people's fatalism is in fact a practical way to rationalize the uncertainty and chaotic motion of life. "Tragedy cannot exist without some sense of injustice about human destiny, and the Chinese refuse to recognize any injustice in sufferings and miseries at all."¹⁹¹ Because of this pragmatism, Chu continues, the Chinese race is strong in moral philosophy but weak in metaphysics. Confucianism is primarily a system of moral thoughts.

Tragic Mode vs Bei-Qiu (悲秋)

The destruction of human values in Yuan zaju is brought about by social forces or ethical obligations, both concrete and humanized. It is impossible, therefore, to genuinely talk about the metaphysics of the tragic in traditional Chinese drama. Yet, the four tragic dimensions

¹⁹¹ Chu Kwang-Tsien, 208.

are functioning clearly in the sphere of emotions. Because, in the experiential domain, different people feel similarly.

In section one of Zhao Shi Gu Er, after the family of Zhao has been massacred, the royal princess enters with her new-born son, the little orphan of the Zhao family. She recites her entrance poem:

All the sorrows of man
Are gathered in my heart,
Like the rain of an autumn night
Each drop a note of grief.¹⁹²

The royal princess is certainly a most pitiable young widow. She is a weak woman who assumes the too heavy moral obligation of raising the little orphan to avenge her husband's family. In the zaju, her entrance is preceded by that of the cruel general, Tu An Jia, and that of a soldier. In his first entrance, Tu declares his wicked plan to kill the baby immediately after the princess has given birth to it. Hence in the zaju's context, the princess's destiny is pre-ordained. She bears the burden of her fate. She expresses her profound sorrow in her entrance poem, a poem that synchronizes human emotion with nature's rhythm.

This corresponds strikingly to Northrop Frye's theory of myths. In arguing for an archetypal criticism, Frye

¹⁹² Liu Jung-en, Six Yuan Plays, 49.

stresses the importance of process because "narrative involves movement from one structure to another."¹⁹³ He regards the cyclical movement of the alternation of success and decline, effort and repose, life and death as the fundamental form of process.¹⁹⁴ Later Frye applies the morphological thought of Oswald Spengler to his theory and writes:

Poets . . . have generally been Spenglerians, in the sense that in poetry, as in Spengler, civilized life is frequently assimilated to the organic cycle of growth, maturity, decline, death, and rebirth in another individual form.¹⁹⁵

These cyclical symbols are usually divided into four main phases, the four seasons of the year being the archetype for four periods of the day (morning, noon, evening, night), four aspects of the water-cycle (rain, fountains, rivers, sea or snow), four periods of life (youth, maturity, age, death), and the like.¹⁹⁶

In Frye's idea of the tragic mode, we see the universality of the human experience in cyclical movements. Westerners and the Chinese may have different conceptions of life and death, yet both experience

¹⁹³ Northrop Frye, Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1973), 158.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 160.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

nature's organicity and life's cyclical rhythm. Both find correspondences between the human life cycle and other organic cycles in nature.

In the famous Wen Fu (文賦, Essay on literature), Lu Chi (261-303) begins with the poet's motivation for creative writing,

Erect in the Central Realm the poet views the expanse
of the whole universe,
And in tomes of ancient wisdom his spirit rejoices and
finds nurture.
His lament for fleeting life is in observance of the
four seasons that ever revolve,
His regard for the myriad growing things inspires in
him thoughts as profuse.
As with the fallen leaves in autumn's rigour his heart
sinks in grief,
So is each tender twig in sweet spring a source of
joy. In frost he finds sympathy at moments when
his heart is all frigid purity,
Or far, far, into the highest clouds he makes his
mind's abode.¹⁹⁷

佇中區以玄覽，顧情志於典墳。遵四時以嘆逝，
瞻萬物而思紛，悲落葉於勁秋，喜柔條於芳春。
心懷懷以懷霜，志眇眇而臨雲。

Lu Chi stresses the importance of observations on the happenings in the entire universe. The poet's passion should flow with the seasonal cyclical rhythm. Autumn and spring are the year's two turning points, just as decay and growth are the two basic life forces of the universe. Sensitive and passionate, the poet will respond to the

¹⁹⁷ Lu Chi, "Essay on Literature," in Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century, ed. by Cyril Birch (New York: Grove Weidenfeld, 1965), 204-205.

seasonal rhythm with the two basic human emotions: grief and joy (bei and xi).

The Yuan zaju which best illustrate this point are Han Gong Qiu (Autumn in the Han Palace) and Wu Tong Yu (Autumn Night Rain Hitting the Chinese Parasol Tree). Both zaju depict the irreparable losses of the emperors, and both end in autumn.

The prime image of Han Gong Qiu is a journeying wild goose separated from its company. Journeying wild geese are a symbol of parting; thus a single wild goose separated from its group suggests a separation with double intensity. The dominant image of Wu Tong Yu, of course, is the autumn night rain hitting the falling leaves of the Chinese parasol tree. As the parasol is the first tree to shed its leaves in autumn, and as these leaves fall abundantly, just like rain, it is a symbol for longing and parting. The two zaju certainly are compatible with Frye's theory of myths.

The sentiment of autumnal grievance is described in Chinese literature by the term bei-qiu (悲秋). Witnessing time's passage and nature's decay, the poet sighs for the finitude of life. Perhaps that is why the etymological origin of the word for chou (愁, worry) is a combination of the heart radical (心) and the word autumn (秋).¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁸ There is a famous Chinese saying which may be of interest to the reader: "What combines to make the word chou? autumn on the heart of a man who is far away from home." (何處合成愁? 離人心上秋。)

As early as the fourth century B.C., the great poet Qu Yuan (屈原) (340-278) wrote in one of his elegies, "Stray Thoughts," the following lines:

My heart with grief is heavy,
 I sigh with head down hung.
 My thoughts are like a tangled skein,
 And yet the night is young.

In autumn all things wither,
 The world is full of hate,
 My prince is easily enraged,
 And my affliction great.

The people's suff'rings move my heart,
 Our land I cannot leave.
 Here for my loved one my stray thoughts
 Into a song I weave.¹⁹⁹

心鬱鬱之憂思兮，獨永歎乎增傷。
 思蹇產之不釋兮，曼遭夜之方長。
 悲秋風之動容兮，何回極之浮浮！
 數惟蓀之多怒兮，傷余心之憂憂。
 願遙起而橫奔兮，覽民尤以自鎮。
 結微情以陳詞兮，矯以遺夫美人。

The translation is not good enough to show the passion of the poet. The original line, "In autumn all things wither," should be read, literally, as "I feel sad that the autumn wind has changed the face of the earth." The line is not simply a genuine observation but rather a deep and passionate empathic response to the seasonal rhythm.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Qu Yuan, Li Sao and Other Poems of Qu Yuan, trans. by Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1980), 41.

²⁰⁰ The most elaborate of the bei-jiu poetic visions is in Nine Arguments (九辯), written by Qu Yuan's disciple,

In Chinese culture, bei-giu is mentioned side by side with shang-chun (傷春), which means the spring-time grievance of a young lady who has, in the midst of blossoming and fragrance, developed a tender and delicate longing for a young man's company. Sometimes, a young lady may even weep for the fallen flowers, for their short lives.²⁰¹

Bei-giu and shang-chun are both subjective sentiments towards the seasons. They are natural rhythm internalized. Thus, the passions evoked are both emphatic and humanistic.

As poetic visions that connect aesthetic experiences with the organic world, bei-giu and shang-chun nourish the poet's senses and sensibility. The mourning for the inevitable loss and the signing for the transience of life are important motifs in Oriental literature.

These two poetic visions are also metaphysical, grounded on one fundamental belief: cosmic correspondence. Every thing in the universe relates to every other thing, whether living or not, and whether perceived or not. This belief implies that there are some mysterious connections between different entities. Subject and object are related

Sung Yu (宋玉). For the present study it is not appropriate to venture into detail.

²⁰¹ This sentiment is comparable to the traditional Japanese aesthetic concept of mono no aware (grievance for the transience of things). The most famous example of shuang-chun in Chinese literature is Lin Daiyu's burial of flowers in Hong Lou Meng (紅樓夢) (The Story of the Red Chamber).

by some unknown laws. When one's name is mentioned, he coughs. Similarly, when one does something good, there will be good return.

The dramatic possibility of Yuan zaju usually lies in the violation of this correspondence, i.e., when the good is not rewarded and the evil is not punished. In this respect, although at the end of the play, poetic justice is generally achieved in many zaju, the dramatic action begins with injustice. And on his way towards justice, whether successful or failing, the protagonist experiences some haunting forces that are beyond his control.

Objective Absolute vs Subjective Necessity

The above two sections have created a tension: metaphysical differences versus experiential similarities.

At first glance, Chinese thought is not compatible with tragic thought because, unlike tragedy, it inclines towards the ethical. When an ontology grounds itself on ethics, everything is relational. Since relation is relative, theoretically the dramatic purpose of Yuan zaju is not situated in the absolute.

What is oppressing the characters of Yuan zaju are social forces. There is no secret in the causes of human suffering, no doubt. Experientially, however, their enemies are indomitable to the characters. They are thus facing some "relatively absolute" forces. An ethical code, for example, is not absolute in metaphysical senses, yet,

to the dramatic personae in the drama's context, it is necessity.

The human sufferings depicted in the zaju are not entirely the result of the wrongdoing of the villains.²⁰² The protagonist's subjectivity, his ethical obligations, his personality, and the behaviors his social status requires of him, etc., all contribute to his suffering.

This actually is an existential question: does one's personality generate one's life history? or vice versa, does one's life history shape one's personality?

Zhang Qian chooses to kill his sworn-brother's lascivious wife when she is about to murder her husband. By so doing he not only manifests an act, but also establishes himself as an individual. He may choose to act otherwise, or, not to act at all. He chooses, so that his existence has a particular value. In this respect, we may say that existence precedes essence. Yet, Zhang Qian's action is motivated not simply by his personality but by an ethical code that has been indoctrinated into his being during socialization. If one is born into a particular belief system, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for one to escape from that system's domination. Existence, thus, comes after essence. Although ethical codes are man-made, they are bricks of a prison house, pre-ordained, invincible, and immutable.

²⁰² If it is the case, we may say that they are closer to melodrama than to tragedy.

The destructive power in Yuan zaju, though unlike the mysterious force in Greek tragedy, is similarly within a sphere invincible to the individual. In Greek tragedy we see the active struggles of the tragic heroes who are entrapped in a pre-ordained downfall. In Yuan zaju, we witness, by and large, the passive responses of the characters (most of them are Han people) who are victimized by some brutal social forces, usually represented by concrete evil human characters.

Yuan zaju, thus, is not Hegelian in its dramatic form. It depicts the struggle between the good and the evil rather than between two one-sided wills. It justifies the ethical necessity rather than glorifies the absolute spirit. Yet, Yuan zaju is not simply melodramatic, especially when we examine the dramatic content of the action.

In Greek tragedy, according to Hegel, the principal source of opposition is that of the "body politic," i.e., the opposition "between ethical life in its social universality and the family as the natural ground of moral relations." Hegel calls the two forces "the purest forces of tragic representation."²⁰³ That is why Hegel praises the Oresteia myth--which has an inner movement of murder, revenge, and reconciliation--as the mythical precedent of his philosophy.

²⁰³ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, "Dramatic Poetry," in Dukore, Dramatic Theory and Criticism, 538.

As we have seen in Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi and Zhao Shi Gu Er, this opposition of the "body politic" is also the chief source of the dramatic interest.²⁰⁴ In Yuan zaju, however, these two oppositional forces are embedded in the protagonist. Zhang Qian confesses his murder and leaves his elderly mother alone in the world; Cheng Ying substitutes his son for the orphan of the family of Zhao. Both observe justice; both violate the basic ethical law. Although they have made their choices, being human, they cannot prevent themselves from suffering an irreparable loss.

Unlike Greek tragic heroes, Zhang Qian and Cheng Ying do not voluntarily assert their acts at the beginning of the plays. They would rather not get involved in the dramatic conflicts. The hero in Greek tragedy acts: the "protagonist" (not necessarily hero in its normal usage) in Yuan zaju reacts. This explains the difference in the rhythm between a Western tragedy and a Yuan zaju that has a tragic favor.

Tragic rhythm, a concept that has its origin in Germanic tragic theories, is a term prevalent in contemporary criticism.²⁰⁵ First coined by Kenneth Burke

²⁰⁴ I do not use the term "dramatic action" here because the sense "action" normally implied in Western dramaturgy does not apply completely in Yuan zaju.

²⁰⁵ The American philosopher Susanne Langer also uses this term as one chapter in Feeling and Form (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1953), 351-366.

and subsequently popularized by Francis Fergusson, it is a synthesis of the Aristotelian and the Hegelian tragic theories.

While Aristotle uses Sophocles' Oedipus Rex as his model to define tragedy, Hegel uses Sophocles' Antigone.²⁰⁶ Aristotle defines tragedy as an imitation of a serious action which achieves the effect of catharsis through pity and fear; Hegel sees tragedy as the struggle between two Rights, which leads to the final triumph of the absolute spirit.²⁰⁷ To Aristotle, tragedy is a creation of man; to Hegel, a manifestation of the Absolute. Aristotle assumes a formalistic approach and deduces his poetics by formal logic; Hegel, on the other hand, adopts a dialectic attitude, and defines the fundamental movement of the universe as a constant synthesis of the thesis and its inevitable anti-thesis.

Combining the Hegelian dialectic movement with the Aristotelian cathartic process, Burke formulates the idea of the dialectic of tragedy which revolves around the tragic hero. This dialectic regards any tragedy as a movement generated from an assertion that is embodied in an agent.²⁰⁸ He uses the terms poemata, pathemata, and

²⁰⁶ See paragraphs 437 and 470, G. W. F. Hegel, Phenomenology of Spirit; and "Dramatic Poetry, " in Bernard F. Dukore, ed., Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greek to Grotowski, 532-545.

²⁰⁷ See "The Spiritual Work of Art," from paragraph 727 to 743, Phenomenology of Spirit, 439-450.

mathemata to describe this process. In The Idea of a Theater, Fergusson simplifies the terms. Purpose-passion-perception, this is his formula.²⁰⁹

According to Burke and Fergusson, the tragic hero always starts with a purpose such as, say, to solve the suffering of the people. He then deliberately and forcibly asserts his purpose through acts. His acts, however, will generate a counter-assertion, usually manifested by a greater power, whose coercive measures propel the hero's inevitable downfall. The tragic hero suffers, but he lives with his pain in a state of great tragic passion. He subsequently crystallizes a perception. With grandeur, he understands and accepts the mystery of his fate. Thus, in a Western tragedy, the tragic hero achieves the sublime through perception.

This conclusion implies an orientation towards rationality, one dominant characteristic of Western man.

The rhythm of the traditional Chinese drama, a form that springs from a culture more inclined to the lyrical and the ethical, is different from that of the West. Suffering comes first. The protagonist starts without any purpose. He simply wants to live, no more. But he suffers. The protagonist does not assert, rather, he is pressed upon. Moreover, his perception comes about without the

²⁰⁸ Kenneth Burke, A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 38.

²⁰⁹ Francis Fergusson, The Idea of a Theater (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), 18.

reasoning process. It is intuitive. He becomes illuminated at the end of his suffering.

In Dou E Yuan, the heroine's illumination evokes in her a fearful anguish. This anguish--an anguish generated by the social environment and total injustice--elevates the young widow to the level of a demi-god. She knows that it is no use condemning any particular person. She shouts, and she accuses Heaven and Earth, because she has grasped the essence of the injustice done to her. Dou E is pressed upon, and she acts from a conviction of her moral obligation.

Instead of asserting himself, the protagonist of a Yuan zaju reacts to assertion from outside. Even in Zhang Qian Ti Sha Qi and Shuang Fu Meng, two zaju with titles that explicitly state the core actions, the protagonists are reactive. In these two zaju, the acts--sha (殺, to kill) and fu (赴, to journey)--are not assertions. They are not generated by the original purposes, if any, of the protagonists. These acts are, in fact, reactions.

From a metaphysical perspective, however, action and reaction are similar in nature if the reaction is not just reflex action. There is no struggle involved in an unconscious downfall but there can be severe struggle in an act of conscious endurance.

Reaction is another form of action. In this respect, Yuan zaju is closer to Aristotle than to Hegel. Aristotle defines tragedy as an imitation of a serious action which

achieves the effect of catharsis through pity and fear. In his theory, action is not simply an act manifested by the protagonist. It means the entire movement of the drama that involved all the dramatic personae. The action of a Greek tragedy normally begins with the assertion of the protagonist because Greek tragedy adopts a late point of attack. On the other hand, because of the Chinese national personality, Yuan zaju usually adopts an early point of attack. It embeds in its structure the events that lead to the suffering of the protagonist. Hence, the difference between Yuan zaju's rhythm and the tragic rhythm is merely aesthetic, not metaphysical. This explains why the tragic emotions can be applied to the discussion of Yuan zaju.

To study the nature of different reactions of the protagonists in Yuan zaju is a way to approach the tragic dimensions of Chinese drama. When we investigate the reactions of the characters in a Yuan zaju, we find that the reactions cannot be described simply as "to do something," rather, they usually take the form of "to express something."

To express something implies emotional content. This study has shown how eight Yuan zaju that seriously represent life evoke four types of intense emotional effects. They represent four tragic dimensions of traditional Chinese drama. While bei-ai and bei-yuan are more inclined to the pathetic, bei-fen and bei-zhuang are closer to the tragic.

Unlike the contemporary concept of the tragic, which has been shaped by years of philosophization, the four tragic dimensions are not situated in the metaphysical sphere. They are conceptually different from the tragic in logical type. Whereas the tragic implies a secret cause or mysterious first cause that is out of the reach of humanity, the four tragic dimensions represent four human responses to sufferings.

Usually the reactions are involuntary at the beginning, but they may become intentional when the characters, having understood their situations, wilfully react. This is especially true in the two dimensions of bei-fen and bei-zhuang, and may be true for characters in the emotional state of bei-yuan.

Zhang Qian kills his sworn-brother's wife, not because she seduces him, but because she tries to kill her drunken husband. Although the play starts with a moral problem, the problem is not the cause of Zhang's action. We cannot say that Zhang's purpose is to kill the lascivious woman; rather it is his reaction to a situation--the erotic harassment asserted by the lustful woman. Zhang acts because of his voluntary conformity with his moral duty.

In Shuang Fu Meng, the ghosts of Guan Yu and Zhang Fei do not appear until section three although both men have been murdered before the play's action begins. If Zhuge Liang had not prevented the messenger from reporting the news of their deaths to the king, they would not have to

journey a long way back to the capital to enter into their sworn-brother king's dream. In this respect, their journey is also a reaction. To use Walter Kaufmann's term, they act in order to regain their ontological integrity, the meaning and dignity of their beings.

Yuan zaju's rhythm, thus, is different from the tragic rhythm of Western tragedy. In Yuan zaju, perception is not necessarily the final movement of the drama. While Han Gong Qiu ends in a bitter atmosphere of the existential perception of human helplessness, Shuang Fu Meng ends with an action--the entrance of the two ghosts into their brother's dream. While Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui ends with a woodcutter's outcry towards the cruelty of the emperor, in Dou E Yuan the heroine's ghost strives to regain her name.

Perhaps it is good for us to pause a little to reappraise Henry W. Wells's analysis of traditional Chinese tragedy, an analysis which has influenced Western scholars for some time. In The Classical Drama of the Orient, Wells tries to derive a structural formula for Chinese "tragedy":

A familiar formula in plays of various degrees of seriousness or tragic intensity provides that the hero or heroine shall die in the next to the last episode and that the final episode be devoted to the punishment of the guilty. It is thus more properly said of such plays that the climax or catastrophe is the death of the protagonist and that the actual conclusion presents the moral justification so much in demand in plays and in fiction throughout the world and in China the most

conspicuously.²¹⁰

Wells derives this formula from Snow in Midsummer (the Peking opera version of Dou E Yuan). Although the heroine dies in section three, i.e., the next to the last episode, the dramatic interest is not to show her death and suffering. As analyzed in chapter 4, the playwright's preoccupation is to show the agony of Dou E's recognition. Although the zaju concludes with the punishment of the villains, section four's dramatic interest is not so much in poetic justice itself as in the character's struggle for poetic justice. Actually, it shows, primarily, how Dou E's ghost strives towards her rehabilitation.

After the illumination, the dramatic action of most Chinese drama continues. That is why some metaphysical forms are created to resolve the injustice. By showing how unreal characters intrude into the real world, Yuan zaju creates an interesting rhythm different from Burke and Fergusson's tragic rhythm. Even though we may, for whatever reason, call Yuan zaju's rhythm "tragic rhythm," this "tragic rhythm" assumes a different structure: suffering-reaction-perception-sublimation. Without sublimation the playwright's dramatic vision is not complete.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 55.

Ontological Tragic Vision vs Phenomenal Tragic Vision

The question of tragic vision is both ontological and existential (in the broad sense).

In the nineteenth century, tragedy attracted the attention of many philosophers. The efforts of Friedrich Hegel, Arthur Schopenhauer, Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Max Scheler, Miguel de Unamuno, Karl Jaspers, and many others raised the discussion of tragedy into a study of the nature of the human condition. Kierkegaard (1813-1855), for example, dichotomizes our life experience into the tragic and the comical, "whenever there is life, there is contradiction, . . . The tragic is the suffering contradiction, the comical, the painless contradiction."²¹¹

After Hegel, who first turns the formal discussion of tragedy into a metaphysical consideration, the concept of will becomes pivotal in the discussions of tragedy. Schopenhauer (1788-1860) develops the idea of tragic resignation in The World as Will and Idea (1818): the will of individuals, after viewing tragedy, is defeated by the will of the world and retreats not only from worldly affairs but also from life itself.²¹² Nietzsche turns Schopenhauer's pessimism to optimism. In The Birth of

²¹¹ Søren Kierkegaard, "The Comical," in Dukore, Dramatic Theory and Criticism, 556.

²¹² Arthur Schopenhauer, "The World as Will and Idea," in *ibid.*, 516-522.

Tragedy, he argues that the interplay of the Apollonian vision and the Dionysian spirit is healthy and that tragedy fosters the triumph of the will, not its defeat.²¹³

This line of thought generates the concept of the tragic vision, another term that prevails the discussion of tragedy in the twentieth century. Murray Krieger is the main proponent of the term, and Richard B. Sewall develops his concept fully in The Vision of Tragedy.²¹⁴

According to Sewall, tragic vision has two phases. First, "it calls up out of the depths the first (and last) of all questions, the question of existence: What does it mean to be?"²¹⁵ It presupposes the existence of human suffering, and "impels the man of action to fight against his destiny, kick against the pricks, and state his case before God or his fellows."²¹⁶ To Sewall, the person who dares face his destiny with this tragic vision is an artist, and the tragic artist will not stay in the realm of action or response alone, hence Sewall's second phase

²¹³ Friedrich Nietzsche, The Birth of Tragedy and The Genealogy of Morals, trans. Francis Golffing (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1956), 1-146.

²¹⁴ Murray Krieger, The Tragic Vision: Variations on a Theme in Literary Interpretation (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); Richard B. Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy: Tragic Themes in Literature from the Book of Job to O'Neill and Miller (New York: Paragon House, 1990).

²¹⁵ Richard B. Sewall, The Vision of Tragedy, 4.

²¹⁶ Ibid., 5.

of the tragic vision:

the artist's action or response takes him beyond the lament or the melancholy lyric toward an increasingly complicated dialectic as he contemplates the thrust and counterthrust of man against destiny. Here his cause is one with the philosophers and theologians, the difference being that the artist's dialectic is not of ideas in the abstract but of ideas in action, ideas as lived. . . . the tragic artist explores each experience directly, . . . He presses the "boundary-situation" for its total yield. Whatever he finds man capable of, in action and underextremest pressure, is to him the truth, whether it be abject and miserable or sublime and redeeming. This truth constitutes the discovery of tragedy.²¹⁷

The word "discovery" is crucial. Sewall's formulation, although more inclusive, is actually following Burke's notion of the dialectic of tragedy. His contribution is to pin-point the existential question concerning the tragic. He does not explain explicitly in his introduction, yet, from his subsequent analyses of individual works, we may rephrase his idea in the following simple words: "If 'vision' means seeing some distant truth from afar, then 'tragic vision' is the seeing of some indestructible human values in the tragic hero's inevitable 'total destruction.'"

This idea of the tragic vision is very close to Karl Jasper's philosophical concept of the "Encompassing," the belief that a man can see beyond the horizon if he is able

²¹⁷ Ibid., 6-7.

to ascend higher.²¹⁸ Hence, tragic vision is not a vision of sight but a vision of the mind or the heart. Of the mind, because one may achieve illumination through rational reasoning and contemplation; of the heart, because one may also reach illumination through faith and intuition.

While Sewall stresses the tragic artist's rational "discovery" of tragedy, the visions of most main characters of the zaju discussed in this study are not achieved through rationality. This gives us hints to differentiate Western tragedies from traditional Chinese dramas that have a tragic flavor.

Undoubtedly, zaju writers did "see" some visions beyond the oppressive social context. That is why, even though on the surface a zaju is pathetic or melodramatic, the play is not simply four sets of sentimental lyrics written for the sake of drawing the audience's sympathy. The dramatists not only narrate the story of the sufferers and their sufferings, but also intentionally depict certain images that are metaphorical and transcendental.

The imagery the playwright creates in the zaju, in turn, becomes the medium for the audience to "see" through life's meaning: of human suffering in particular and of existence in general.

Sometimes the protagonist also sees his destiny,

²¹⁸ Please refer to chapter 1 for a more elaborate definition of the "Encompassing".

sometimes he does not. Sometimes the protagonist understands the meaning of his suffering, sometimes he does not. Yet the complex imagery, which combines the act, the actor, the scene, and the emotions, impels the audience to reflect upon matters concerning life and death, values and obligations, justice and righteousness. This quality distinguishes these zaju from melodrama, which aims merely to evoke the audience's sensations.

In Han Gong Qiu and Shuang Fu Meng, we see two images--one static, one dynamic--of defeated men of high social status. The emperor, having lost his most beloved concubine, falls into melancholy. This, however, is not simply inaction. It is existential contemplation, for the emperor is not disturbed even by the news of his woman's death. The playwright impels the audience to face the cruel reality that all beautiful Chinese things are gone. In the zaju's historical context this vision is very subversive.

If Han Gong Qiu depicts the irreparable loss of basic human values without indicating whether the protagonist will perceive and embrace his destiny, Shuang Fu Meng gives us insight into probable action. The two ghosts' situation is piteous, but as grand heroes, they cannot fall into self-pity. Rather, they must strive for their revenge. Through this the playwright conveys a message to his audience: even though the nation is defeated, the people are not!

One vision of Yuan dramatists that is distinct from Western tragedy is the depiction of suffering innocents. Sometimes the vision is more inclined to the pathetic, especially in a zaju that evokes the emotion of bei-ai (e.g., Fen Yu Lan); sometimes, the vision is more inclined to the tragic (e.g., Dou E Yuan).

In Fen Yu Lan, the twelve-year-old girl survives a brutal massacre of her family, but there is no way out. In great horror, she lives among the dead bodies on a free-drifting boat. In this image, we see the common people's helplessness in the face of evil. This imagery certainly is pathetic. Considering the zaju's structure as a whole, the vision cannot be regarded as tragic because the playwright shifts his focus to poetic justice--he saves the piteous girl in section three and punishes the evil murderer in section four. Yet, this image is also timeless. It seems as though the anonymous playwright aims not only at provoking tears and horror, but at subtly affirming mysterious endurance of the weak and innocent.

On the other hand, Guan Han Qin, the writer of Dou E Yuan, does not stop at the injustice done upon Dou E; he impels Dou E to act by shifting the scene from one of execution to one of accusation. The playwright and the audience are united in the tragic vision of the character.

Through the portrayal of the innocent's suffering, the dramatist successfully establishes a tragic vision with a Chinese flavor. Dou E is not the typical tragic hero in

Aristotle's sense. Hers is not a downfall from a high social position, like that of Oedipus in Oedipus the King, Creon in Antigone, Agamemnon in Agamemnon, or Phaedra in Hippolytus. Her downfall, suffering, and subsequent elevation, however, is no less pitiable and fearful than that of her Greek counterparts. Moreover, she does not have the typical self-pride of the Greek tragic heroes. Her suffering is different in kind when compared with that of a Greek tragic hero because her personality contributes little to its cause. It is her sense of morality and ethical praxis which leads to her downfall. That is why the playwright must motivate a scene of "resurrection" in order to affirm the Confucian morality--the spiritual spine of the defeated Chinese people. In this respect, the playwright's vision is political rather than tragic. Dou E cries out, and is resurrected in the form of a spirit. Her ghost, the motivating force in the subsequent plots, is a tragic actor who, though defeated, recomposes herself to generate the necessary poetic justice to complete the dramatist's vision.

In Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui, the protagonist also embodies an anguish that goes beyond extremity. Jie Zi Tui has been seriously disturbed by the injustice done to him. He has been silenced by his anger. His quiet determination haunts us. In Jie Zi Tui's act, the playwright and the audience are also united. We see some indestructible human value in Jie's "total destruction." Call it dignity if you will,

but it is more than that. Because Jie's determination embraces in a very pure sense the Confucian moral standard of ren (benevolence, humaneness), and because Jie does not escape even though he will be burnt to ashes, the worst form of death in traditional Chinese culture, he survives as pure will. "In the tragic world the hero has only one potentiality: to fulfil himself through his own danger, to drain the glass of his destiny to the very dregs. To become engulfed by his own flame."²¹⁹ Jie does not set up the fire, yet he wilfully induces it. In his destruction he gains the perfect virtue of ren, the ethical ideal of a Confucian scholar. It might, in this regard, be described as an individual's vision of ontological integrity. In fact, Huo Shao Jie Zi Tui provides the best Chinese dramatic example of the tragic vision.

Although in Western theatre metaphysical intervention is also very common, it seldom interlocks with the plot. The most famous ghost in Western theatre, Hamlet's father, incites the dramatic action, yet the basic theme of the play revolves only around Hamlet's personality. The basic conflict of the play is situated in the phenomenal world, and the dramatic action can be resolved without the intervention of the ghost.

In Yuan zaju, however, the appearance of the

²¹⁹ Angelos Terzakis, Homage to the Tragic Muse, trans. Athan H. Anagnostopoulos (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1978), 25.

metaphysical form bears profound significance. It signifies the triumph of the will of a suffering nation over the physically strong but intellectually weak Mongolian ruler. By employing the haunted spirit as a device to resolve the dramatic action, the playwright cultivates in the audience's subconscious a subversive ideology: what was not possible in the phenomenal world becomes probable in the dramatic world. This is not self deception, as many a scholar has interpreted it. On the contrary, it generates profound momentum that brings out a conquered people's buried rebellious attitude. This corresponds to the first phase of Sewall's conception of the tragic vision.

If we analyze Dou E Yuan and Shaun Fu Meng on the metaphysical level, we can find the aesthetic connection between traditional Chinese drama and Aristotle's Poetics. In the Poetics, Aristotle states that poetry is more philosophical than history, because poetry depicts what ought to be instead of what is. To him, convincing probability is more important than unconvincing possibility. "Convincing" is the key word in Aristotle's statement. When something has to be convincing, the reception of the audience is of the utmost importance. Hence the social context of a text becomes an indispensable element in its signification.

Applying Aristotle's perspective to Yuan zaju, we can understand the ideology behind the dramatists' designs

when they employed metaphysical characters (ghosts, souls, etc.) in their plays. They felt that justice could not be obtained without the intervention of some force outside of the present social context, and that the ideal world cannot be achieved without the transformation of some forms in the real world. These two notions imply that the social context is not capable of satisfying the Yuan people's ideological demands. The logical conclusion is that a fight to change the social context is a necessity.

In this respect, the tragic vision of Greek tragedy is different from that of Yuan zaju. Aeschylus' Emends, for example, is a play full of metaphysical characters, but the dramatic action is resolved by the human institution established in the phenomenal world. The goddess Athena, the god Apollo, the Furies, and the ghost of Clytemnestra, act as judge, witness, prosecutors, and victim, respectively. The transformation of the Furies to Emends is the result of the existing social order.

The Greek feels the tragic in the realm of fate; the Yuan dynasty Chinese senses the tragic in the realm of reality. Greek tragedy shows the destruction of the tragic hero by some mysterious force situated outside the human sphere; in Yuan zaju, the tragic is depicted in the oppression of an individual by the external environment. Greek tragedy is optimistic, it points to the re-establishment of the existing social order; Yuan zaju is pessimistic; although it ends with justice reclaimed, it

demands the destruction of the existing social order. In Greek tragedy, we see an ordered world established in the context of existing social forces; in Yuan zaju, it cannot be realized in the existing social order.

The tragic vision of Yuan zaju is pessimistic towards reality. This, however, is not simple pessimism. It is highly enthusiastic with regard to future possibilities. The dramatic probable transforms the historical impossible. Yuan zaju elevates through the unification of the historical and the aesthetic dimensions.

Conclusion

When Aristotle defined tragedy in chapter 6 of Poetics, he defined it in the form of a conclusion. "Tragedy, thus, is . . . ," he wrote. Two millennia later, it is very difficult, if not impossible, to define tragedy with such grandeur. Not because we do not want to, but because we have burdened ourselves with too diversified and mighty a tragic tradition. Like a lever, Greek tragedy is at the far end, and we are at the near end, close to the fulcrum--our historical position. Only some thinkers who have gigantic power, or some visionaries who can transcend their historical position, have sufficient leverage to lift the whole tragic tradition.

Many thinkers, East and West, have stated that there is no tragedy in China. Their arguments appeared to be so strong that it seemed as though my study would be futile. "There is no tragedy in China, why bother writing a dissertation on Chinese tragedy'?" I had been asking myself this question before finally deciding to set forth on this expedition. This might be called "tragic spirit." I carried with me the burden of, to use Walter Kaufmann's words, an ontological uncertainty, as I journeyed toward a highly probable void. "You think that you cannot go further at the edge of the mountains and the rivers, then a bend in the road reveals a village with blooming willow and flowers." (山窮水盡疑無路，柳暗花明又一村。) In the fourth year of my journey, after I had a difficult and

unsuccessful struggle with the ontology of the tragic , a village appeared. When I was developing a methodology for the dissertation, I experienced intuitively the importance of subjectivity in any tragic phenomenon. Everyone approaches tragedy in his own way, with his own temperament, thinking patterns, and tastes. So much so, that an actor can only "go into" a role which he impersonates.

In a philosophic analysis, our tragic faculty should manifest the tragic in the form of statements that are logical in both their semantic universe and metaphysical universe; in a dramatic analysis, however, before any semantic operation, our tragic faculty is first employed in the sphere of imagination (visualising the text) and in the sphere of emotion (experiencing the appropriate emotions of tragedy).

This study has applied four tragic dimensions to a group of traditional Chinese dramas. The terms--bei-ai, bei-yuan, bei-fen, and bei-zhuang--not only prove to be useful for the discussion of the emotional effects of plays that have a tragic flavor, but also suggest a methodology concerning intercultural studies in general, and comparative literature in particular.

If we define tragedy as a serious drama, whose dramatic purpose is to depict, to both the audience and the character, the destruction of some irreplaceable human

values, by apparently invincible forces;²²⁰ we may perhaps say that the eight Yuan zaju are "tragedies."

This statement is not a definition. It is only a conditional sentence. This humble "conditional definition" of tragedy stresses the subjective perception of both the character and the audience. If a tree falls in a forest, it is not tragic; not only because it is only a tree but because nobody knows it has fallen.²²¹ A poem about a tree falling in a forest may, however, seem very tragic to its readers who can feel the passion of the poet, and who may contemplate the mortality of any life. Sometimes, even if a poet does not have any particular passion when he writes a poem, and the subject matter is apparently neutral, the poem may arouse a particular emotion in the reader. "When you feel, the petal's dew is the flower's tear (感時花殘淚)," sighs the Tang dynasty poet Tu Fu.

Perhaps Max Scheler is correct when he says that there is no tragedy if there is no value involved. If an audience does not regard the destruction before its eyes

²²⁰ The first clause of this conditional definition not only situates tragedy in the domain of drama, but also differentiates it from comedy, tragicomedy, and satire. The remaining of the definition distinguishes tragedy from sentimental drama and melodrama, where their main interests are to arouse the audience's pity and sensation, respectively. The word "destruction" separates tragedy from drama, which may include but not embrace destruction.

²²¹ From the point of view of a transcendental observer, this may be extremely tragic. Because he knows not only that a tree has fallen, but also that nobody knows. Perhaps that is why Hamlet asks Fortinbras to tell his story to generations to come.

as vital to the character, it would not call the play a tragedy. On the other hand, even if the actor does not recognize the text's tragic quality, it may be very tragic to the audience who perceives the irreplaceable loss.

This is the theoretical ground work of this study: different peoples see the tragic(s) differently.

If one accepts this argument, one may say that there are tragedies in traditional Chinese drama. But even if one does not accept this, one must agree that there are some qualities in traditional Chinese drama that can be compared to the Western conception of the tragic.

To use Wittgenstein's terms, we may say that the eight Yuan zaju have a family resemblance with Western tragedy.

Aesthetically, the Greek theatre and Yuan theatre have one striking similarity: empty stage. In its mature form, the protagonist of the Greek theatre isolates himself from the chorus, stands on the empty acting area, manifests his purpose, acts, suffers, and comes up with a perception of his fate. Similarly, although Yuan zaju stresses the theatrical more than the dramatic aspect, the zheng mo (or zheng dan) also performs on an empty stage, expressing his emotions.

In the Yuan zaju that we have discussed in this study, we hear the desperate cries, whether in screaming shouts or silent roars, tearful or tearless, of men and women in confrontation with a hostile environment. In this respect, we may say that, although the dramatic rhythm of the eight

Yuan zaju is different from the Western tragic rhythm, it generates a vision that is not only subversive, but also tragic. Some characters voluntarily induce their own destructions with extreme determination.

We see in this vision a haunting yet sublime tragic spirit.

The poet beholds the future in the present; the tragic hero beholds his ultimate destruction within his present suffering.

Time stands still.

In the terrifying stillness of the present, the dynamic of the action almost bursts out. Pregnant, this moment transcends time, space, and emotion. It is an eternal image which becomes imprinted on our mind. The story, the plot, the characters, and even the action are all dissolved. The tragic image thus crystallized contains the pure fire which consumes even its own physical form. Will becomes spirit. Encompassing.

From the ashes the phoenix is reborn. It shatters its beautiful body to let the dust drop down onto the wounded earth, flaps its wings, and flies away, to a distant land.

Appendix 1: Multiplicity of Tragedy

There are many forms of tragedy. Even if we only consider the external form, i.e., the medium of expression, we can find quite a few varieties. In ancient Greece, tragedy was a play, performed by actors; in the middle ages, when people did not know of ancient dramatic performance, tragedy was a narrative or a story; in the Renaissance, Michelangelo worked on a project called The Tragedy of the Tomb, and in modern times, we can hear Tchaikovsky's Tragic Symphony.

The situation is not simpler even if we regard form as the structure of a dramatic work. In this more restrictive sense of the word, we still find ourselves in a mist of "forms." For example, while Elizabethan tragedy juxtaposed subplots to the main plot, Greek tragedy stuck primarily to one plot. In selecting one example to explain the interplay of plot and subplot in The Theory and Analysis of Drama, Manfred Pfister says that "the example should have been taken from the sphere of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama" because their "playwrights were not overburdened with normative theories demanding unity of plot."²²² And in modern times, tragedies that are created by new structural principles continue to emerge. Starting with the symbolist Maurice Maeterlinck (1862-1949), who

²²² Manfred Pfister, The Theory and Analysis of Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 213.

wrote about "The Tragical in Daily Life" (1896),²²³ more and more writers have begun to probe the tragic "essence" of "the mere act of living." Maeterlinck called for a drame statique (static drama) which stressed psychological rather than physical action. Peter Szondi examines the paradox of Maeterlinck's term in Theory of the Modern Drama. When Szondi talks about the crisis of modern drama, he says, "From the dramaturgic point of view, this means that the category 'action' is replaced by 'situation.' . . . they [Maeterlinck's static dramas] are, therefore, no longer 'Dramas'--as long as the Greek word is understood in this sense."²²⁴ While Maeterlinck tried to seize the tragical "moment" in everyday life, other writers experimented with the constant flux of existence. Life became contingent, and the structure of many modern dramas became fragmentary. This tendency, perhaps, is a result of a momentum developed over a long period of time.

It is incontrovertible that the form of tragedy changes with the times. But within the same period, and even among the works of one writer, we can see different forms of tragedy. In chapter eighteen of Poetics, Aristotle categorizes tragedy as follows:

²²³ Maurice Maeterlinck, "The Tragical in Daily Life," in Bernard F. Dukore, ed., Dramatic Theory and Criticism: Greeks to Grotowski (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1974), 726-736.

²²⁴ Peter Szondi, Theory of the Modern Drama, ed. and trans. Michael Hays (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 32.

(a) the complex tragedy, the essence of which is reversal and recognition;

(b) the tragedy of suffering--for example, plays about Ajax or Ixion;

(c) the tragedy of character--for example, Phthiotides and Peleus;

(d) the simple tragedy, such as Phorcides, Prometheus, and all works set in Hades.²²⁵

As there is diversity in tragedy's form, there is multiplicity in its definition. Over the years, different interpretations emerged, and the same work was classified into different genres. For example, while Aristotle calls Euripides "the most tragic" of poets,²²⁶ some of his plays are regarded by modern writers as melodrama,²²⁷ a critical term that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century. Sometimes, a new assumption of tragedy will give a play a completely different understanding. In Tragedy and After: Euripides, Shakespeare, Goethe, Ekbert Faas argues that

²²⁵ Stephen Halliwell, The Poetics of Aristotle (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1987), 51.

²²⁶ In chapter 13 of Poetics, see Stephen Halliwell, The Poetics of Aristotle, 45.

²²⁷ For example, in a text book, one sentence reads: "Major works such as Euripides' Medea, Kyd's The Spanish Tragedy, Shakespeare's Richard III, Webster's The White Devil, though called 'tragedy' in their day, can be recognized in our time for what they truly are: melodramas--highly theatrical pieces, if you will--that have considerable merit." In Frederick B. Shroyer and Louis G. Gardemal ed., Types of Drama (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman, 1970), 36.

the limitation of the tragic understanding of suffering is a theme of Euripides'. To Faas, the modern notion of "the death of tragedy" begins as early as Euripides, whose tragedies, due to their deviations from those of his predecessors, may be described as "anti-tragedy" and "post-tragedy."²²⁸

In the corpus of tragedy's definitions, Aristotle's is undoubtedly the most important one. His definition of tragedy is not necessarily the most correct (and not necessarily not!) but is certainly the most influential, especially since the turn of the sixteenth century, when the Poetics was translated into Latin and Greek. In Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present, Marvin Carlson starts "The Italian Renaissance" chapter with the following statement:

The story of dramatic criticism during the Italian Renaissance is essentially the story of the rediscovery of Aristotle, or the establishment of his Poetics as a central reference point in dramatic theory, and of attempts to relate this work to the already established critical tradition.²²⁹

Influential as Aristotle was, there has been a continuous readjustment of his Poetics, in the form of translation,

²²⁸ Ekbert Faas, Tragedy and After: Euripides, Shakespeare, Goethe (Kingston, Canada: McGill-Queen's University, 1986).

²²⁹ Marvin Carlson, Theories of the Theatre: A Historical and Critical Survey, from the Greeks to the Present (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1984), 37.

notes, commentary, essays, or even plays, to suit the times. In the Renaissance, Italian critics produced a pile of commentary on Aristotle's Poetics. They adopted a very liberal attitude towards the Greek philosopher's ideas. "Aristotle is too obscure to be taken as a guide; it would be better to listen to reason, while taking into consideration the time, the place, and the progress achieved,"²³⁰ said Cinthio (1504-1573), who justified tragicomedy as a dramatic genre. Most critics tried to reconcile Aristotle's ideas with the Horatian decorum ideal and instruction principle. Scaliger (1484-1558) said that the end of poetry is "the giving of instruction in pleasurable form."²³¹ And Minturno gave the following definition:

Tragedy is concerned with the imitation of serious and weighty happenings, embodied in a complete and perfect form, . . . arousing feelings of pity and terror, and tending to purge the mind of the beholder of similar passions, to his delight and profit.²³²

The enthusiasm for re-interpretation of Aristotle's Poetics has not faded. In this century, after the seminal English translations of S. H. Butcher and Ingran Bywater

²³⁰ From Carlson, Theories of the Theatre, 41.

²³¹ Julius Caesar Scaliger, "Poetics," in Dukore, Dramatic Theory and Criticism, 138.

²³² Minturno, "The Art of Poetry," in Barrett H. Clark, ed., European Theories of the Drama (New York: Crown Publishers, 1961), 58.

appeared in 1894 and 1909 respectively, new translations and commentaries continued to emerge.

To borrow Jonathan Barnes's description of Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, Aristotle's Poetics has been "fervently embraced and critically rejected, but never coldly ignored."²³³ While F. L. Lucas enlarged Aristotle's concept of tragedy to include all serious plays,²³⁴ Brecht established his epic theatre by taking Aristotle's dramatic theatre as his target opponent.²³⁵ And while the Brazilian theatre activist Augusto Boal denounces Aristotelian catharsis as a repressive mechanism in The Theatre of the Oppressed,²³⁶ Leon Gordon works out with brilliant scholarship an epistemological interpretation of catharsis.²³⁷

In the history of post Italian Renaissance dramatic

²³³ Jonathan Barnes, "Introduction," J.A.K. Thomason, trans., The Ethics of Aristotle (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1986), 9.

²³⁴ F. L. Lucas, Tragedy: Serious Drama in Relation to Aristotle's, Rev. (New York: Collier Books, 1962).

²³⁵ Bertolt Brecht, Brecht on Theatre, trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964). See particularly "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," 33-42, and "A Short Organum for the Theatre," 179-205.

²³⁶ Augusto Boal, "Aristotle's Coercive System of Tragedy," in Theatre of the Oppressed, trans. Charles A. and Maria-Odilia Leal McBride (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1985), 1-50.

²³⁷ Leon Golden, "Catharsis," Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association 93 (1962): 57.

criticism, critics usually showed great interest in some key notions of the Poetics. This was an urge of the time and of creative activity. Two aspects became prominent in subsequent discussions of tragedy. They are

- 1) the tragic emotions, and
- 2) the nature of the tragic hero.

Aristotle mentions "pity" and "fear" as the tragic emotions through which the tragic effect of "catharsis" is achieved. He stresses this several times in his Poetics but does not define the three terms involved. He did not know how much controversy these three terms would create two thousand years later. Let us first look at how Philip Sidney (1554-1586) augmented the notions of pity and fear. In stressing that the right use of both comedy and tragedy will be blamed by nobody, the major critic of the English Renaissance gave a description of tragedy as the form

that openeth the greatest wounds, and showeth forth
the ulcers that are covered with tissue; that
maketh kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants
manifest their tyrannical humors; that with
stirring the effects of admiration and
commiseration teacheth the uncertainty of this
world, and upon how weak foundations golden roofs
are builded. . . .²³⁸

Sidney separated Aristotle's pity and fear by transposing fear to another part of the definition, connected it to ethical value by mingling it with moral instruction to the

²³⁸ Philip Sidney, "The Defense of Poesy," in Dukore, Dramatic Theory and Criticism, 171.

ruler. This perhaps was necessary because he needed to defend "poesy" against Stephen Gosson's (1554-1623) accusation in The School of Abuse (1579).²³⁹ This is, however, not innovation. His innovation is in the word "admiration."²⁴⁰ To him, the noble quality of the tragic hero never fails to amaze and attract the audience. Thus the distance between the audience and the tragic hero is reduced because we want to be the one we admire.

Indeed the element of fear in Aristotle's definition became a problem in later times. In Hamburg Dramaturgy (1769), Gotthold Lessing (1729-1781) stressed the primary importance of pity, although from time to time he talked about pity and fear together. "Tragedy, in a word, is a poem which excites pity," he said.²⁴¹ This is a very precise proposition. Marvin Carlson suggests that "eighteenth-century humanitarianism, even sentimentality, doubtless contributed strongly to Lessing's preference for pity."²⁴²

One hundred years before Lessing, the French critic St Evremond had already given a succinct argument to dispense with fear. In On Ancient and Modern Tragedy (1672) he

²³⁹ Stephen Gosson, "The School of Abuse," in *ibid.*, 162-166.

²⁴⁰ Later, in neo-classical France, Pierre Corneille (1606-1684) followed him, and included admiration among the tragic emotions.

²⁴¹ In Marvin Carlson, Theories of the Theatre, 168.

²⁴² *Ibid.*

pointed out that while the ancients believed in miracles, modern men did not:

The gods and goddesses among the ancients brought about everything that was great and extraordinary upon the theatre. . . . But all this profusion of miracles is downright romance to us at this time of day. The gods are wanting to us and we are wanting to the gods.²⁴³

With the dissolution of the mythical base of ancient times, argues St. Evremond, modern man's fear no longer reaches the superstitious terror which had once produced tremendous tragic effects. "Our fear, generally speaking, is nothing else but an agreeable uneasiness which consists in the suspension of our minds."²⁴⁴ Therefore, he said, modern men "were obliged to mingle somewhat of love in the new tragedy,"²⁴⁵ because "there is no passion that more excites us to everything that is noble and generous than a virtuous love."²⁴⁶ He concludes his argument with the following:

we ought in tragedy, before all things whatever, to look after a greatness of soul well expressed, which excites in us a tender admiration. By this sort of admiration, our minds are sensibly ravished, our courageous elevated, and our souls

²⁴³ Saint-Evermong, "Of Ancient and Modern Tragedy," in Dukore, Dramatic Theory and Criticism, 271.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 274.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 275.

deeply affected.²⁴⁷

The concern for the tragic emotions of pity and fear continues through this century. For example, I. A. Richard and James Joyce (through the mouth of his character, Stephen Daedalus) give interesting definitions of both pity and fear.

Another major notion which critics tried very hard to re-adjust is the nature of the tragic hero. As the social structure change with the times, so did the taste of the audience, the subject matter of the play, and the status of the protagonist. These all affect the nature of the tragic hero. In France the target of ridicule in Moliere's plays--the emerging bourgeoisie--became more and more discontented with the feudalistic political structure. Hence, the 1789 French Revolution. One advocate of the Revolution, Denis Diderot (1713-1784), proposed a new form of drama--bourgeois tragedy. When he talked about the range of the dramatic scale, he distinguished two kinds of comedy and two kinds of tragedy. They are:

- 1) Happy Comedy, whose subject is ridicule and vice;
- 2) Serious Comedy, whose subject is virtue and the duties of man;
- 3) Serious Drama, a new kind of Tragedy whose subject may be our domestic misfortunes;

²⁴⁷ Ibid. 276.

4) Tragedy, whose subject is public catastrophes and the misfortunes of the great.²⁴⁸

Lessing echoed Diderot's proposal in theory and practice. His play Miss Sara Sampson (1755) marked a new era in German drama by its domestic quality. And in essay 14 of his Hamburg Dramaturgy, he writes that: "The misfortunes of those whose circumstances most resemble our own must naturally penetrate most deeply into our hearts, and if we pity kings, we pity them as human beings, not as kings."²⁴⁹

Like the discussion on pity and fear, this line of thought descends, in theory and in practice, through Buchner, Hebbel, and Maeterlinck to this century. In 1949 the American playwright Arthur Miller (b.1915) produced the influential Death of a Salesman, which was regarded by many as a masterpiece of modern tragedy. Besides the play, Miller wrote an article to argue for the tragedy of the common man: "The tragic feeling is evoked in us when we are in the presence of a character who is ready to lay down his life, if need be, to secure one thing--his sense of personal dignity."²⁵⁰

²⁴⁸ Denis Diderot, "On Dramatic Poetry," in Dukore, Dramatic Theory and Criticism, 292.

²⁴⁹ Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, "Hamburg Dramaturgy," in *ibid.*, 430.

²⁵⁰ Arthur Miller, "Tragedy and the Common Man," in *ibid.*, 894.

To Miller, social status is not an intrinsic criterion of a tragic hero. There are many forms of a man's downfall, but the most important one is his personal dignity, a dignity he recognizes during the course of the action. Hence, "Tragedy . . . is the consequence of a man's total compulsion to evaluate himself justly."²⁵¹ Though he disagrees with Aristotle, Miller indeed is very Aristotelian, for he follows Aristotle's line of thought almost step by step. After Miller, however, it is rare to find critics arguing for tragedy in this perspective.

What we have discussed so far, diverse as it is, revolves around Aristotle. Yet there are not only many interpretations of Aristotle, there are also many theories of tragedy, which situate themselves on different metaphysical ground from Aristotle's.

Starting from the nineteenth century, the concept of will became a key notion in the discussion of tragedy. Friedrich Hegel sees tragedy as the struggle between two one-sided wills which will lead to the triumph of the absolute spirit. Arthur Schopenhauer takes on the notion of will and conflict but deduces that the will of the individual will achieved its illumination after its struggle with the will of the world and will retreat not even from the struggle but also from life itself. While Schopenhauer's tragic rhythm ends on the silent tragic

²⁵¹ Ibid.

resignation, Friedrich Nietzsche sees in tragedy the triumph of the will.

After the Germanic philosophizing of tragedy, more and more critics saw "conflicts" in tragedies and many theories used "struggle" as a means to categorize different kind of drama. Ferdinand Brunetiere's (1849-1906) "The Law of the Drama" (1894) and Sigmund Freud's (1856-1939) "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage" (1905) were influential in both East and West.

Brunetiere regarded theatre as the "spectacle of a will striving towards a goal, and conscious of the means which it employs."²⁵² He then used the will as a parameter and categorized the four major dramatic species by the relationship between the will and its obstacle. Thus, we have:

- 1) Tragedy, the obstacle is unsurmountable and the will is defeated or destroyed;
- 2) Romantic drama or social drama, the hero has a chance of victory and he wins;
- 3) Comedy, exhibits the struggle of two opposing wills
- 4) Farce, the obstacle against which the will struggles lies in the realm of the irony of fortune.²⁵³

Whereas Brunetiere's law sees the dramatic struggle as a process through which the will actualizes itself,

²⁵² Ferdinand Brunetiere, "The Law of the Drama," in Dukore, Dramatic Theory and Criticism, 407.

²⁵³ Ibid., 408.

Freud's analysis regards struggle as the basic parameter. Brunetiere is more inclined to Schopenhauer, Freud to Hegel. "Will" is the constant in Brunetiere's categorization; "struggle" is the constant in Freud's. Freud's classification, however, is diachronic, his interest being in the "evolution" of the drama. Thus,

1) Classical tragedy:

- a) struggle against the divine,
- b) struggle against human society or powerful individual as religious belief diminished;

2) Psychological drama: struggle between different impulses in the hero's mind;

3) Psychopathological drama: struggle between conscious impulses and repressed impulses.²⁵⁴

Human consciousness is the unwritten parameter in Freud's theory; that is why there is a shift in the nature of the struggle within classical tragedy.

The forms of tragedy are so diverse that simply by describing the diverse theories it is sufficient for us to understand the complexity of the problem. We might even say, by adopting Croce's aesthetic idea, that each individual play is a genre by itself. The multiplicity of tragedy's definition is addressed by many modern critics. Some of them try to liberate tragedy's genre restriction to call for a focus on the true meaning of individual

²⁵⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Psychopathic Characters on the Stage," in Carlson, 335.

plays. F. L. Lucas, for example, says that we need to remould Aristotle's definition of tragedy to "Serious drama is a serious representation by speech and action of some phase of human life."²⁵⁵ What concerned him is whether the play "is a serious attempt to represent life." If it is, "it makes no great difference whether or not good fortune intervenes in the last scene."²⁵⁶

²⁵⁵ F. L. Lucas, Tragedy: Serious Drama in Relation to Aristotle's 'Poetics,' rev. (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 33.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

Appendix 2: The Organic Structure of Yuan Zaju

Although scholars are still debating the precise time when Chinese drama was born, it is agreed that China's first full-fledged dramatic forms appeared around the thirteenth century. In Southern China, the longer and loosely structured nanxi (Southern drama) developed in the later years of the Southern Song dynasty (1127-1279); in Northern China, the shorter and more regularly structured zaju emerged when the Mongols took over Northern China in 1234.²⁵⁷

This is significant in our study both historically and aesthetically. Unlike Western drama, which developed and ripened near the dawn of civilization, Chinese drama emerged when Chinese culture had already travelled a long way, had reached high-noon, perhaps.

The historical position, i.e., the particular time in relation to the long river of history, of the birth of a cultural form, as we have seen in this study, strongly influences its subject matter, themes, techniques, and structure. For example, whereas Greek tragedy--the product of the first golden age of Western drama--primarily takes Greek myths as its subject matter, Chinese mythology does not occupy a prominent position in Chinese drama in

²⁵⁷ It is interesting to note the parallels between these two dramatic forms to the two ancient poetic forms--the Northern shi (詩) and the Southern ci (詞). Whereas shi adopts a regular pattern of four characters per line, ci is longer and more irregular.

general. The product of the first golden period of Chinese drama--Yuan zaju--bases its stories on diverse sources: Chinese history, legends, literature, and contemporary events, but seldom on Chinese myths.

One significant characteristic of Yuan zaju, which was moulded by its historical position in Chinese literature, is its frequent use of different narrative devices. In The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Tza-chu, the first full-scaled English-language study of its kind, Chung-Wen Shih has given a detailed description of this point. "Predominant among the influences that combined to mould the complex art that is Yuan drama was the long heritage of oral narrative, which contributed many formal conventions to the drama," says Shih.²⁵⁸ This remark is reasonable. As the Chinese proverb says, "Reside near cinnabar, redden; reside near ink, become black (近朱者赤, 近墨者黑。)," embryonic Yuan zaju was nourished by the contemporary cultural environment. Being born in a time when the story-telling tradition had already established itself as a form of popular entertainment, Yuan zaju naturally borrowed narrative techniques from story-telling, and developed itself as a form which combined oral narrative's flexibility with dramatic impersonation.²⁵⁹

²⁵⁸ Chung-Wen Shih, The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Tsa-chu (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1976), x.

²⁵⁹ Of course, from an ontological point of view, this

The marriage of the narrative to the dramatic created magic. Enlightened by this new paradigm in Chinese cultural consciousness, and encouraged by the flexibility of narrative techniques, Yuan playwrights succeeded in telling complicated stories in zaju. This explains why the performance of canjunxi (參軍戲, adjutant plays), though originated in the Han dynasty, remained a form of simple farcical impersonation in the Tang dynasty. This explains also why the zaju (variety play) in the Tang dynasty and the early Song dynasty, and the yuanben (院本) in the Jin dynasty (1115-1234) were merely short skits but the zaju in the late Song dynasty (i.e., Wen Zhou zaju (溫州雜劇), commonly called nan xi, Southern drama) and Yuan dynasty almost immediately became a mature cultural form.

Before the blending of the dramatic and the narrative, the dramatic possibility of some profound stories were not able to be realized. The trivialization of Donghai Huanggong (東海黃公, Mr. Huang of the Eastern Ocean), a well-known skit of the bai xi (百戲, hundred games) in the Western Han dynasty (B.C. 206-24 A.D.), perhaps best illustrates this point. It is worthwhile to elaborate the case.

is a chicken and egg problem. We can also argue that the narrative is intrinsic to Yuan zaju, so it is not until the story-telling tradition was well developed that Yuan zaju could be born. As Kenneth Burke says in A Grammar of Motives (California: University of California, 1962), 12, "whereas historicism regularly treats historical scenes as the background, or motive, of individual developments, Hegel would treat Reason as the background, or motive, of historical sequence in general."

As far as the main attraction is concerned, Donghai Huanggong's performance was similar to jiaodi xi (角紙戲, horn butting game), a competition of strength between two men. It differed from an average jiaodi xi in one fundamental aspect: whereas the stronger man in an average jiaodi xi became the winner of the game, the winner of Donghai Huanggong was pre-ordained. The plot conditioned the outcome of the fighting, and the winner was not necessarily the stronger man in real life.

The story tells of a legendary magician's downfall. According to Xi Jing Za Ji (西京雜記, Anecdotes of west capital) and Xi Jing Fu (西京賦, The descriptive prose of west capital), there was a Mr. Huang of the Eastern Ocean who in his youth had learned a magician's tricks and was thereby able to tame tigers and snakes. Carrying a glittering red sword and knotting his long hair with a piece of red cloth, his appearance was flamboyant. His magic was so fantastic that he could make the air foggy and cloudy. In his old age, unfortunately but inevitably, his strength decayed, and too much wine made his magic fade away. About the time of the end of the Qin dynasty (221-206 B.C.), a white tiger appeared in the Eastern Ocean. The senile Mr. Huang, perhaps because he was drunk or because he did not have a realistic self-knowledge, looked forward to tame the tiger with his glittering red sword. Yet his magic had gone. Without his magic, the poor old man was bitten to death.

Clearly, this story itself is tragic. It is Mr. Huang's own blindness and bad habits that cause his downfall and there is something mysterious, almost fatalistic, in the plot. In Mr Huang's personality, there is an Oedipus quality, a quality that determines his inevitable doom. To use a Greek term, we may say that it is his hybris which motivates the tragic action. But out of this seemingly tragic story, only a skit-like horn butting game, not a full-fledged tragedy, was produced. The dramatic possibility of this story could not be fully developed at that time.

No matter how we explain this discrepancy between the story's profound dramatic possibility and its naive theatrical realization before the Song dynasty, we must conclude that Yuan zaju could only be the product of a cultural environment when the techniques of narrative had fully developed.

The flower cannot grow from the seed alone. The historical position of a cultural form is not a product of chance operation. It is the hybridization of the narrative and the dramatic that created the first mature Chinese dramatic form. That is why two critical terms were often employed in traditional Chinese literary criticism to describe the dramatic and the narrative forms in a text; they are dai yan ti (代言體) and xu shi ti (敘事體), respectively.

Yuan zaju, being performed on a basically empty stage,

needed some conventions to set up the scene, and the narrative is the most effective convention for this purpose. Usually, before any dramatic interaction, there are characters stepping forward to recount the past events that led to the scene or to the point of the action. As such, Yuan zaju's characterization takes a different track from Western realistic drama. For example, a zaju villain will announce explicitly to the audience in his own words that he is a villain with a wicked heart and that he is going to do some harm to so and so, etc. Contemporary Western audiences familiar with the realistic tradition might regard such narrative devices defective, yet Bertolt Brecht found insights in them, and developed a dramaturgy heavily embedded with similar narrative conventions. In Towards a New Theatre, Robert Edmond Jones also voices his dislike of the "idea of exposition in the theatre." He regards this as a "symptom of backwardness."²⁶⁰

²⁶⁰ Robert Edmond Jones' opinion on the symptoms of realistic drama's backwardness is well worth an extensive quote: "Another symptom of backwardness, it seems to me, is our antiquated and childish idea of exposition in the theatre. It has got so that the first twenty minutes of any topical play are a guessing contest between the playwright and his audience. Somebody on the stage says, 'Oh, hello, Mazie!' and immediately we tumble to the fact that her name is 'Mazie'. Then, we are treated to a list of the necessary data of the play. We are allowed to 'horn in' on them, so to speak. Presently, when we are all worn out with this embarrassing display of the 'tag-you're-it' technique, the real drama begins. It is all so tiresome, so feeble, so creaky. Let's do away with the hocuspocus and get back to the theatre's age old, ageless, business of creating life. It is so easy, if you would just have a little courage. For example: why don't you have the

In terms of aesthetics, needless to say, besides the narrative and the dramatic, Yuan zaju must incorporate into its form the most important element in Chinese literature--the lyrical.

Lyric poetry has dominated Chinese poetry since the early days. In Chinese literature, epic poetry is rare, and narrative poetry is not prominent. Unlike other peoples in the world, who normally possess some epic poems of the heroic period, the Chinese people only have a handful of prose records of the mythical era, although the heroic quality of the mythical hero is comparable to that of Greek mythology. In the narrative poems that we know of, the lyrical element is distinctive, if not dominant.

Perhaps it would be useful to illustrate my point with a famous narrative poem of Tao Yuan Ming (陶淵明) (365?-427 A.D.), Yong Jing Ke (詠荊軻, Ode to Jing Ke the assassin). The original poem is written in the format of wuyanshi (五言詩), a poem with five characters (and five sounds, due to the monophonic nature of Chinese words) in a line. In Yong Jing Ke here are all together thirty lines, i.e., one hundred and fifty words. It tells the

leading character of your next play stand alone on a bare stage at the rise of the curtain and say right out, 'I'm Joe Dokes, age 34, married, with a couple of kids,' etc.; and he roll up his sleeves, and tread the boards, and begin to act. Or, to carry this line of thought even further, why not a play composed entirely of soliloquies, allowing an audience to build up the plot in its own mind? And so on." (Robert Edmond Jones, Towards a New Theatre, ed. Delbert Unruh (New York: Limelight Editions, 1992), 41.

story of the most famous assassin in Chinese history--Jing Ke--who was so daring as to go to the palace of the Qin Empire to assassinate the powerful emperor of Qin.

The poem starts with how the prince of the kingdom of Yin tried his best to recruit the best men to revenge the powerful Qin. It ends with the failure of the assassination and two lines of the poet's praise to the assassin. In this comparatively short poem, the poet recounts the complete action in chronological order. There are five distinctive parts: 1) recruitment of the assassin (4 lines), 2) farewell to the hero (16 lines), 3) entering the Qin Empire (4 lines), 4) the failure of the assassination (4 lines), and 5) commentary of the poet (2 lines). If a Western poet were to narrate this story, it is very likely that he would choose a late point of attack and emphasize, to him, the most interesting part--the assassination. But Tao Yuan Ming is a Chinese poet. To him, the most interesting part of the action is the farewell to the hero. In fact we might as well say that the whole point of the poem is to foreground the farewell scene because the poet uses sixteen lines for it, which is more than all the other parts added together.

It is very clear that the purpose of this narrative poem is to create the context for the lyrical lines in the farewell scene. This is typical of other Chinese narrative poems. This also gives us an insight for understanding Yuan zaju.

The dramatic, the narrative, and the lyrical are the three major aspects of Yuan zaju. Therefore, in order to understand the organic structure of a Yuan zaju, we need to, besides analyzing the action of the drama, look at the lyrical and the narrative elements. We need to see how the playwright sets up the scene by different narrative conventions derived from the tradition of story-telling of the Song Dynasty, and how the playwright liberates the passion of the character by giving the character beautifully written poetic lines to sing.

Besides the three organic elements, there are also "inorganic" parts in Yuan zaju, which, in terms of the dramatic action, are dispensable. These "inorganic" parts are deliberately inserted between the scenes to draw the audience's attention. They are called chake dahun (插科打諢), impromptu comic gestures and remarks. Pragmatically, these comic skits and interludes were indispensable because of the extremely noisy performance conditions. Chake dahun is also important in the study of theatre history because some of the skits and standardized interludes might be vestiges of the entertaining Song zaju (宋雜劇) or Jin yuanben (金院本).

As a form of entertainment for city dwellers, Yuan zaju naturally obeys the laws of popular culture. It included in its structure comic skits, acrobatics, and dance to draw attention. It also embedded in its structure redundant dialogue to explain the plot to the audience.

This is chake dahun. They are vestiges from the Song zaju (or even Han hundred games) serving the practical function of drawing attention.

For the present study, a study of the tragic dimensions of Yuan zaju, chake dahun is not essential. In analyzing the dramatic structure and the action of the play, we have taken them away, for they are not an organic part of the drama.

Appendix 3: The Tragic Sense of Life: East and West

East and West, the finitude of human life and the inevitability of human death have drawn thinkers' ponderations. "You cannot step into the same river twice," says the Greek philosopher Herititus; "While standing by a river, the Master [Confucius] said, 'What passes away is, perhaps, like this. Day and night it never lets up.'"²⁶¹

In the early twentieth-century, the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno expounded the concept of the tragic sense of life. To him, the most fundamental contradiction that frustrates humanity was man's desire for longevity and his awareness of human finitude. Human existence, thus, is tragic as long as human beings have the basic faculties of desire and rational reasoning.

Unamuno phrases his arguments in a very logically way. According to him, the starting point of any individual reflection of existence is the problem of destiny: "If I do not die, what is my destiny? and if I die, then nothing has any meaning for me."²⁶² To a man who both reflects on the meaning of life and senses life's passage, there are three answers to the questions:

(a) I know that I shall die utterly, and then irremediable despair, or (b) I know that I shall not die utterly, and then resignation, or (c) I cannot know either one or the other, and then resignation in despair or despair in resignation, a

²⁶¹ Confucius, The Analects IX: 17, trans. D. C. Lau (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1979), 98.

²⁶² Miguel de Unamuno, Tragic Sense of Life, 33.

desperate resignation or a resigned despair, and hence conflict.²⁶³

According to Unamuno, there is no way to transcend this tragic sense of life. Man can only embrace it with the sense of universal love--a love that consists of sympathy and a consciousness of looking inward.²⁶⁴

Unamuno's idea of the tragic sense of life is stated almost verbatim in a Chinese philosopher's work: "Our lives are finite, but knowledge is infinite. To follow the infinite by means of the finite is perilous; thus those who still invent knowledge will only perish."²⁶⁵ The philosopher, who lived around the same time as Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), is Zhuang Zi (c.369-c.286 B.C.), the second most important thinker of Taoism.

Like Unamuno, Zhuang Zi also aware the finitude and limitation of human life, being a Taoist, however, he differs from Unamuno in that he advises man to follow nature's way, instead of to act against it. That is why:

If you are doing good, get away from fame; if you are doing ill, get away from punishment. Practice meditation constantly, and preserve your body,

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Miguel de Unamuno, Tragic Sense of Life, 148-149.

²⁶⁵ Zhuang Zi, "Mastery of Nurturing Life," in Thomas Cleary trans. The Essential Tao: An Initiation into the Heart of Taoism through the Authentic Tao Te Ching and the Inner Teachings of Chuang-tzu (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 1993), 81.

prolong your life, feed your parent, and live out your years.²⁶⁶

為善無近名，為惡無近刑，緣督以為經；可以保身，可以全生；可以養親，可以盡年。

While Unamuno suggests that man may, like Don Quixote, use love and faith to embrace the tragic sense of life, Zhuang Zi asks a Taoist follower to retreat from worldly affairs. Unamuno lives with the tragic sense of life; Zhuang Zi transcends it. The most famous passage to illustrate this attitude is in the story of "Zhuang Zhou Meng Die (莊周夢蝶)," which is recorded in the metaphysical treatise Qi Wu Lun (齊物論, On equalizing things):

Once Chuang Chou [Zhuang Zi] dreamed he was a butterfly. He was happy as a butterfly, enjoying himself and going where he wanted. He did not know he was Chou. Suddenly he awoke, whereupon he was startled to find he was Chou. He didn't know whether Chou had dreamed he was a butterfly, or if a butterfly were dreaming it was Chou. But as Chou and the butterfly, there must be a distinction. This is called the transformation of beings.²⁶⁷

昔者莊周夢為胡蝶，栩栩然胡蝶也。自喻適志與！不知周也。俄然覺，則蘧蘧然周也。不知周之夢為胡蝶與？胡蝶之夢為周與？周與胡蝶，則必有分矣。此之謂物化。

²⁶⁶ These lines, which come immediately after the above citation, are translated by the author, because Thomas Cleary's translation is unsatisfactory.

²⁶⁷ Zhuang Zi, "On Equalizing Things," in Thomas Cleary trans. The Essential Tao, 80. This story is important both in Chinese thought and in Chinese drama. The interplay between dream and life is a very important motif in Yuan zaju and Ming dynasty chuangqi (dramatic romance).

Both Unamuno and Zhuang Zi sees the importance of equalizing things. "The feeling that Nature is a society has taken hold of me hundreds of times in walking through the woods, possessed with a sense of solidarity with the oaks, a sense of their dim awareness of my presence," says Unamuno.²⁶⁸ "Heaven and Earth live together with me, everything in the universe equalized with me," says Zhuang Zi.²⁶⁹

There is one distinctive difference between the two philosophers: Unamuno humanized things; Zhuang Zi dehumanized man. That is why Unamuno embraces but does not transcend the tragic sense of life, while Zhuang Zi is aware of human limitation but transcends it by disregarding it and by calling for the human returning to the Tao through the equalization of things.

The polarity these two attitudes created is related to that between the Buddhist concepts of bei-zeng (悲增) and zi-zeng (智增), the sympathetic and the rationalistic modes of praxis, respectively. Zi-zeng is to cut away from any source of psychological disturbance as soon as possible, and retreat to Buddhism from worldly affairs. On the other hand, bei-zeng implies a discrepancy between understanding and practice. Although one is aware of all the psychological disturbances worldly affairs will give

²⁶⁸ Unamuno, 150.

²⁶⁹ Zhuang Zi, Qi Wu Lun (On equalizing things).

him, he remains involved with people in order to practice his bei-min (悲憫), to pity the sufferings of mankind.²⁷⁰

The idea of zi-zeng is comparable to Schopenhauer's idea of tragic resignation. But the metaphysical assumption is different. Buddhism strives towards the original phase of life (ben-xiang, 本相); Schopenhauer points out the human will's recognition of humanity's limitation. In this respect, Buddhism is more optimistic. That is why a Buddhist monk, a chuiaren (出家人), a man who retreats from worldly affairs, cannot be a Schopenhauerian. He is a man of illumination rather than resignation.

As for the idea of bei-zeng, it relates to the tragic in the sense that it involves the sympathy for humanity. The practitioner remains in the rotten world in order to illuminate others. He is practising good. Therefore, even though he may encounter physical hardships and humiliations, he would not regard them as sufferings. Thus, physical pains and psychological hardships are transcended. They are not sufferings.

In Buddhism, being born, growing old, getting sick, and approaching death are all sufferings that humanity cannot surpass. Yet, as one will be transfigured into another form, either human, animate, or inhuman, one should forget his present sufferings by keeping on

²⁷⁰ Hua Yin Jing (The scripture of Hua Yin)

practising good deeds. "To good people, there will be good returns; to wicked people, ill returns." (善有善報，惡有惡報。) This Buddhist idea prevails among Chinese.

Hence, although both the Taoist and the Buddhist have a tragic sense regarding human life--they are both aware of human limitations and sufferings--their thoughts are non-tragic, in the sense that they both do not believe in the mystery of fate. In this respect, Karl Jaspers' remark in Tragedy is not Enough is understandable:

No such tragic outlook develops wherever man succeeds both in achieving a harmonious interpretation of the universe and in actually living in accord with it. That is to a great extent what happened in ancient, especially in Pre-Buddhist, China. In such a civilization, all misery, unhappiness, and evil are merely temporary disturbances which never need occur. There is no horror, rejection, or justification of the ways of this world--no indictment, only lament. Man is not torn in desperation: he suffers and even dies with composure. There are no hopeless entanglements, no dark frustrations; all is basically clear, beautiful, and true. To be sure, terror and horror are part of experience and are as familiar to this civilization as to those civilizations awakened to an awareness of the tragic. Yet serenity remains the dominant mood of life; there is no struggle, no defiance. A deep awareness of the past connects man with the ancient foundation of all things. What man seek here is not any kind of historical movement, but rather the ever-new reestablishment of an eternal reality that is both orderly and good. Wherever the tragic sense appears, something extraordinary is lost: the feeling of security without the shadow of tragedy, a natural and sublime humanity, a sense of being at home in this world, and a wealth of concrete insights--all of which were real for the Chinese at one time. The relaxed and serene face of the Chinese still contrasts with the tense and self-conscious expression of Western man.²⁷¹

Jaspers' remarks, though beautifully written, are not profound. He starts and ends in only the ideological sphere. His arguments does not have a dialectic. He would not understand, for example, why Buddhism, a system that does not strive for scientific knowledge, may, surprisingly, incorporate science into its metaphysics.

The Chinese philosopher Mao Zong San explains this very well in Zhongguo Zhexue Shijiu Jiang (中國哲學十九講, Nineteen lectures on Chinese philosophy). According to him, Buddhism regards every form as emptiness in its original phase and ultimate phase; it does not disregard form, it dissolves form. It does not disregard form because some forms have senses and feelings. As Buddha has the da bei xin (大悲心, the grand sympathetic heart, he would not disregard human sufferings. In order to tu zhong sheng (渡眾生, to illuminate all living creatures, he must not retreat entirely from the world. As he must not retreat entirely from the world, he must not disregard human knowledge. That is why (in the sense of li (理), religious transcendental reasoning, not in the sense of causality) science is also a necessity in Buddhism.²⁷²

This argument gives us hints to understand the

²⁷¹ Karl Jaspers, Tragedy is not Enough, translated by Harald A. T. Reiche, Harry T. Moore and Darle W. Deutsch, (Archon Books, 1969), 32-33.

²⁷² Mao Zong San, Zhongguo Zhexue Shijiu Jiang (Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy) (Taipei, Taiwan: Xuesheng Shudian, 1993), 278.

possibility of the tragic form in a non-tragic system of thought. In bei-zeng, the sympathetic mode of Buddhist praxis, ideally the practitioner himself should transcend physical pain and psychological hardship. Yet, this transcendence is only the product of the handful of true practitioners. To those who still has a man's passion, the praxis of bei-zeng may be a suffering. When we see a Buddhist monk burns himself to remonstrate the people for their declining morality, or to protest against a oppressing colonial ruler, do we not shed tear? To the monk, his act is not an act of suffering, to the people, however, it is. Suffering, thus, lies in the subjective sphere.

Similarly, although Christian theology and tragic thought are not compatible in their metaphysics, there can be feeling of the tragic in a Christian, because a Christian is also a mortal. Though he believes he is created by God, he knows very well that he is living in the world. As a human being, he is vulnerable to human passions. If he experiences too much human sufferings, then his flipping between faith and doubt again becomes his source of suffering. Faith is by nature absolute. Yet as a human being, he cannot stand the hardships that disturb him. "It is God's test?" "Why test?" "Is it necessary?" etc. These are unanswerable questions. They are "tragic doubt." Kierkegaard expounds this notion thoroughly in Fear and Trembling when he retells Abraham's

story. He opens up a new dimension of philosophical reflection: the problem of existence under a doubt of one's own belief.

To a non-Christian, however, Abraham's situation is not tragic. Because a non-Christian first of all does not believe in God. He would not perceive faith's necessity.

The tragic, thus, is something perceived. If there is no recognition, then there is no tragedy. This is both true for the character involved in the tragedy and for the audience viewing the performance.²⁷³

²⁷³ Perhaps I should illustrate this crucial point with one example. At the beginning of the Oedipus Rex, the audience knows very well what is going to happen to Oedipus and it knows very well also that Oedipus, the king, does not know. This dramatic irony creates a tension between the fictional world and the real world. The tension increases as the action of the play proceeds. Until, finally, the irony breaks when Oedipus recognizes that the cause of the plague is he himself because he has murdered his father and married his mother. Before the recognition scene, two dominant emotions prevail in the audience's mind: fear and hope. The audience fears that Oedipus will meet his own downfall; it hopes that he will stop his search. If we view the play in this light, we will understand the function of Teiresais and Jocaste. After the recognition scene, the audience's fear shifts to pity. But this pity is not just a sympathy of the fate of Oedipus, or else the audience should have this emotion at the beginning of the play. This piteous emotion is emphatic. The audience shares the moment of recognition with Oedipus. It is the recreation of the tragic moment on stage that arouses piteous emotion. This moment is the key, or the knot, of the tragedy. After this knot, when the being of the tragic hero has been destroyed (although his life may not be), a new expectation springs in the audience's mind. It wants to see how the tragic hero regains his ontological integrity after the destruction. When the tragic hero makes his fate his own, when he continues to act against all odds to regain his own dignity and integrity, the audience experiences the tragic emotions of fear and pity, which eventually leads to a catharsis. It is as if the spirit of the tragic hero has

All the ontological reflections on tragedy are in fact subjective perceptions of the thinkers. This explains why there are so many tragic theories in human history. It is not that some are correct and some are wrong but that each thinker interprets the tragic differently.

There are different interpretations of the tragic Idea (assuming that there is only "one" Idea) because there are different perceptions of the tragic Form (or forms). Human perception is historical, each age sees the tragic in a new light; human perception is also cultural, different nations see the tragic differently. These two notions give us hints to a more universal understanding of the tragic.

entered the audience members' bodies and has dissolved their power of practical reasoning.

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