

Emulation through Readaptation in Yüan and Early Ming *Tsa-Chü*

The history of Chinese literature is still bedeviled by the dynastic fallacy. We tend to associate a specific genre of literature with a specific dynasty even though it may have originated well before the founding of that dynasty and continued to flourish for a long time after its demise. A case in point is the body of texts usually referred to as Yüan *tsa-chü* 元雜劇. The Mongol Yüan dynasty lasted from 1260 to 1368, but *tsa-chü* may well have come into being as a definite dramatic form by the middle of the thirteenth century, and it certainly continued to be the main theatrical genre in northern China well into the early sixteenth century. The heyday of *tsa-chü* did not neatly coincide with the lifespan of a political regime; instead of the century of Yüan rule, it lasted for about two centuries, from around 1250 to around 1450. Of course, the character of *tsa-chü* written during this period continued to change as time went by, but there is no sudden sharp break accompanying the dynastic transition from Yüan to Ming 明. One reason for the remarkable longevity of *tsa-chü* as a successful theatrical form must have been the fierce competitive spirit among playwrights. Emulation took many forms, and was an important factor in the ongoing transformation of the *tsa-chü* tradition.

One of the great and perennial attractions of *tsa-chü* that are preserved from the Yüan and early Ming dynasties is the diversity of subject matter. *Tsa-chü* authors took their materials from national history, religious legend, and contemporary social life. The characters they fashioned ranged from emperors and concubines, generals and ministers to immortals, dragons, and demons, and to students, courtesans, merchants, farmers, soldiers, beggars, and crooks. Various scholars have attempted to bring order into his confusing variety by classifying plays according to subject matter. None of these schemes can be deemed completely successful; by trying to be all-inclusive they contain loose ends.¹ However, it cannot be denied that various groups

¹The earliest classification of the subject materials of *tsa-chü* is found in Chu Ch'üan 朱權, *T'ai-ho cheng-yin p'u* 太和正音譜, in vol. 3 of Chung-kuo hsi-ch'ü yen-chiu yüan 中國戲曲研究院, comp., *Chung-kuo ku-tien hsi-ch'ü lun-chu chi-ch'eng* 中國古典戲曲論著集成 (Peking: Chung-kuo hsi-ch'ü ch'u-pan she, 1959), p. 24, "Tsa-chü shih-erh k'o" 雜劇十二科. The most detailed modern classification of *tsa-chü* according to subject materials is found in Lo Chin-t'ang

of *tsa-chü* do belong together, because the plays in such a group either feature the same characters or show a striking similarity in plot. In the first case, playwrights attempted to achieve novelty by showing well-known characters in new adventures. In the second case, the authors tried to captivate the audience by showing new characters in a well-known and popular situation. *Tsa-chü* that constitute a group because they share characters are based, as a rule, on such great popular story cycles as the Three Kingdoms saga or the Water Margin story. The clearest examples of *tsa-chü* showing a shared plot are the deliverance plays, in which an immortal makes an initially unwilling convert leave the family, and those romantic plays in which a courtesan spurns a merchant's money out of love for a poor student. The courtroom dramas present a dilemma to the dichotomy outlined above. On the one hand most of them share Pao Cheng 包拯 as the honest judge and may be considered as a series of his adventures; on the other hand, most of them demonstrate striking similarities in plot.

Many of these thematic groups of *tsa-chü* have received monographic treatment in recent years, allowing one a better appreciation of the measure of originality involved in each case. It may not always be clear which playwright is imitating whom, but it is clear that each and every author tried to outdo his predecessor by details of plot or characterization.

The early catalogues of *tsa-chü* — *Lu-kuei pu* 錄鬼簿, *Lu-kuei pu hsü-pien* 錄鬼簿續編, and *T'ai-ho cheng-yin p'u* 太和正音譜 — inform us that playwrights also often tried to outdo each other not only by showing well-known characters in a new situation or by showing new characters in a well-known situation, but also by showing again well-known characters in the same well-known situation, in other words, by reworking a story already dramatized in *tsa-chü* form by previous authors.² A glance at the early catalogues shows that many stories were not treated just once or twice, but even more times by different authors. Of course one should be careful; titles that suggest an identical content may well have dealt with barely overlapping episodes from a story cycle, and it is also quite plausible that in a number of cases one and the same play has been attributed under an identical or slightly

changed title to two or more authors. But even with such allowances, there can be no doubt about the popularity of adaptation and readaptation among playwrights. This is not the place to present a full list of all stories that were treated twice or more in *tsa-chü* form during the Yüan and early Ming, but to judge from the number of adaptations, both playwrights and their public were much attracted by tales of love and revenge.

We start with revenge. The early catalogues list numerous adaptations both of the saga of Wu Tzu-hsü 伍子胥 and his revenge on the kings of Ch'u 楚, and of the tale of Han Hsin's 韓信 rise to glory and his fall. As for love, we have numerous adaptations each of the tragic love of emperor Yüan 元 of the Han for Wang Chao-chün 王昭君 and of emperor Hsüan-tsung 玄宗 of the T'ang for Yang Kuei-fei 楊貴妃. The elopement of the rich young widow Cho Wen-chün 卓文君 with the dashing poet Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju 司馬相如 was also adapted several times, as was the romance of the student Shuang Chien 雙漸 and the courtesan Su Hsiao-ch'ing 蘇小卿, who left the merchant her mother had arranged for her to marry. Some stories came under demand for adaptation only at a specific date: *Chiao Hung chi* 嬌紅記, a long tale in classical Chinese by a late Sung/early Yüan author, was repeatedly dramatized by early Ming authors, as was the legend of Liu Ch'en's 劉晨 and Juan Chao's 阮肇 meeting with two immortal maidens in the Tien-t'ai 天台 mountains.³

The early catalogues note the adaptation of the same materials by different authors only if two *tsa-chü* have identical titles.⁴ *T'ai-ho cheng-yin p'u* is most complete and systematic in this respect. Whenever it lists an identical title under two authors, it notes under each title *erh-pen* 二本 (two versions). *Lu-kuei pu* is far less complete and systematic in this respect. A title identical to one already listed may be followed by the legend *tz'u-pen* 次本 (second version). In a few cases the reader is referred forward to a "second version" by a different author. If a second occurrence of a title refers to a *tsa-chü* that assigned its only singing role to the female lead, then it may be annotated as a *tan-pen* 旦本 (female lead version), implying, as is generally assumed, that the title when it occurred first referred to a version in which the singing role was assigned to the male lead, a *mo-pen* 末本 (male lead

羅錦堂, *Hsien-ts'un Yüan-jen tsa-chü pen-shih k'ao* 現存元人雜劇本事考 (Taipei, 1960), pp. 419-30. Also see Chung-wen Shih, *The Golden Age of Yüan Drama: Yüan Tsa-chü* (Princeton: Princeton U.P., 1976), pp. 68-112: "Themes."

² The popularity of reworking materials that had been dealt with before by others is pointed out by Yen Tun-i 嚴教易 in his *Yüan-chü chen-i* 元劇辭疑 (Peking: Chung-hua shu-chü, 1960), pp. 745-48. Writing a new play on an earlier subject should be distinguished from the even more pervasive phenomenon of revising existing plays. Yen argues that many *tsa-chü* by Yüan authors have reached us in versions that have been drastically rewritten by Ming hands.

³ In both cases the early catalogues record numerous early Ming adaptations against one early Yüan version; the preserved versions date from the early Ming.

⁴ For surveys and discussions of double listings of titles, see Sun K'ai-ti 孫楷第, "Shih Lu kuei pu so-wei tz'u-pen" 釋錄鬼簿所謂次本, in his *Ts'ang-chou chi* 滄州集 (Peking, 1965), pp. 399-405; Chao Ching-shen 趙景深, "Yüan ch'ü ti erh-pen" 元曲的二本, in his *Tu-ch'ü sui-pi* 讀曲隨筆 (Shanghai, 1936), pp. 63-66; and Yoshikawa Kōjirō 吉川幸次郎, *Gen zatsugeki kenkyū* 元雜劇研究, in vol. 4 of *Yoshikawa Kōjirō zenshū* (Tokyo, 1968), pp. 209-11.

version). However, it is extremely rare to find one of two identical titles followed by the annotation *mo-pen*. In one case, a title is followed by the information *tan-mo-pen* 旦末本, which, if our text is correct, could mean that in the *tsa-chü* concerned the song suites were alternately assigned to the female lead and the male lead.⁵ The legend *mo-tan l'ou-che* 末旦頭折, which occurs once, might only mean that the first song suite, assigned to the female lead, was preceded by a wedge, assigned to the male lead.⁶ Occasionally the play titles themselves draw attention to the fact that the main singing role has been assigned to either the male lead or the female lead. For example, our catalogues record both the anonymous *Huo-lang tan* 貨郎旦 (*The Pedlar: A Female Lead*), which has been preserved, and a *Huo-lang mo-ni* 貨郎末泥 (*The Pedlar: A Male Lead*) by Wu Ch'ang-ling 吳昌齡, which has been lost.

In three cases, *Lu-kuei pu* distinguishes the play referred to by the second occurrence of a title by specifying the rhyme category used in one of the acts (in one of the cases it explicitly refers to the fourth act).⁷ In one case, it distinguishes a second version by calling it *Kan-chou che* 甘洲者,⁸ which must mean that this *tsa-chü* was one of the few plays in which the opening song of its first suite was not *Tien Chiang-ch'un* 點絳脣 but *Pa-sheng kan-chou* 八聲甘洲. One title by Chao Kung-fu 趙公輔, who hailed from P'ing-yang in Shansi, is followed by the legend *pien-pen* 汴本.⁹ It has been suggested that this is a scribal error for *tz'u-pen*,¹⁰ but it could also mean the "K'ai-feng version," as opposed to the version that may have been popular in the capital Ta-tu and was composed by Li Wen-wei 李文蔚 from Chen-ting.

At least in one case a play is distinguished from another work on the same subject by reference to the actor who performed in it: while Cheng Te-hui 鄭德輝 in his (preserved) *Fu Ch'eng-wang Chou kung she cheng* 輔成王周公攝政 (*Supporting King Ch'eng the Duke of Chou Acts as Regent*) and Chin Jen-chieh 金仁傑 (d. 1330) in his (lost) *Chou-kung Tan pao tzu she ch'ao* 周公旦抱子設朝 (*The Duke of Chou Tan Holds Court Carrying the Infant in his Arms*) both deal with the regency of the Duke of Chou, the latter title is followed by the legend *Hsi-ch'un-lai an* 喜春來按, which has been explained as "performed by Hsi-ch'un-lai."¹¹ Both Chin Jen-chieh and K'ung Wen-ch'ing

孔文卿 (1260-1341) composed a play on the death of Yüeh Fei entitled *Tung-ch'uang shih-fan* 東窗事犯 (*The Crime at the Eastern Window*); in the early catalogues K'ung's title is followed by a reference to the famous early fourteenth-century actor Yang Chü-erh 楊駒兒. The reference is worded differently in the various versions of the *Lu-kuei pu* but at least establishes a link between this play and a named performer.¹² In one case, the compiler of *Lu-kuei pu* points out that two plays with a different title by Li Shou-ch'ing have an identical plot (*kuan-mu* 關目).¹³ This would appear to be the only case from the period 1250-1450 in which one and the same author readapted materials he had already treated before. However, the late Ming author Ling Meng-ch'ü 凌濛初 in fact wrote three *tsa-chü* (two of which have been preserved) inspired by the same T'ang dynasty tale.¹⁴

As a rule, only one of the two or more *tsa-chü* treatments of the same material has come down to us. Quite often, moreover, none of the versions has been preserved: in the case of the adaptations of the immensely popular romance of Shuang Chien and Su Hsiao-ch'ing we only have the text of a few song suites. This need not surprise us. Subjects of topical interest may well have created quite a stir for some time to be quickly forgotten, and in the case of consistently popular subjects the theatrically most effective play will eventually have supplanted all other versions. This has resulted in the fact that, while there exists a wealth of materials for the study of the phenomenon of imitation in *tsa-chü* writing, we have only a few texts that allow us to study in detail which strategies and techniques Yüan and early Ming playwrights employed in readapting materials already treated by other authors.

Among the one hundred *tsa-chü* in the collection *Yüan-ch'ü hs'üan* 元曲選, we have just one case of readaptation: the early Ming playwright Ku Tzu-ching's 谷子敬 *Ch'eng-nan liu* 城南柳 (*The Willow South of the City Wall*) treated the legend of Lü Tung-pin's 呂洞賓 deliverance of a willow tree during his visits to Yüeh-yang Tower, a story dramatized earlier by none less than Ma Chih-yüan 馬致遠 in his *Yüeh-yang lou* 岳陽樓 (*Yüeh-yang Tower*). One more case is provided in *Yüan-ch'ü hs'üan wai-pien* 元曲選

¹² Chung, *Lu-kuei pu*, p. 117 and pp. 202-3, n. 592. The actor Yang Chü-erh was the father of the actress Yang Mai-nu 楊買奴; around 1320 in Hangchow he enjoyed the patronage of Kuan Yün-shih 貫雲石 (1286-1324). See Yen, *Yüan-chü*, pp. 491-93, and Richard J. Lynn, *Kuan Yün-shih*, Twayne's World Authors Series 562 (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980), pp. 46-47.

¹³ Chung, *Lu-kuei pu*, p. 111.

¹⁴ Ling Meng-ch'ü wrote three *tsa-chü* inspired by Tu Kuang-t'ing's 杜光庭 tale *Ch'iu-jan-k'o chuan* 虬髯客傳. These are *Ch'iu-jan-weng* 虬髯翁, which has been preserved and in which the singing role is assigned to the curly-bearded stranger; *Mang tso p'ei* 莽擇配, which has also been preserved and in which the singing part is assigned to Hung-fu; and a third play in which the singing role was given to Li Ching but has been lost.

⁵ Chung Ssu-ch'eng 鍾嗣成, *Lu-kuei pu* 錄鬼簿, in vol. 2 of *Chung-kuo ku-tien hsi-ch'ü lun-chü chi-ch'eng*, p. 111, n. 424 (p. 183).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 119. ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109; p. 109, n. 350 (p. 174); p. 112, n. 435 (p. 184).

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 108, n. 284 (p. 167). ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁰ Fu Hsi-hua 傅惜華, *Yüan-tai tsa-chü ch'üan-mu* 元代雜劇全目 (Peking: Tso-chia ch'u-pan she, 1957), p. 142.

¹¹ Chung, *Lu-kuei pu*, p. 120. Chin Jen-chieh wrote many readaptations: at least five of his nine titles may be so classified, as has been pointed out by Yen, *Yüan-chü*, pp. 749-50.

外編: both Fei T'ang-ch'en's 費唐臣 *Pien Huang-chou* 貶黃周 (*Banished to Huang-chou*) and the anonymous *Tsui-hsieh Ch'ih-pi-fu* 醉寫赤壁賦 (*Writing the Red Cliff Rhapsody while Drunk*) treat the incident of Su Shih's 蘇軾 banishment to Huang-chou and his eventual recall. When we include early Ming works our sample becomes somewhat enlarged. Two of the many *tsa-chü* versions of the romance of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Cho Wen-chün have been preserved: *Cho Wen-chün* by Chu Ch'üan 朱權 (1378-1448) and the anonymous *T'ich'iao chi* 題橋記 (*The Inscription on the Bridge*). The Yüan-dynasty play *Ch'i Ying Pu* 氣英布 (*The Enraged Ying Pu*), which may have been written by Shang Chung-hsien 尚仲賢, has a counterpart in the anonymous *P'ien Ying Pu* 騙英布 (*The Deceived Ying Pu*); both plays deal with Sui Ho's 隨何 successful scheme to make Ying Pu switch his allegiance from Hsiang Yü 項羽 to Liu Pang 劉邦, and Ying Pu's subsequent reception at the Han court.

The dramatic oeuvre of Chu Yu-tun 朱有燾 (1379-1439) is especially important for our purpose. Among his thirty-one *tsa-chü* we find many imitations and readaptations.¹⁵ In the latter case, some of the original plays that he intended to outdo have been preserved. Chu Yu-tun's first play, *Ch'en-kou-yüeh* 辰鈎月 (*The Mercurial Moon*) of 1404, was intended to improve upon Wu Ch'ang-ling's play *Chang T'ien-shih* 張天師 (*Heavenly Master Chang*). His *Ch'ü-chiang-ch'ih* 曲江池 (*Serpentine Pond*) of 1409, as had Shih Chün-pao's 石君寶 *tsa-chü* of the same title, treats the romance of Cheng Yüan-ho 鄭元和 and the courtesan Li Wa 李娃, inspired by the shortened version of the T'ang-dynasty tale *Li Wa chuan* 李娃傳 by Pai Hsing-chien 白行簡 (775-826). It is conceivable that his *Chi-mu ta-hsien* 繼母大賢 (*A Stepmother's Virtue*) of 1434 was actually written to improve on the play *Hu-tieh meng* 蝴蝶夢 (*Butterfly Dream*).¹⁶

¹⁵ Chu Yu-tun's penchant for imitation and readaptation was already noted in the sixteenth century by Kao Ju 高儒 in his *Pai-ch'uan shu-chih* 百川書志; see Kao Ju et al., eds., *Pai-ch'uan shu-chih Ku-chün shu-k'o* 百川書志古今書刻 (Shanghai: Ku-tien wen-hsüeh, 1957). For detailed discussions of Chu Yu-tun's plays and their sources, see Tseng Yung-i 曾永義, "Chou Hsien-wang chi ch'i Ch'eng-chai tsa-chü" 周憲王及其誠齋雜劇, part 1, in *Ku-kung t'u-shu chi-k'an* 古宮園書集刊 2.2 (1971), pp. 47-66, and part 2 in *ibid.* 2.3 (1972), pp. 39-58; and W. L. Idema, *The Dramatic Oeuvre of Chu Yu-tun (1379-1439)* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985).

¹⁶ Chu Yu-tun refers to an earlier *tsa-chü* entitled *Chi-mu ta-hsien* in the preface to his own work, and such a title is also listed among the anonymous plays in the catalogue included by Chu Ch'üan in his *T'ai-ho cheng-yin p'u*. However, the correspondences between Chu's *Chi-mu ta-hsien* and *Hu-tieh-meng* are so striking that one suspects that actually in these cases *Hu-tieh-meng* may have been referred to by an alternative title. This hypothesis is perhaps weakened by the fact that the *T'ai-ho cheng-yin p'u* catalogue also lists the short title *Hu-tieh-meng*. For a full translation of Chu Yu-tun's preface, see W. L. Idema, "Chu Yu-tun as a Theorist of Drama," in R. P. Kramers, ed., *China: Continuity and Change* (Zürich: European Association of Chinese Studies, 1982), p. 248.

Chu Yu-tun has left us his defense of readaptation. In the preface to the play *T'uan-yüan meng* 團圓夢 (*A Dream of Reunion*) of 1433 he narrates how a soldier's wife in Chi-ning had hanged herself after her husband's death in order to remain loyal to him, and he continues:

Afterwards I also obtained a *tsa-chü* entitled *T'ung-kuan chi* 同棺記 (*The Shared Coffin*), written about [the soldier's wife] by a gentleman from Chi-ning. It is my opinion that everyone is free to display his finest abilities in texts that admonish to goodness, and to set them to music so as to please the hearts of others. Thus, I have inquired into the facts of the case and wielding the brush I "poured out my thoughts." I too have composed a play, entitled *Chaste Consort Chao: After Death a Dream of Reunion*. The plot in it is well thought out, the words of the lyrics are well ordered, and it does completely delineate the demeanor of the Chaste Consort.¹⁷

In other words, he states the freedom of every author to try his hand at subjects dealt with by others, and claims in this instance to have outdone his predecessor in plot and characterization, and in the quality of his songs. Unfortunately, *T'ung-kuan chi* is not available for comparison.¹⁸

Our still very limited sample may be further enlarged if we take into account those *hua-pen* 話本 that with a fair degree of probability may be viewed as retellings of *tsa-chü*. The collection of *hua-pen* nowadays known as *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen* 清平山堂話本, published by Hung P'ien 洪楗 in about the middle of the sixteenth century, contains a number of texts that in view of various peculiarities most likely derive from lost *tsa-chü*. In some cases other *tsa-chü* on the same subject have been preserved. Patrick Hanan has repeatedly suggested that the vernacular story *Ho-t'ung wen-tzu chi* 合同文字記 (*The Contract*) is based on a lost *tsa-chü* on the same subject as that of the preserved anonymous play *Ho-t'ung wen-tzu*.¹⁹ Elsewhere I have argued that the story *Ssu-sheng-chiao Fan Chang chi-shu* 死生交范張雞黍 (*Friendship in Life and Death: Fan and Chang's Chicken and Millet*) must have been based on a lost *tsa-chü* on the same subject as that of Kung T'ien-t'ing's 宮天挺 *tsa-chü* of the same title. The story *Feng-yüeh Jui-hsien-t'ing* 風月瑞仙亭 (*Breeze and*

¹⁷ Chu Yu-tun, *Hsin-pien Chao Chen-i shen-hou t'uan-yüan-meng* 新編趙貞姬身後團圓夢 (original woodblock edn.; Peking Library collection), preface.

¹⁸ This lost *tsa-chü* is not listed in Fu Hsi-hua, *Ming-tai tsa-chü ch'üan-mu* 明代雜劇全目 (Peking: Tso-chia ch'u-pan she, 1958).

¹⁹ Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Short Story: Studies in Dating, Authorship, and Composition*, Harvard-Yenching Monograph Series 21 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard U.P., 1973), pp. 135-39: "Stories Adapted from the Drama."

Moonlight in the Pavillion of Auspicious Immortals) may very well be a summary of T'ang Shih's 湯式 lost play of the same title, one of the many adaptations of the romance of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Cho Wen-chün.²⁰

Finally, I would like to draw attention to the case of *Ts'o li-shen* 錯立身 (*Choosing the Wrong Career*). This title refers to the story of the son of a noble Jurchen family who out of love for an actress runs away from home, marries her, and joins her company as an actor. Two *tsa-chü* carrying this title are listed in the early catalogues, but both have been lost. However, we have both an adaptation of this story as a *hsi-wen* 戲文 that clearly derives from a *tsa-chü* (one of three early *hsi-wen* preserved in a stray volume of the *Yung-lo ta-tien* 永樂大典), and a close imitation as a *tsa-chü*, in which the actress has become a *chu-kung-tiao* 諸宮調 singer. This *tsa-chü* imitation is Shih Chün-pao's *Tzu-yün-t'ing* 紫雲庭 (*Courtyard of Purple Clouds*), which has only been preserved in a Yüan edition.²¹

Tsa-chü is by its very nature an asymmetrical form. Because basically only one role is allowed to sing and so is enabled to give full expression to its character's views and feelings, the other party in the dramatic conflict remains underexposed. One of the most obvious strategies in the readaptation of materials already dealt with by another playwright would therefore be to switch the singing role from one party in the dramatic conflict to the other. Depending upon the plot, such a switch might also be one from male lead to female lead or vice versa. However, not all adapters opted for this device. In Ku Tzu-ching's *Ch'eng-nan liu* the singing role is assigned to Lü Tung-pin, just as in Ma Chih-yüan's *Yüeh-yang lou*.

Both plays dramatize Lü Tung-pin's deliverance of a willow tree. The willow, in order to be delivered, has first to be reborn in human shape. Accordingly, both plays devote their first act to a description of Lü's first visit to the wine shop in Yüeh-yang Tower. In Ma Chih-yüan's *tsa-chü*, Lü Tung-pin is visited after nightfall by the willow sprite, who is informed by Lü that he will be reborn in human shape to be delivered after thirty years. Ku prefixes his first act with a wedge, in which Lü Tung-pin initially enables the willow to become a sprite. In Ku's first act Lü pawns his sword to the

innkeeper to buy wine. After nightfall Lü has a meeting with the willow sprite and leaves. When the innkeeper comes upstairs he is frightened by the willow sprite and hits him with Lü's sword, only to find a piece of wood.

Ma Chih-yüan's second act takes place thirty years later. The willow, reborn as Kuo Ma-erh 郭馬兒, is now operating a tea shop in Yüeh-yang Tower, together with his wife, the reincarnation of a white plum. Lü Tung-pin arrives by boat and attempts to make Kuo realize his original nature as a willow. Finally, he asks Kuo to swallow the tea leaves he (Lü) has just spat out. Kuo is willing to do so only after his wife has done so. Enraged at the thought that his wife may be carrying on with Lü, he beats him up. When Lü departs and invites Kuo to board his boat with him, Kuo pushes him into the water. When, in a wedge, Kuo has changed his line of business to selling wine, Lü visits him again and leaves his sword with him, suggesting to him that he use it to kill his wife, so that he will be free to leave the family. The third act takes place the next morning: Kuo finds his wife has been killed and together with the village head he reports the murder. They find Lü Tung-pin, but when Kuo shows him the warrant, his own name is on it! When Kuo and the village head try to take Lü to the magistrate, he disappears. In the final act, Kuo Ma-erh is sentenced to die; when he is led out of court he implores Lü to save him, and Lü does so: Kuo meets with the Eight Immortals and becomes aware of his own original nature.

In Ku Tzu-ching's *Ch'eng-nan liu*, Lü Tung-pin in the second act returns to Yüeh-yang Tower after twenty years. The willow's reincarnation, now surnamed Yang 楊, does not recognize him. His wife, a reincarnation of a peach, does recognize Lü and departs together with him. Yang sets out to pursue them, armed with the sword that Lü had left with the innkeeper in the first act. In the third act, Lü Tung-pin reenters, disguised as a fisherman. Yang asks to be ferried across and Lü obliges. On the other shore, Yang kills his wife when she refuses to return with him. In the final act, Lü and Yang appear before a judge; they accuse each other of the killing. When the bloodied sword is found on Yang, Lü is ordered to behead him. When Yang closes his eyes to wait for the strike, Lü, the judge, and the yamen runners all change into the costumes of the Eight Immortals. At Lü Tung-pin's shout, Yang opens his eyes, realizes his own original nature, and together with his wife is taken to see the Queen Mother of the West.²²

²⁰ W. L. Idema, *Chinese Vernacular Fiction: The Formative Period* (Leiden: Brill, 1974), pp. 17-23: "The Influence of Drama"; and pp. 58-67: "Adaptations of *Tsa-chü*."
²¹ Both plays have been translated in Wilt Idema and Stephen H. West, *Chinese Theater 1100-1450: A Source Book* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1982), pp. 205-35 ("A Playboy from a Noble House Opt for the Wrong Career"), and pp. 236-78 ("Wind and Moon in the Courtyard of Purple Clouds"). A translation of the *hsi-wen* version of *Ts'o li-shen* is also found in William Dolby, *Eight Chinese Plays* (London: Paul Elek, 1978), pp. 30-52, as "Grandee's Son Takes the Wrong Career."

²² My summary of the plot of *Yüeh-yang lou* is based on the edn. in Tsang Chin-shu 臧晉叔, ed., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan* (Peking: Chung-hua, 1958), pp. 614-31. This edn. of the play has been translated into English by Richard F. S. Yang as "The Yüeh-yang Tower," in his *Four Plays of the Yuan Drama* (Taipei, 1972). The edn. from *Ku ming-chia tsa-chü* 古名家雜劇 has one more scene in the wedge. For Ku Tzu-ching's play I again use the *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan* edn., pp. 1187-99.

It is clear from the above plot summaries that one of Ku Tzu-ching's primary concerns in the readaptation of these materials was to improve the plot, while maintaining the characterizations of the persistent deliverer and the reluctant convert as he encountered these in the earlier work. In Ma Chih-yüan's *Yüeh-yang lou*, the plot is both complicated and confused; Ku Tzu-ching has considerably simplified it while at the same time increasing its logical coherence. Ku Tzu-ching has stripped the play of many illogicalities and repetitions found in the earlier play; he transposed the boating routine in order to exploit fully its allegorical import, and gave a central function in the plot of each act to Lü Tung-pin's sword as the means of the willow's and Yang's perdition and deliverance. Together with the quality of the songs in *Ch'eng-nan liu*, Ku Tzu-ching's improvement of the plot has made modern Chinese critics place his work above *Yüeh-yang lou* for all its distinguished authorship.²³

A comparable desire to improve on the plot of one's predecessor is observed in Chu Yu-tun's *Chi-mu ta-hsien*, assuming for the moment that that *tsa-chü* indeed may be seen as a readaptation of *Hu-tieh meng*. Both plays deal with the story of a stepmother, who, when her stepson(s) and her own child are arrested for murder, insists that the stepson be spared and her own son be executed. Both plays assign the singing role to the mother. In *Hu-tieh meng*, the three brothers together have taken revenge on a high official who killed their father and they are all equally guilty. The only reason for the mother to insist that her stepsons be spared is her desire to avoid the reputation of being an evil stepmother. In *Chi-mu ta-hsien*, it is the good-for-nothing son alone who accidentally committed the murder. The stepson is a paragon of filial piety who wants to die in his brother's place in order to spare his stepmother the grief of losing her son.²⁴ The simple sense of justice of the stepmother in *Chi-mu ta-hsien* contrasts sharply with the freakish

perversion of commonsense morality in her counterpart in *Hu-tieh meng*, but while Chu Yu-tun's plot may be more logical, it is certainly less intriguing.²⁵

Even though the early catalogues repeatedly characterize a second version as a *tan-pen* in contrast to a preceding *mo-pen*, our exiguous sample of twin plays contains no example of this strategy of adaptation. However, if we also admit into our study *hua-pen* that are assumed to derive from *tsa-chü*, we may find one such example in *Feng-yüeh Jui-hsien-t'ing*. This *hua-pen*, as stated before, may be based on T'ang Shih's lost *tsa-chü* of the same title. As the *hua-pen* focuses on Cho Wen-chün's role in the story and repeatedly reproduces her inner thoughts in a manner reminiscent of *tsa-chü* songs, T'ang Shih's play may very well have been a *tan-pen*. We do not know whether or not the numerous preceding adaptations of this story during the Yüan were *mo-pen*, because they have all been lost. Chu Ch'üan's *Cho Wen-chün* is, however, a *mo-pen* and so allows us to compare *tan-pen* and *mo-pen* versions of the same tale.²⁶

The most striking difference between these two versions is their contrasting characterization of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Cho Wen-chün. In *Feng-yüeh Jui-hsien-t'ing*, Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju has been turned into the very stereotype of the poor but talented student. Cho Wen-chün is described not as a young widow, but as a girl of marriageable age, exceptionally intelligent and beautiful, accomplished in all womanly arts, and assisting her father in the management of his large estate. This last detail may help to explain her independence of mind. She is worried that it will be difficult for her to find a suitable partner, so when she has secretly observed Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju, she decides to take action herself, because her father, in her opinion, will be opposed to a poor suitor. Even before Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju has set eyes on her, she has already collected some jewelry in order to elope with him. It takes, therefore, little effort to seduce her, and it is she who, after they have made love, proposes that they elope.²⁷ In Chu Ch'üan's *Cho Wen-chün*, however, the title heroine only has a very subordinate role, and it is now Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju who, as the singing role, holds the stage. He is shown to be animated by a burning ambition. Scoffing at social conventions in his

²³ Tseng Yung-i, "Yüeh-yang lou chi chi-t'ia t'ia-t'ia-hsiang t'ung ti tsa-chü" 岳陽樓及其他題材相同的雜劇, in *Chung-shan hsüeh-shu wen-hua chi-k'an* 中山學術文化集刊 4 (1969), pp. 695-702. Tanaka Kenji 田中謙二, "Gen zatsugeki no daizai" 元雜劇の題材, *THGH* 13 (1943), p. 157, provides a list of thirteen topics that were each dramatized by both a representative of the so-called literary embellishment school (*wen-ts'ai p'ai* 文采派) of Yüan playwrights and a representative of the so-called authenticity school (*pen-se p'ai* 本色派). Unfortunately, no example of a couple of plays from this list has been preserved, but the suggestion is that within each couple the plays would have been primarily distinguished by the language of their songs.

²⁴ My remarks on *Hu-tieh-meng* are based on the *Yüan-chü ü hsüan* edn., pp. 632-46. This play has been translated into English by Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang as "The Butterfly Dream," in *Selected Plays of Kuan Han-ch'ing* (Shanghai: New Arts and Literature Publishing House, 1958), pp. 79-105. For Chu Yu-tun's play I base myself on his *Hsin-pien Ch'ing-ho-hsien Chi-mu ta-hsien*.

²⁵ Chu Chün-i 朱君毅 and K'ung Chia 孔嘉, "Lüeh-t'an Chu Yu-tun tsa-chü ti ssu-hsiang-hsing" 略談朱有嫌雜劇的思想性, in *Kuang-ming jih-pao* 光明日報, Dec. 1, 1957 (*Wen-hsüeh i-ch'an* no. 185); Chou I-pai 周貽白, *Chung-kuo hsi-ch'ü fa-chan-shih kang-yao* 中國戲曲發展史綱要 (Shanghai: Shang-hai ku-chi, 1979), p. 256; Idema, *Dramatic Oeuvre*, pp. 200-4.

²⁶ For a detailed discussion of the dramatic and fictional versions of this romance in the period 1250-1450, see Idema, "The Story of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Cho Wen-chün in Vernacular Literature of the Yüan and Early Ming Dynasties," in *TP* 70 (1984), pp. 60-109.

²⁷ Hung P'ien 洪楗, ed., *Ch'ing-p'ing shan-t'ang hua-pen* 清平山堂話本, T'an Cheng-pi 譚正璧, comp. (Shanghai, 1957), pp. 38-48.

overweening self-confidence, he deliberately sets out to seduce Cho Wen-chün even before he has set eyes on her. If his aim was to improve his finances by such a scheme, it is an appropriate punishment that poverty forces him to open a wineshop where he suffers the indignity of being pestered by local ruffians and being lectured by a poor fellow-student, all the while living in fear that his secret dealings may come to light. Cho Wen-chün is now shown as a passive victim of seduction, and a loyal and devoted wife.²⁸

Both *Feng-yüeh Jui-hsien-t'ing* and *Cho Wen-chün* are highly idiosyncratic versions of this perennially popular romance, and both versions time and again depart from the facts as presented in its classical account in Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's biography in *Shih-chi* 史記. But whereas *Feng-yüeh Jui-hsien-t'ing* is a very selective version, Chu Ch'üan's *Cho Wen-chün* tries to include into its plot as many incidents from the Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Cho Wen-chün lore as possible. Within the restricted compass of a *tsa-chü*, Chu Ch'üan not only finds room for such indispensable incidents as Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's seduction of Cho Wen-chün, their operating a wineshop, and his triumphal return to Ch'eng-tu after being summoned to court, but also for Cho Wen-chün's driving her own carriage after the elopement, and Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's infidelity to her when he later falls in love with a young girl at Mao-ling. *Feng-yüeh Jui-hsien-t'ing* and *Cho Wen-chün* not only demonstrate the adaptive strategy of contrastive characterization, but also make clear that the author might choose between a selective or an inclusive plot in reworking popular materials.

One way to overcome the asymmetry of the *tsa-chü* form would, of course, be to violate the convention of assigning the song suites to a single role-type by distributing them equally over both parties in the dramatic conflict. Even though the *Hsi-hsiang chi* 西廂記 did provide a precedent for such a practice, the force of convention was such that we only have one other example — Chu Yu-tun's adaptation of the story of Li Wa.

Shih Chün-pao's play on this subject is a regular four-act *tsa-chü* in which the song suites are assigned to the *tan*, who plays the part of Li Wa. Chu Yu-tun's *Ch'ü-chiang-ch'ih* has five acts, and he calls his play a *shuang-pen* 雙本 (double version) because he assigns the first, third, and fifth song suites to the *tan* and the second and fourth song suites to the *mo*. Chu Yu-tun's version presents a much fuller account of the love affair of Li Wa and Cheng Yüan-ho than does Shih Chün-pao's *Ch'ü-chiang-ch'ih*.

A more striking contrast between the two plays, however, is the respec-

tive characterization of the protagonists, which results in completely different modes. In Shih Chün-pao's *Ch'ü-chiang-ch'ih* both Li Wa and Cheng Yüan-ho are portrayed as independent and strong-willed persons. The action of the play is the outcome of the characters of the protagonists and moves forward to two intensely dramatic parent-child conflicts, which in one case is resolved by a complete rupture between mother and daughter, and in the other case, when Cheng Yüan-ho refuses to recognize his father, is only resolved by Li Wa's threat of suicide. As a result, Shih Chün-pao's work approaches the tragic mode. In Chu Yu-tun's play, the lovers are rather depicted as helpless victims of their surroundings. The parent-child conflicts lose much of their intensity, and the plot of the play is governed by accident. Chu's play is, therefore, best classified as melodrama. Tragedy and melodrama are, of course, not traditional Chinese genre distinctions, but the playwrights doubtless were aware of the intended overall impact of their plays and selected their strategies of adaptation accordingly.²⁹

Each example of adaptation discussed so far has shown that the author of a second version never limited himself to a mechanical transposition of singing role or rhyme classes: in each case the readaptation involved far-reaching changes in plot and/or characterization. The most drastic changes occurred when the author opted for the strategy of *fan-an* 反案 (overturning the case). This technique is best known from *ch'uan-ch'i* 傳奇. Kao Ming's 高明 *P'i-p'a-chi* 琵琶記 (*The Lute*) is an early example. Whereas earlier *hsi-wen* versions of its tale had shown Ts'ai Po-chieh 蔡伯皆 as an exemplar of marital infidelity, who received his deserved punishment when he was eventually killed by a thunderbolt, Kao Ming turned him into a paragon of filial piety and loyalty, who ends up with two devoted wives.

Tsa-chü authors of the early Ming also had recourse to this strategy. In the famous tale of Wang K'uei 王魁, the male character, after success in the examinations, betrayed the courtesan Kuei-ying 桂英 who had enabled him to participate in them. This story was presented as a *tsa-chü* by the early Yüan playwright Shang Chung-hsien. His play was entitled *Wang K'uei fu Kuei-ying* 王魁負桂英 (*Wang K'uei Betrays Kuei-ying*); it has been lost. The early Ming playwright Yang Wen-k'uei 楊文奎 evidently overturned

²⁸ For Shih Chün-pao's play, see Tsang, *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, pp. 263-76. The remarks on Chu Yu-tun's play are based on the original woodblock edn., *Hsin-pien Li Ya-hsien hua-chiu Ch'ü-chiang-ch'ih* 新編李亞仙花酒曲江池 (Fu Ssu-nien Library collection). For other discussions of these two plays, see Kim Mun-kyung 金文京, "Shōsetsu Ri Wa den no gekika" 小説李娃傳の劇化, in *Chūgoku bungaku hō* 中国文学報 32 (1980), pp. 74-115; W. L. Idema, "Shih Chün-pao's and Chu Yu-tun's *Ch'ü-chiang-ch'ih*: The Variety of Mode within Form," *TP* 66 (1980), pp. 217-65; and Idema, *Dramatic Oeuvre*, pp. 123-35.

²⁹ A copiously annotated edn. of *Cho Wen-chün* is found in Chou I-pai, ed., *Ming-jen tsa-chü hsüan* 明人雜劇選 (Peking: Jen-min wen-hsüeh, 1958), pp. 113-40.

the case in a lost *isa-chü* entitled *Wang K'uei pu-fu-hsin* 王魁不負心 (*Wang K'uei Was Not Ungrateful*). In the anonymous early Ming play *T'i ch'iao chi* the romance of Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju and Cho Wen-chün is subjected to such a treatment. The other adaptations of this tale differed, as we saw, in assigning the blame for Cho Wen-chün's seduction and her subsequent elopement, but in both versions the elopement was the central event. In *T'i ch'iao chi* the reader is surprised to discover that Cho Wen-chün's father takes the initiative to offer his daughter in marriage to the poor student and that the couple become man and wife with all due ceremony. As a result, Cho Wen-chün is turned into a dutiful daughter while the "madman Ssu-ma" is metamorphosed into a proud but well-behaved young man.³⁰

Fei T'ang-ch'en's *Pien Huang-chou* and the anonymous *Tsui-hsieh Ch'ih-pi-fu* provide another instance of the *fan-an* procedure. The first play seems to adhere closely to historical fact: the playwright has the poet Su Shih banished because of the political criticism voiced in his poetry. But this moves toward a fictional conclusion: the poet, when recalled from Huang-chou, refuses to write any poetry for fear of his life and retires from public service. In *Tsui-hsieh Ch'ih-pi fu* the (fictional) cause of Su Shih's exile is a flippant lyric on the subject of Wang An-shih's wife, but when Su returns from his banishment he has become aware of the plight of the common people and has started to write serious poetry in the Confucian tradition, while he continues his career. In this way, these plays provide two contrasting views of the direction of Su Shih's poetic development.³¹

Chu Yu-tun's objection to Wu Ch'ang-ling's *Chang T'ien-shih* was that it suggested a sexual relation between the goddess of the moon Ch'ang-o 嫦娥 and a mortal student; and so Chu's *Ch'en-kou-yüeh* introduced a peach tree sprite posing as Ch'ang-o to delude the student.³² In the preface of his

play Chu mentions that indignation at the calumniation of the divinity of the moon goddess was his reason for reworking the subject matter of Wu's work. This pious statement may well be true in this particular instance. Most of the surviving *isa-chü* from the early Ming dynasty were composed as palace entertainment by court playwrights or even imperial princes, and many of their works are marked by a strong Confucian didacticism. However, we should not only impute the motivation for plays like *Wang K'uei pu-fu-hsin*, *T'i ch'iao chi*, and *Tsui-hsieh Ch'ih-pi fu* to an arid moralism, which retroactively reformed all earlier generations. Another, and even stronger, motivation of these playwrights in presenting such iconoclastic adaptations of popular materials may have been their desire to captivate their audiences by surprising their expectations.

However, one has to admit that at times quite specific extratheatrical factors have been important in calling for readaptations of previously dramatized materials. *Ch'i Ying Pu* and *P'ien Ying Pu* present an obvious example. While the attribution of *Ch'i Ying Pu* to the early Yüan playwright Shang Chung-hsien may rest on a shaky foundation, the fact that this *isa-chü* is preserved in a Yüan printing clearly establishes its date as pre-Ming. The play's first act describes Sui Ho's visit to Ying Pu, during which Sui Ho clinches his argument to go over to Liu Pang by killing the envoy who happens to arrive from Hsiang Yü's headquarters. When, in act two, Ying Pu, who earlier had expressed great anxiety over the reception he would get, arrives in Liu Pang's camp, Liu Pang insults him deeply by receiving him while having his feet washed, and the enraged Ying Pu decides to depart immediately and become a bandit. In act three he is not pacified by great presents and is only persuaded to return when Liu Pang personally has offered his apologies by kneeling down in front of him. The fourth and final act is devoted to a report of Ying Pu's first victory in the service of Liu Pang over Hsiang Yü's troops.³³

In the *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan* edition of this *isa-chü*, Liu Pang's insulting behavior is presented as a conscious action intended to curb Ying Pu's excessive arrogance,³⁴ but a careful reading of the text in the Yüan printing reveals no indication of any premeditation on the part of Liu Pang. Actually, the

³⁰ *T'i ch'iao chi* has been preserved in two editions. A printed edn. is found in *Tsa-chü shih-tuan chin* 雜劇十段錦 of 1557, which was photomechanically reproduced in 1913. A ms. edn. is contained in *Mai-wang-kuan chiao-ch'ao-pen ku-chün isa-chü* 脈望館校抄本古今雜劇 (rpt. *Ku-pen hsi-ch'ü ts'ung-k'an ssu-chi* 古文戲曲叢刊四集). Both editions have been consulted. Also, see n. 26.

³¹ For typeset edns. of *Pien Huang-chou* and *Tsui-hsieh Ch'ih-pi-fu*, see Sui Shu-sen 隋樹森, ed., *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan wai-pien* 元曲選外編 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1959), pp. 355-67 and 767-81. For a more detailed discussion of these two plays, see W. L. Idema, "Poet versus Minister and Monk: Su Shi on Stage in the Period 1250-1450," *TP* 73 (1987), pp. 190-216.

³² *Hsin-pien Chang T'ien-shih ming tuan Ch'en-kou-yüeh* 新編張天師明斷辰鉤月 (original woodblock edn.; Peking Library collection), preface. For Wu Ch'ang-ling's play, see Tsang, *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, pp. 175-92. Yen, *Yüan-chü chen-i*, pp. 359-68, has argued that the present text of *Chang T'ien shih* is heavily indebted to Chu's work and Wu Ch'ang-ling's authorship of the present text has been questioned. Also see Idema, *Dramatic Oeuvre*, pp. 40-45.

³³ For a modern edition of the Yüan printing of *Ch'i Ying Pu* one may consult the collation of Cheng Ch'ien 鄭騫, *Chiao-ting Yüan-k'an isa-chü san-shih-chung* 校訂元刊雜劇三十種 (Taipei: Shih-chieh, 1962), pp. 157-68; and the collation of Hsü Ch'in-chün 徐沁君, *Hsin-chiao Yüan-k'an isa-chü san-shih-chung* 新校元刊雜劇三十種 (Peking: Chung-hua, 1980), pp. 288-307.

³⁴ Tsang, *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan*, pp. 1280-98, esp. p. 1290.

characterization of Liu Pang as a boorish rascal with an uncanny aptitude for antagonizing the very persons he needs, is quite in line with the general debunking tendency in texts dealing with the founding of the Han.

The Ming dynasty during its early years strictly outlawed any impersonation of "emperors and empresses." As a result, the anonymous author of *P'ien Ying Pu* had to omit the two central scenes of Liu Pang's insulting rudeness and of his abject apologies. He coped with this handicap by introducing a first act in which Sui Ho is shamed into accepting the dangerous mission to Ying Pu, and by developing the action of the first act of *Ch'i Ying Pu* into his own second and third acts. In these, he introduced the character of Ying Pu's chancellor Fei K'o 費客. Ying Pu still expresses anxiety over the reception that will be accorded to him, but now, in act four, upon his arrival at the Han headquarters he is received with due pomp and honor by Hsiao Ho on behalf of their lord. As a result of being unable to show the (future) emperor on stage, our anonymous author had to drop some central incidents of his story, and he had no choice but to make a subplot his main focus. He did this, one should add, with considerable success: acts two and three, in which Sui Ho manages to convince Ying Pu that the (actually quite innocent) Fei K'o has been conspiring with Liu Pang, are well drafted and quite humorous.³⁵

Our overview of the few surviving examples of the widespread phenomenon of readaptation in Yüan and early Ming *tsa-chü* has been limited to an inventory of the basic adaptive strategies playwrights, when dealing with well-known materials, might employ in order to achieve novelty and to give expression to their own conception of the subject at hand. These techniques ranged from simply tightening up the plot and contrastive characterization to overturning the original plot. Whatever freedom the authors took with the thematic materials, they only rarely questioned the formal conventions of *tsa-chü*. However, this tenacity of the tradition of form in *tsa-chü* should not blind us to the extent of transformation of subject materials that it allowed — a transformation that became increasingly daring as time went by.

³⁵This discussion is based on Wang Chi-lich's 王季烈 punctuated edn. of the late Ming ms. in *Ku-pen Yuan Ming tsa-chü* 孤本元明雜劇 (Peking: Chung-kuo hsi-ch'ü, 1958).