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Cross-Dressing  
*in* Chinese Opera  
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Siu Leung Li

Hong Kong University Press  
14/F Hing Wai Centre  
7 Tin Wan Praya Road  
Aberdeen  
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## EPILOGUE

Cross-dressed plays such as the various Liang-Zhu operas, *The Male Queen*, and *Shadow of Disguise*, constitute texts mirroring and complementing each other in disturbing the rigid categories that support gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality. The radical indeterminacy of the boundaries between fiction and reality, and between the male and female gender categories in the Chinese theatrical and literary tradition has absurdly and ironically been put into practice in contemporary real life, most conspicuously in the "Butterfly Scandal" of Shi Pei-pu and Bernard Boursicot. The relevance of traditional Chinese theatre to contemporary society lies significantly in the self-(un)masking of this art form effected by its multilevel cross-dressing traditions and its self-dismantling aesthetics of prettiness-eroticism and artistry. In the long-standing prevalence of transvestism on the public stage, the male *dan* player is perhaps the most perplexing entity throughout the history of Chinese opera. The ultimate icon of Chinese opera in modern times is unquestionably Mei Lanfang. Lu Xun in his critique of culture and politics bitingly refers to the ambiguous and unsettling transvestite figure of the *dan*, and the transnational film *Farewell My Concubine* again centers on a male *dan*. Hwang relies on this same figure to construct his "deconstructive" *M. Butterfly*. This role-type virtually embodies boundless ambiguity and anxiety

concerning the transgression of gender and sexual boundary and the attempt to eradicate this subversive body in mainland China is symbolic of repressive anxiety. Cheng Dieyi, the transvestite *dan* in *Farewell My Concubine* is characterized by his foremost admirer, the Chinese opera aficionado Yuan the Fourth Master in an eight-character couplet:

Undifferentiating human reality and theatrical illusion [*renxi bufen*]

Coexistence of the female and the male [*cixiong tongzai*]

My reading of this remark — appropriating it to my critical project — is that it is a metaphor for the subversive functioning of Chinese opera in collapsing rigid hierarchal boundaries.<sup>1</sup> The subversive and unsettling body of the male *dan* is what the film text of *Farewell* tries to annihilate in order to restabilize the heterosexual matrix built upon the “normal” relationship of a “real” man (Duan Xiaolou) and a “real” woman (Juxian). A prime effect of the cultural operations of Chinese opera is a forever unsettling self-inquiry into the question posed by Foucault in the English introduction to his *Herculine Barbin dite Alexina B.*: “Do we *truly* need a *true* sex?” (original emphasis). To assign any text, form or human agency to any fixed position in the continuum of transgression and containment does not address effectively the operation of cultural practices as we perceive them today. While putting into question established social and cultural values, Chinese opera itself is being produced by and producing values, defined by and redefining reality. Theatrical cross-dressing is participating simultaneously in the cultural construction and transgression of desires and meanings in the perpetual struggle for the power to define truth and reality.

In analyzing the cultural politics played out on the unstable site of Chinese opera, I wish to demonstrate that such a critique of traditional culture can be made to speak to the concerns of today’s ideological resistance to political hegemony and cultural dominants in the “Chinese” context, where we find a totalizing force in the discursive field that can loosely be termed “Chinese culture.” Destabilizing differences in this discursive field are constantly being neutralized by a master “Chinese” cultural narrative that strives for a monolithic “grand unity” [*dayitong*] — an idea that has been equally forcibly at work in

the numerous enterprises for geographical “unification” in the history of China. Ironically, we see more moments of multiple divisions than singular unification in the history of this empire. I have tried to look for fissures in this supposedly coherent plane to demonstrate the possibility of a resistance to a totalitarian and totalizing discourse by exposing its incoherences — polyvalent meanings of gendering and gendered differences that are constructed, reproduced, dismantled, and contested in a particular site of Chinese culture. An inquiry into how the subversiveness of Chinese opera is at once suppressed yet emergent in ancient and modern (con)texts is instructive for attempts at a broader remaking of a history that refuses unjust hierarchies perpetrated by the present configurations of power.

The theory of “uninterrupted revolution” [*buduan geminglun*] advanced by Mao Zedong, which at first glance sounded like a call for continuous renewal of society, was ironically frozen into a definitive answer to history and turned against *revolution* (read “change”) itself to reinforce one man’s ideology and perpetuate one single power machinery. It is of great urgency to resist oppression through and with a practice of unceasing problematization of all hegemonic discourses in order to resist the closure of the questioning of existing ideologies and institutions in the name of “home-truths.” Therefore, in my critical investigation of Chinese opera as a cultural artifact, I aim at opening up discursive spaces for a polyphony of contrapuntal voice-parts, by questioning ideological assumptions of gender and sexuality that posed as “natural” tonal harmonies backing a single dominant melodic line of cultural dogma on top of the established power hierarchy.



## NOTES

### INTRODUCTION

- 1 See Chao Tsung's *Zhongguo dalu di xiqu gaige: 1942-1967* [Traditional music drama reform in mainland China: 1942-1967] (1968) for a critical account of censorship and prohibition of Chinese opera in the period. See Gao Yilong and Li Xiao's *Zhongguo xiqu xiandaixi shi* [History of Chinese music drama in modern times] (1999) for a comprehensive account of contemporary Chinese opera "reform" from a mainland Chinese perspective. Wang Xiaochuan's *Yuan Ming Qing sandai jinhui xiaoshuo xiqu shiliao* [Historical materials on the censorship and destruction of fiction and drama in Yuan, Ming and Qing periods] (1958) collects invaluable historical sources on the policing of Chinese drama during the last three imperial dynasties.
- 2 Michael Shapiro lists 79 plays of this kind which appeared between the late sixteenth and the mid-seventeenth century ("Chronological List of Plays with Heroines in Male Disguise" 221-3).
- 3 The currently known woman writers and their works featuring cross-dressed heroines include: Liang Xiaoyu (late Ming), *Heyuanji* [The reunion] (lost); Liang Mengzhao (late Ming), *Xiangsiyan* [The inkstone of mutual love] (lost); Zhang Lingyi (1669-1747), *Qiankunquan* [The circle of male and female] (lost); Wang Yun (1749-1819), *Fanhuameng* [The flourishing dream] (1768), *Quansuji* [Story of total blessing] (1772); Wu Zao (1799-1863), *Qiaoying* [Shadow of disguise]; He Peizhu (c. 1814-?), *Lihuameng* [Dream of the pear flower] (written between c. 1839-

1847). Altogether we now know of 23 woman playwrights in imperial China from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, most of whom were gentry women, though some were courtesans (Ye Changhai, *Qixue yu xijuxue* 80–1).

- 4 Male writers produced a larger number of plays of this theme. For instance, Xu Wei, *Maid Mukan, The Female Top Graduate*; Anonymous, *Zengshuji* [Story of the complimentary book] (late Ming); Li Yu (1611–1680), *Yizhongyuan* [The love you want]; Wang Fuzhi (1619–1692), *Longzhouhui* [The dragon boat fair]; Long Xie (1640–1697), *Jianghuameng* [Dream of the river flower]; Zhang Jian (1681–1763), *Mengzhongyuan* [Predestined love in a dream]; Shen Qifeng (1741–1802), *Hongxin cike sizhong* [Four plays by the red-heart poet]; *Bao'enyuan* [A predestined love of repaying a favor]; *Cairenfu* [The good fortune of a talent]; *Wenxingbang* [The honor roll of the Big Dipper]; *Fuhutao* [Strategy of taming the tiger]; Zhou Gao (Qing), *Yu yuanyang* [The jade mandarin ducks]. In addition, Ruan Dacheng (c. 1587–c. 1646) briefly employed female cross-dressing as a minor device in his play of “ten mistaken identity/identification” *Chundengmi* [The riddle of the spring festival lantern] (1633).

#### CHAPTER ONE

- 1 Lu Xun's cultural status in modern China needs no further qualification. This brief comment of his on theatrical female impersonation in connection with politics has been well remembered and quoted in recent sexology studies in China (see following text). In the English-speaking academic world, Lu Xun's “fame” was catapulted to a new international height in the 1980s by Fredric Jameson's “marvellously erudite reading” (Ahmad 95) of him (along with several other “Third-World” writers) in the controversial article “Third World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism” (1986). Aijaz Ahmad's criticism of Jameson (“Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the ‘National Allegory’” [1987]) serves to remind us that Lu Xun may have been “valorized beyond measure” and “elevated to the lonely splendour of a representative — of a race, a continent, a civilization, even the ‘Third World’” (98). My reference to Lu Xun here once more reinforces the paradox of the “overflow” of Lu Xun's radical signification in contemporary critical discourses.
- 2 Cultural essentialism is often at odds with historical contingency. The various Chinese operatic forms enjoyed a period of resurgence after the opening of China in 1978. Witnessing the gradual decline of Chinese opera among public audiences since the mid-1980s, the revival of this

traditional art has become an obsessive topic, almost a mission, to all kinds of people surrounding it: workers in the theatre, scholars, government officials, theatergoers, and intellectuals. It is assumed that there are essential values inherent in Chinese opera, and that it is a moral mission to “reform and save rapidly” [*gaige he qiangjiu*] the art. The dominant discourse on Chinese opera in contemporary China since the advent of Euro-American cultural imperialism is underscored by a sense of constant crisis. Meanwhile, in the international frame, the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) honored Kunju opera as a “Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity” in May 2001.

- 3 A frequently quoted explication of *xing* by Zhu Xi (1130–1200) from his *Shi ji zhuan* [A comprehensive annotation of *The Classic of Poetry*].
- 4 Character role-types in Chinese operas are elaborate and vary to some extent from one opera to the other. For the sake of convenience they can be reduced to four major types: *sheng*, the male; *dan*, the female; *jing*, the painted-face; and *chou*, the comedians. For more explanation on this topic in English, see Hsü 43–50, 341–50; Riley 14; and Zung 37–58. Judging from the context, Lu Xun is probably using the term *huadan*, which in more specific theatrical usage denotes one variety of female role-type, as a substitute for the more inclusive term *dan* (or *danjiao*) to refer to young female role-types in general. This interchangeable usage is common in daily linguistic exchanges.
- 5 It is for rhetorical purposes that the adjective “male” is added to “transvestism,” which is itself a term *normatively male*, as Marjorie Garber comments, “. . . the terms ‘transsexual’ and ‘transvestite’ are themselves normatively male in general usage; recent work on the early-modern period, for example, has begun to speak of the visibility of ‘female’ transvestites in London, while ‘transvestite’ without a gender qualification is usually taken to refer to men in women’s clothing” (102). *The American Heritage Dictionary* (2nd college edition, 1991) defines “transvestite” as “A person especially a male who dresses in the clothing of the opposite sex for psychological reasons.” A later edition (3rd ed., PC version 3.0A, 1993) gives a non-gender-biased definition of the word as “A person who dresses and acts in a style or manner traditionally associated with the opposite sex.”
- 6 Biographical works and commentaries on Mei in Chinese are voluminous to date, and an English biography of him was written as early as 1957, by A. C. Scott. A useful reference is the meticulous *Mei Lanfang nienpu* [The Mei Lanfang chronology] (1994). The massive, extravagant, English-Chinese bilingual pictorial album *Mei Langfang* (Beijing: Beijing chubanshe, 1997) provides a most detailed pictorial biographical history

- of Mei to date. Each copy of this limited-edition publication carries a serial number.
- 7 John Willett, in his translation of Brecht's "*Verfremdungseffekte in der chinesischen Schauspielkunst*," draws our attention to a penciled note on the article's typescript: "This essay arose out of a performance by Mei Lan-fang's company in Moscow in spring 1935" (99).
  - 8 The deification of Lu Xun began in the 1940s. His "infallibility" was first questioned in the early 1980s with the eradication of the extreme leftist party line. Wong Wang-chi's gripping article "Gei zhengzhi niuqu liao de Lu Xun yanjiu" [A kind of Lu Xun studies that has been distorted by politics] (1994) gives a revealing historical critique of this issue. Wong points out that Lu Xun's words were taken as "golden rule and precious precept" [*jinke yulü*] because Mao's words had been taken as infallible law (64): "Everything is very clear. After Mao's conclusive appraisal . . . , who would dare or be willing to stand up and contradict Mao's assertion?" (74).
  - 9 For instance, Jiang Xingyu in his "Lu Xun xiansheng lun Mei Lanfang — lüelun 'Lüelun Mei Lanfang ji qita'" [Mr Lu Xun on Mei Lanfang — brief comments on "Brief comments on Mei Lanfang and other topics"] (1988) takes Lu Xun to task by rebutting his various adverse criticisms collected in *Huabian wenxue* [Literature of floral margins] (1934).
  - 10 Mei Lanfang was touring Japan in 1956 on the invitation of the *Asahi Shimbun* and other organizations. He gave 23 shows to more than 70,000 spectators. In response to this cultural exchange between China and Japan, Yoshikawa wrote a series of commentaries, including "Bai Ranbō no chi'i" [Mei Lanfang's status], "Bai Ranbō so no ta" [About Mei Lanfang], "Kabuki to kyogeki" [Kabuki and Beijing opera], "Kyogeki zakkan" [Miscellaneous thoughts on Beijing opera], "Minamiza kangeki zekku" [Poetic quatrains written after watching drama]. In "About Mei Lanfang," Yoshikawa relates an interesting story which shows that Mei Lanfang was an irresistible performing artist: a housewife wrote a letter to a newspaper telling the readers that she was poor and had never even been able to pay for a Kabuki show; yet she made the effort to buy a ticket and watch Mei Lanfang (597).
  - 11 Literally, *sizen denai* means "the unnatural." It is a positive aesthetic judgment in this context. A direct English rendition would be "artificial." An obsolete meaning of "artificial" is "artful."
  - 12 The geographical permeation of Beijing opera in mainland China today is a result more of political maneuver than autonomous cultural operation. Beijing opera troupes have been set up in locations as culturally different and geographically distant as Inner Mongolia, Xinjiang, and Ningxia.
  - 13 See, for instance, Jonathan Goldberg's critique of Jean Howard, Laura

- Levine, Stephen Orgel and Lisa Jardine in his *Sodometries* (1990) (chapter 4, "The Transvestite Stage: More on the Case of Christopher Marlowe"); and also Valerie Traub's critique of Marguerite Waller's critique of Stephen Greenblatt, and Lisa Jardine in her *Desire and Anxiety* (1992), the chapter entitled "Desire and the Differences It Makes."
- 14 Feng Menglong (1574–1646), *Taiping guangji chao* [Selections from *Anthology of Widely Gathered Accounts in the Taiping Era*], *juan* 72 has a section entitled "Renyao" [Human prodigies], consisting of tales of female and male cross-dressers and people with paranormal sex transformation. Feng's anthology is a short re-edition of the 500-volume *Taiping guangji*, compiled in 977. See also Judith Zeitlin's "Dislocations in Gender" in her *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (1993) for an account of the records and commentaries on "the human prodigy" in Ming-Qing times. See R. H. Van Gulik, *Sexual Life in Ancient China* (158–160) for an account of the transformation of woman into man and hermaphrodites as *yao*.
  - 15 Another translation came out in Taiwan in 1994, entitled *Zhongguo yanqing: Zhongguo gudai de xing yu shehui*. The 1990 Mainland translation is called *Zhongguo gudai fangnei kao*, which is van Gulik's original Chinese title.
  - 16 Only 12 of the original illustrations are reproduced in this translation due to censorship considerations. But *all* the original erotic plates with the Chinese translation are reproduced in Taiwan's lavish, gigantic volume *Mixi tu da guan* [Grand view of paintings of the clandestine game] (1994), which also collects a plethora of other pre-modern erotic paintings from China and Japan. Another extravagant album of illustrations of erotica (paintings and artifacts included) by leading mainland Chinese sexologist Liu Dalin (see n17) was published in Hong Kong in 2000. The point of interest about this bilingual publication, *Chinese Sex Artifacts Over 5000 Years*, apart from its informative sexual content, is that it was self-censored shortly before its originally scheduled date of release. In a letter dated February 28, 2000 with the heading "The Progress of Editorial Work of *Chinese Sex Artifacts Over 5000 Years*" [Guanyu *Zhongguo wuqiannian xingwenwu daguan* de bianji jinzhan] addressed to the pre-publication subscribers, the publisher explains that the book has been reduced from its original length of two volumes with a total of 600 pages to a single volume of 300 plus pages due to the cutting away of "sensitive parts" that touch upon "sensitive topics such as religion, etc." The listed price was cut from HK\$998 (US\$128) to \$698 (\$89). The book was finally published in August 2000.
  - 17 Geographical *mainland* China's second "Western exposure" in this century, if we take the May Fourth Movement as the first exposure. The

- other two major communities of ethnic Chinese, Hong Kong and Taiwan, have not been “shuttered” from the West since modern times, ironically because of Euro-American imperialisms — military and cultural.
- 18 Liu Dalin, author of the aforementioned *Chinese Sex Artifacts Over 5000 Years*, among his publications are also *Zhongguo dangdai xing wenhua* [The sex culture of contemporary China] (1991), *Zhongguo gudai xingwenhua* [The sex culture of ancient China] (1993), and, as chief editor, *Zhonghua xingxue cidian* [A Chinese sexology dictionary] (1993). His popularity is demonstrated by his appearance in one of the most popular “tabloid” weekly magazines in Hong Kong and Taiwan, *Next Magazine/ Yizhoukan* 223 (June 17, 1994): 80–4. He was recently dubbed the “Chinese Dr Comfort” by *Ming Pao Daily* (September 3, 1999):F3.
  - 19 Van Gulik, reading a handbook of sex from the Ming Dynasty, points out that “sapphism [lesbianism] among the womenfolk of a household was not only viewed tolerantly, but on occasion even encouraged” (*Sexual Life* 274). See also “Appendix: Lesbianism in Imperial China” in Hinsch (1990) and “*Nü tongxingai*” [Lesbian love] in Xiaomingxiong (1997).

## CHAPTER TWO

- 1 Public troupes composed solely of young female players first appeared in several big cities in the last decades of the nineteenth century (e.g., Shanghai, Hangzhou and other cities in Jiangsu and Zhejiang). These troupes performed in regional operas as well as Beijing and Kunju operas. This was labelled *mao'er xi* [“female” theatre/“kitten” theatre]. Xu Ke’s *Qing bai lei chao* [Categorized anecdotes from the Qing period] (1917) contains four entries on *mao'er xi* (53–5). For historical accounts of the emergence of female players in this period, see *Zhongguo Jingju shi* 1: 280–91; Zhang Faying 389–92; Xu Muyun 201–4; Lu Eting 247; for the rise of the female Zhejiang Yueju, see Shengxian wenhuaju, ed., *Zaoqi Yueju fazhan shi* [The early history of Yueju opera] and Gao Yilong.
- 2 “The boy actress” was used by Harley Granville-Barker in *Prefaces to Shakespeare*, Vol. 3 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1946), 12; quoted in Kelly (81). “Play-boy” was used by Lisa Jardine and Shapiro.
- 3 The “four great Anhui theatre troupes” were hired to perform in the imperial capital of Beijing on the occasion of the eightieth birthday of the Emperor Qianlong (reign 1736–1796) in 1790. Afterwards these troupes stayed in the capital and played a major role in the development of Beijing opera. A Beijing opera festival in celebration of the bicentennial anniversary of the four great Anhui opera troupes coming to Beijing was held from December 20, 1990 through January 12, 1991. The largest-scale activity

of the kind ever held in the People's Republic of China, the festival staged 166 shows of various regional operas, held symposiums and a large exhibition. For information, see Wang Wenzhang, ed., *Two Hundredth Anniversary of Anhui Opera Coming to Beijing* (1991). A series of Chinese opera performances were also held in Hong Kong in October 1990. For an account in English of actors and boy actors in the Qing period, see Mackerras, *The Rise of the Peking Opera* 40–8, 145–53.

- 4 The source of this incident is the notation book *Yinbualu* [Records of chats] by Zhao Lin, who was active in the time of the Tang emperor Xuanzong (reign 837–860). A full quotation is given in Zhang Faying 32–3.
- 5 Other versions of this story are found in Liu Shu's *Jiu Tang shu* [Old Tang history] *juan* 29, and Duan Anjie's *Yuefu zalu* [Miscellaneous notes on yuefu songs] 44–5. For a detailed historical and ethnological study of the mask of Lan Ling, see Zhou Huabin, "Lan Ling Wang jiameng yanjiu" [A study of the mask of Prince Lang Ling].
- 6 Based on Chung-wen Shih's translation (5) with a number of places altered to render the translation closer to the original.
- 7 The following two quotes are also from Cui 18.  
 Versions of "The Stomping-Swaying Wife" are also found in *Jiu Tang shu* [Old Tang history] *juan* 9, and *Yuefu zalu* [Miscellaneous notes on yuefu songs] 45. Written about a century and a half after Cui, Duan's account is shorter and does not mention the female impersonation in the performance of this theatrical act.
- 8 This "select-scene play" is taken from act 17 of the Ming drama *Jinsuo ji* [The golden casket], in which the corresponding act title is "Wushang" [Mistaken injury]. This Ming play is an adaptation of arguably the greatest Yuan tragic drama *Dou'e yuan* [Injustice to Dou'e]. In the Yuan plot it is the father of Zhang the Donkey who is poisoned to death.
- 9 According to Lu Eting, Ding Jizhi was born in 1585 and lived for more than 90 years (154 n1). Eighteenth century critic Jiao Xun also includes an anecdote of Ding acting at the age of 80 in *juan* 6 of his *Jushuo* [Discourse on drama] (8: 216).
- 10 Wang Guowei in his *Song Yuan xiqu kao* (1915) already suggests the connection between shamanism and the beginnings of Chinese theatre. For comprehensive accounts of the various theses, see Zheng Chuanyin, *Zhongguo xiqu* 4–44; Tang Wen-piao 1–42; 215–33.
- 11 These boisterous military plays, which mainly exhibit acrobatic fighting and dance, are frequently performed in Chinese opera troupes' overseas tours. The plays featuring the Monkey King are particularly "representative" in this sense. Obviously this has something to do with Arthur Waley's *Monkey* (1942) (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961) — his

popular (abridged) translation of the sixteenth century classic fiction *Xiyouji* [Journey to the west]. There are two complete translations: Anthony C. Yu's *The Journey to the West* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977–1983), and W. J. F. Jenner's *Journey to the West* (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1982–1986).

The "roc" is a mythic bird of great size and strength.

- 12 Roger Baker in his book *Drag: A History of Female Impersonation on the Stage* (1968) gives one chapter to the Chinese *tan* — i.e. the *dan* and the Japanese *onnagata* ("Onnagata and Tan" 149–56). He also includes a full-page picture of Mei Lanfang in a young *dan* disguise. Majorie Garber's 1992 *Vested Interests* (234–51; 411 n11) and the Bulloughs' 1993 *Cross Dressing, Sex, and Gender* (243), also make several references to Chinese theatrical cross-dressing to further illustrate their arguments. Interestingly enough, the Bulloughs even cite "Shaoxing opera" (i.e., Yueju opera of Zhejiang), which is little known among Westerners, as an example of an "all-female theatre," "wherein all the roles were played by women (a conscious reversal of the Beijing Opera, whose roles were performed by men)" (231). The Chinese female theatre is much more complicated than "a conscious reversal" of a male-dominated theatre in its historical-cultural context, and, to be exact, "Shaoxing opera" is an *almost* all-female theatre in which there are few male performers, though hardly occupying a significant position in this theatre.
- 13 Also writing in commendation of Mei as a great artist, Yoshikawa Kōjiro instead of making him an example par excellence of the allegedly privileged status of the female impersonator in Chinese society, attributes to him the contribution of raising the status of Chinese actors in modern times: "Actors in old China had low status and people despised them. With his great art and high accomplishment, [Mei Lanfang] made people change their understanding of the Chinese theatre" ("Bai Ranhō no chi'i" 590). This is more in accord with what happened in history.
- 14 According to the account in *Zhongguo da baike quanshu: xiqu, quyi* [The great Chinese encyclopedia: traditional music drama, folk musical art forms], Beijing opera as we see it today came into being during the reign of the emperor Guangxu (1875–1908) and the designation *jingxi* [Beijing opera] was created after 1911 in Shanghai (158).
- 15 The film adaptation of *M. Butterfly* with the same title (Geffen Pictures 1993), directed by David Cronenberg, screenplay written by Hwang himself, and starring Jeremy Irons and John Lone, was not as successful as Chen's *Farewell My Concubine* in the international cinema world. Chen's film was based on an original novel by Hong Kong writer Lilian Lee which was published in English translation by Andrea Lingenfelter (Penguin, 1993). John Lone was at first cast as the Beijing opera female

impersonator in *Farewell My Concubine*. He quit soon after shooting began. The production company Tomson (HK) Films then signed top Hong Kong pop singer-actor Leslie Cheung, who ended up giving an acclaimed performance. Cheung's ambiguously closet queer identity perhaps also added to the film's appeal. In the film *M. Butterfly*, the play's radical edges of postcolonial politico-cultural intervention were domesticated and transformed into, in the motion picture's own publicity language, a melodrama which "boldly portrayed" the "mysteries of love and the sting of betrayal" (words in quotation marks taken from the back cover of the US video release of the film).

- 16 "The beginning of the activity and literature known as theatre is traditionally assigned to the plays and practices of the Athenian festivals of Dionysus in the sixth and fifth century B.C.E. . . . In the sixth century, both women and men participated in these ceremonies, but by the fifth century, when the ceremonies were becoming what is known as theatre, women disappeared from the practice" (Case 318). Based on the authoritative work by Margarete Bieber (*The History of the Greek and Roman Theatre* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1939]), Case says, "Scholars do not record any evidence for specific laws or codes forbidding women to appear in songs and dances" (319).
- 17 Some historians insist that it was composed exclusively of men, yet there is a tale about Aeschylus's *The Eumenides* relating that the Furies represented by the chorus appeared so frightening that women in the audience miscarried on the spot (Arnott 25–6). Sue-Ellen Case in her feminist investigation of drag in Greek theatre mentions that "[j]udging from the gender-specific quality of Athenian practice and Aristotle's thoughts on tragedy, it would seem appropriate that women were not in the audience. Or, in the context of chapter 4 [of *Poetics*], that they would be inferior members of the audience" (326).
- 18 Some of the well-known examples are: the great emperor Han Wudi (reign 140–187 B.C.E.) and the musician-entertainer Li Yannian (Sima Qian, *Shiji* [Records of the historian], *juan* 125 "Lingxing liechuan" [Biographies of the male favorites], 10: 3194–5); the late Tang emperor Yizong (reign 860–873) and his favorite entertainer Li Keji (Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi, *Xin Tang shu* [New Tang history], *juan* 181 "Cao Que liechuan" [Biography of Cao Que], 17: 5351–2). Jiao Xun in his *Discourse on drama* records an anecdote of Li entertaining the emperor with a humorous reference to the Buddha, Laozi and Emperor Wenxuan as *women*, (8: 100–1); the late Ming politician Yan Shifan (son of Yan Song [d. 1568], a corrupt statesman whose power even overshadowed the emperor Jiajing [reign 1522–1566] for 20 years) and the transvestite actor Jin Feng (Jiao Xun 201; also Yang Enshou *Xu ciyu conghua* [Sequel to *Collected Chats on Music Drama*], 321–2).

- Yoshikawa, in his account of the relation between the Mongolian court and Yuan drama, also brings our attention to the many instances of emperors assigning high offices to actors during the Yuan Dynasty (*Yuan zaju yanjiu* 58; 60–2). According to Yoshikawa, actors in the Yuan Dynasty were frequently appointed to high offices because of many emperors' great enthusiasm for drama.
- 19 In a footnote to her article "The Saint Play in Medieval France" (1986), Lynette R. Muir cites another incident of women on stage: "A tantalizingly brief entry in the account books of Lorraine mentions a woman (*femme*) who played the *Vie de Sainte Barbe* before the duke in 1505 in Nancy" (176), taken from vol. 2 of *Les Mystères* edited by L. Petit de Julleville (Paris 1880). She also gives another three pieces of evidence in "Women on the Medieval Stage: The Evidence from France" (1985) of women performers in religious plays at Mons in 1501, Romans in 1509, and Valenciennes in 1547 (107–19).
  - 20 Although theatrical activities in the Song periods (960–1279) were already flourishing, there has never been any dispute that Yuan *zaju* drama was the earliest *mature* form of Chinese theatre. Wang Guowei says, "To talk about real music drama, one has to begin with Yuan *zaju* drama" (*Song Yuan* 82). Yoshikawa shares the same view (*Yuan zaju yanjiu* 3, 224). He further suggests that Yuan drama reached maturity during the years 1264–1294 at the latest, adding that the first center of literary output and performance was the Yuan capital Dadu (Beijing), which gradually shifted to the southern city Hangzhou in the later years of the Yuan Dynasty (18–9). Chung-wen Shih begins her *Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Tsai-chü* (1976), the first full-length study of this genre in English, with these words: "Chinese theatre first began to flourish during the Yuan period . . ." (ix). Yuan drama scripts are also the earliest entire playscripts of Chinese drama extant today. (Shih's work was translated into Chinese recently: *Zhongguo xiju de huangjin shidai* [Trans. Xiao Shanyin and Wang Hongxiao. Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 1991].)
  - 21 This and other Yuan imperial prohibitions are quoted in detail in 3–10 in Wang's work.
  - 22 There were many occasions of prohibitions of mixing men and women during imperial times. For quotations from Qing edicts, see Wang, *Yuan Ming Qing* 18, 23, 24, 33, 74, 94, 100, 101, 110, 120.
  - 23 During the Qing Dynasty, numerous provincial and central edicts were issued to ban women audiences and players, see Wang, *Yuan Ming Qing* 78, 110–111, 120, 133 (prohibiting women from attending public performances); 18, 20, 23, 44 (prohibiting female players), 26 (prohibiting female troupes from entering the capital city).
  - 24 There are more references to female players in Wang Yun's writings, and Yoshikawa gives some detailed accounts (*Yuan zaju yanjiu* 67–9).

- 25 Juan 4 and 19 together record three anecdotes about another actress, Shun Shi Xiu (351, 559), whose biography is also found in *The Green Bower Collection* (20).
- 26 That is *sanqu*, following James J. Y. Liu's translation of this Chinese poetic genre (*The Art of Chinese Poetry* 32). He translates *qu* as "dramatic verse"; Victor H. Mair once rendered it as "cantos" (4).
- 27 Ye Yuhua first made this suggestion and received retorts from Hu Ji, Qi Gong and Zhou Miaozhong. See Ye Yuhua, "Shuo beiqu zaju xiyou nüxing yanchang" [Northern music drama was sung by females] (1954); Hu Ji, "Beiqu zaju yanchang ren xingbie de taolun" [On the sex of the singers in Yuan *zaju* drama] (1955) and Qi Gong's "Lun Yuan dai zaju de banyan wenti" [A discussion of the question of impersonation in Yuan theatre] (1955); Zhou Miaozhong, "Guanyu Yuan qu de sange wenti" [Three questions concerning Yuan music drama] (1955).
- 28 Zhou Yibai explains this point in detail in his *Zhongguo xiju shi* [History of Chinese drama] (1953), 3: 280–3.
- 29 Apart from the several contending articles of the 1950s, we have more evidence through anthropological and historical studies. For instance, Zhang Faying in his *Zhongguo xiban shi* [History of Chinese theatre troupes] (1991) reconstructs a general picture of Yuan traveling troupes which were individually built upon members of a family, centering around either a woman or a man performer (65–94).
- 30 A long time ago, the sinologist Herbert Giles once mistook the Yuan playwright Zhang Guobin as a woman: "Just as there have always been poetesses in China, so women are to be found in the ranks of Chinese playwrights. A four-act drama, entitled 'Joining the Shirt,' was written by one CHANG KUO-PIN [sic] [Zhang Guobin], an educated courtesan of the day, the chief interest of which play lies perhaps in the sex of the writer" (274). Liu Wu-chi has already pointed out this error in a short note. We have records of, and extant works by, female playwrights from the Ming and Qing periods, but not the Yuan Dynasty. See n32 and n33 below.
- 31 Zhang Faying (1–26) gives a concise history of this institution.
- 32 For instance, Li Zhaogan's brief article "Zhejiang gudai de nü zuojia" ["Women playwrights from Zhejiang in ancient times"]; Ye Changhai's paper entitled "Preliminary Reflections on the Mind-Set of Female Dramatists" given at the conference "Women and Literature in Ming-Qing China" held at Yale University, June 22–26, 1993; and his *Qixue yu xijuxue* [Theory and criticism of music drama and theatre], part 2, chapter 5. Tao Qiying's *Zhongguo funü yu wenxue* [Chinese women and literature], an early historical work of its kind written in the 1930s, did not mention women playwrights.

- 33 Although Hu Wenkai's initial research work on Chinese women writers lists more than four thousand women writers in the past, there was only one traditional lyrical genre which was the domain of women, the *tanci*. Apart from one or two women poets, such as Li Qingzhao (1084–1155), whom Julia Kristeva appropriates for her feminist agenda as the one woman whose name "dominates Chinese literature" (90), female *tanci* writers like Chen Duansheng (1751–96), Liang Desheng (1771–1847), and Tao Huaizhen (17 c.) have also appeared in Chinese literary histories published in recent times.
- 34 It is interesting to note that in the English language there is no formal term for "customer for prostitutes," although prostitutes call them "johns." In this binary structure between the male consumer of sex and the female prostitute, only the female pole is formally named — the first and male term is missing from negative designation. In the Chinese term, the male is also named in formal usage: *piaoke*.
- 35 Adapted from Stephen Orgel's reading of the theatre of early modern England: "... there are lots of *others* in this theatre; in fact, Elizabethan drama is often dependent on otherness. Comedies are Italian, French, or provincial, tragedies Spanish or Scandinavian or ancient, pastorals take place somewhere else. Dekker, Jonson, and Middleton placing comedies in contemporary London are doing something new. The Other, for this theatre, is as much foreign as female — Othello is the Other. And in the largest sense, the Other is theatre itself, both a threat and a refuge" ("Nobody's Perfect" 9).
- 36 Quoted in Yoshikawa, *Yuan zaju yanjiu* 49. The original sources quoted are *Tongzhi tiaoge* [Yuan laws] (*juan* 3) and *Yuan dianzhang* [Yuan documents] (*juan* 18).
- 37 T'ien Ju-k'ang in his *Male Anxiety and Female Chastity: A Comparative Study of Chinese Ethical Values in Ming-Ch'ing Times* (1987) also states that "[t]he Mongol empire was the first nomad dynasty to conquer the whole of China, shattering the native traditional ethical code which had constrained Chinese society for more than a thousand years previously" (2).
- 38 It is instructive to note that Chinese opera performers are officially called performing artists [*biaoyan yishujia*] or theatrical performers [*yanyuan*] in mainland China today, in contrast with the old insulting labels of *xizi* ["player" with a sense of contempt] or *changxi de* [literally "one who sings drama"]. But traditional theatre has been censored as it was in the past.
- 39 Their names are: Mary Pix, Catharine Trotter, Delariviere Manley, Susanna Centlivre, Jane Wiseman, and Mary Davys. Quoted by Lesley Ferris based on Kathryn Kendall's "Theatre, Society and Women Playwrights in

London from 1695 through the Queen Anne Era" (Ph.D. Diss., U of Texas 1986) (*Acting Women* 155).

- 40 Used in the sense that Jonathan Dollimore defines as signifying "reversal of position and/or reversal of direction, both being inimical to effective government and social control. . . . it is in this sense that the female cross-dresser of the early seventeenth century could be described as an 'invert' or 'pervert,' and hardly at all in the sense of those words as coined and popularized by the nineteenth century sexologists and, later, psychoanalysis" (*Sexual Dissidence* 287–8).
- 41 Charlotte Chark's dual cross-dressing made her a scandalous invert. Many breeches role actresses cross-dressed only on stage. Her unsettled sexuality made her further at odds with normative social ideology of gender and sex: "she went from playing men's roles on the stage to living as a man, even for a time . . . living with a young widow. At least two other women, mistaking her for a man, allegedly fell in love with her, ultimately 'forcing' her to reveal her true sex . . . . It was probably the threat posed by her putative lesbianism that made her less popular than some of the other women who played what came to be called 'breeches' roles" (Bullough 86). Kristina Straub in her *Sexual Suspects* (1992) devotes one whole chapter to Charlotte Chark, illustrating the difficulties, dangers as well as virtues "of reading the ambiguities of past sexualities from the perspective of resistance to the social oppression that goes by the name of normative sexuality" (147).
- 42 There is similar evidence from Turkish and Egyptian harems in the nineteenth century.
- 43 The two terms *nüxi* and *nüyue*, depending on the context, can refer to either "female performers" or "female troupes."
- 44 One or two rare exceptions of men acting together with women on private and informal occasions can be found. Based on a Ming source, Lu Eting notes that the amateur [*chuanke*] painted-face actor Wang Yan (active in the reign of Wanli 1573–1620) occasionally acted with courtesan-entertainers in the city of Changan (83) ("In the city of Changan, Wang visited the brothels and joined in the courtesans' drama performance. He played the character of Zhang Ming the Board Secretary and was extolled by the connoisseurs." From Zhang Yuanchang's *Meihua caotang qutan* [Chats on drama from the thatched cottage of peach blossoms] 11; also quoted in Lu Eting 82). Another exception is recorded in an eighteenth century notation book. The son of the teacher of a female troupe called Double Purity [*Shuangqing ban*] occasionally cross-dressed to play the young female role, pairing with the girl player who cross-dressed in reverse to play the young male role. People called it "the shifting game of the male and female roles" [*shengdan bianju*] (Lu Eting 241).

- 45 They quote from the information given in *Records of Dreams* on Qian Dai's female troupe and another notation book, Xiang Gu Shi, *Canlu gushi* [Stories from the broken bamboo box]. Following the common academic practice in mainland China, Hu and Liu do not give a full citation of their source. Based on the edition of *Records of Dreams* that I have in hand, of the singing-girls in Qian Dai's private troupe whose age is recorded, three were of the age of 12 and one 11 (3235). According to Lu Eting, the singing-girls in the Qing period were also usually around eleven or twelve years of age (241).

## CHAPTER THREE

- 1 English translation *Opera, or the Undoing of Women* (1988).
- 2 *I Puritani di Scozia*, libretto by C. Pepoli, first produced in Paris and London in 1835.
- 3 The story of the Hegemon King and his concubine has been made famous to moviegoers worldwide through Chen Kaige's film *Farewell My Concubine* (1993) (see chapter 2 n15) in which the two male leads are Beijing opera masters who excel in staging this play.
- 4 *Qianjin ji*, one of the most popular plays from the traditional canon/repertoire. The play, based on a historical incident, is well known for its episode of the Hegemon King Xiang Yu and his concubine Yu Ji who died for him. A detailed analysis of this play is given in the following text.
- 5 *An Extensive Collection of Writings on Music Drama* is collected in and makes up one-quarter of Ren's edition of the 12-volume *Xinquyuan* [The new collection of critical writings on drama]. Ren's work as a compiler has been severely criticized by Ye Dejun (462–77) from a conventional literary historian's point of view. The value of this collection is given a positive evaluation in *Zhongguo da baike quanshu: xiqu, quyi* (331).
- 6 Zhuang Yifu gives an entry of this play in his exhaustive *Gudian xiqu canmu huikao* [A comprehensive catalogue of existing traditional music drama titles] (1982) (3: 1356). Wang Yongjian 645–52 gives a detailed biography of Shen.
- 7 Zhuang Yifu explains about the title: "This is about Xiangting's first encounter with Qing'er, thus the title of *A Smile of Thousand Pieces of Gold*" (3: 1356). It is common for playwrights after the Yuan period to give happy endings to existing plays, histories, and stories "to rectify the regrettable" [*buben*].
- 8 This record is not quoted in major works in related fields; for instance, Lu Eting, *Performance History of Kunju Opera*; Gu Duhuang, *Kunju shi bulun* [Supplementary discussions on the history of Kunju] (1987), Hu Ji and Liu Zhizhong, *History of Kunju Opera* (1989).

- 9 For instance, see Lu 160.
- 10 Adapted from Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies 25–6*.
- 11 I consulted the videos of two recent different performances of the Northern Kunqu Opera Company's (see bibliography for details). I have also compared two performance scripts by the company: a later version entitled *Bawang bieji* starring the current leading *dan* actress Yang Fengyi and a traditional version entitled *Bieji* (in according with the Ming play's act title) passed on orally by the great painted-face actor Hou Yushan (1893–1998). The latter of these two stencil scripts bears the date of July 29, 1986. The older text is very close to the Ming play *The Thousand Pieces of Gold*. It represents the legacy of the old tradition. This script was later included in *Hou Yushan Kunqu pu* [The Kunqu music and script as passed on by Hou Yushan] (1994), 53–7. The company's leaders told me that they considered this old version not effective theatrically today and that they had therefore attempted the new versions. I am grateful for the assistance provided by them.
- 12 Mei Lanfang provides more details of his creation of this play in his *Wutai shenghuo sishinian* [Forty years' performing on the stage] (1987), 664–76.

#### CHAPTER FOUR

- 1 Since Maxine Hong Kingston was born into a family of Cantonese origin, she remembers Hua Mulan (spelling following the convention of the pinyin system) in its Cantonese romanization: Fa Mu Lan.
- 2 Thus the presence of the Cantonese romanization "Fa Mu Lan" instead of the more official PRC putonghua/pinyin or ROC *guoyu*/Wade-Giles "Hua Mu(-)lan" in Hong Kingston's text can be read with significant semiotic meaning: the denial of monolithic authority and the celebration of marginality.
- 3 The narrator recounts, "'We are going to carve revenge on your back,' my father said" (34).
- 4 Chang-tai Hung's *War and Popular Culture* (1994) carries a section on the figure of the woman warrior in spoken dramas: "Female Symbols of Resistance: Patriotic Courtesans and Women Warriors." See especially 72–8 for a discussion of the Hua Mulan plays during the Sino-Japanese War.
- 5 There are many plays from the Yuan Dynasty onward that dramatize the military adventures of the Yang family generals and their widows. An often mentioned early play is *Yangliulang diaobing po tianzhen* [Yang the sixth son deploys troops to destroy the Heaven's Gate battle formation], in *Quanyuan zaju waibian* [Sequel to complete works of Yuan

- drama]. *Yangjiafu shidai zhongyong yanyizhuan* [Chivalric stories of several generations of the Yang family generals], prefaced in 1606 by Qinhuai moke [pseud.] (Ming) is one of the popular versions of the saga in long narrative form.
- 6 Among the four major role-types in Chinese opera (*sheng*, *dan*, *jing*, and *chou*) (chapter 1, n4), the *daomadan* role-type can be considered a subdivision of a category of *dan*, the *wudan* ["military female"]. The *daomadan* in general specializes in playing woman generals and wears military armor while the *wudan* plays civil women who excel in martial arts, or bandits, or demons, etc.
  - 7 Catherine Clément's psychoanalytic-feminist reading of *The Ring* and Brünnhilde and opera in general is inspiring toward a rereading of women representations in Chinese opera.
  - 8 According to Huang Wenyang, *Qubai zongmu tiyao* [Synopses for *A Bibliography of Plays*], Vol. 1, 650 and Zhuang Yifu, Vol. 2, 948. Zhuang states that the Beijing Library's collection has an edition of *Xianglin xian* dated 1736, the first year of the reign of Emperor Qianlong. Other sources state that this play has been lost.
  - 9 For a brief biography of Ma, see *Zhongguo xiquzhi: Tianjin juan* [Annals of Chinese music drama: Tianjin volume], 432.
  - 10 I am indebted to Ms Yang Fengyi, winner of the Plum Blossom Award and Deputy Director of the Beijing Northern Kunqu Company for making the script and video of the play available to me and for her explication of her stage interpretation of the dramatic character. I first watched the performance of the play at the Hong Kong Cultural Center on November 17, 1989 on an occasion in which all six Kunqu troupes from China were, for the first time, gathered together to celebrate this traditional theatre. In December 1994, I attended another staging of this play at Ms Yang's "special performance" [*zhuanchang*] in Beijing. The most recent performance by Ms Yang with the company took place in Taipei on March 18, 2002, presented by the New Aspect Cultural Foundation [Xinxiang wenhua jijinhui].
  - 11 "Battle formation" is a translation of the Chinese term *zhen*, which in this context refers to a kind of magic warfare with the formation of troops in the form of mazes in preparation for battle. It appears often in the military adventure novels (also referred to as "military romance" by some critics) in traditional Chinese literature. See Hsia 352–7 for more details of *zhen* and its use in Chinese novels. *Zhen* is also frequently seen in traditional theatres; for instance, the Beijing opera play *Tianmen zhen* [The Heaven's Gate battle formation] is another popular piece that dramatizes an episode of the Yang family woman warrior Mu Guiying who is also one of the leading roles in *Yangmen nüjiang*.

- 12 Lois Wheeler Snow uses the word “pause” to translate *liangxiang* (31) and “Bright Appearance” (glossary) for a literal translation. This is not accurate. *Liang* in the compound *liangxiang* is a verb, meaning “to show” (as in “to disclose”). However, her brief English description of this term is useful to further illustrate this performance convention: “A convention of Peking opera. It is a still, statuesque pose assumed for a brief moment by the principals and others while entering or leaving the stage, sometimes after a dance or an acrobatic feat, in order to bring out sharply and concentratedly the spiritual outlook of the characters” (glossary).
- 13 Translations of this play are based on a stencil-print script dated July 16, 1989.
- 14 The term “tune” is used instead of “aria” to denote a *qapai* [literally “tune-title”] because the concept of “aria” in European opera is not exactly the same as that of a *qapai*. The word “tune” is relatively more neutral in referring to an organized structure of musical sounds.
- 15 Interestingly, the performance convention of *qiba* originated in the imperial past from the Kunqu performance of *The Hegemon King Says Farewell to the Concubine*. “The lord rises up” is Jo Riley’s translation (*Chinese Theatre and the Actor in Performance* 296).
- 16 As Simon Shepherd points out in *Amazon and Warrior Women*, “The business of needlework is a stock emblem of femininity, and of woman’s social place: modest, passive, ornamental. Its rejection by female fighters is commonly insisted on: Tasso’s Clorinda finds it necessary to abjure these attributes in order to fulfill herself as a woman” (7). But cultural processes are full of exceptions. Dorothy Ko has pointed out that in seventeenth century China, embroidery was for a time turning into a respectable art form practiced even by some scholar-officials. This was one of the “playful transgressions” that Ko uses to argue that “the Ming-Qing gender system was more flexible in practice than what the official ideology would have one believe” (175).
- 17 This is the term used by revered ethnomusicologist Rulan Chao Pian in her study of Beijing opera “arias” [*banqiang*] (Pian 1975).
- 18 The synopsis given in Chen Weiyu’s *Kunju zhezixi chutan* [A preliminary survey of the select scene plays in Kunju opera] (1991) describes this earlier version, not the current one.
- 19 The main architects in the making of the new version were Shi Hongtu, then Company Director of the Beijing Opera Company of the City of Beijing [Beijing Jingjuyuan] and An Rongqing, a noted Beijing opera *daomadan* actress.
- 20 The two terms are used after Teresa de Lauretis, see “Feminist Studies/Critical Studies” 1.
- 21 Mark Elvin in his study of the Chinese “body-person and heart-mind”

- states that “the Chinese body (*shen*) is a peg-doll whose role is to be a carrier of corporeal and/or sartorial attributes” (267).
- 22 The other three were Cheng Yanqiu (1904–1958), Shang Xiaoyun (1900–1976), Xun Huisheng (1900–1968).
  - 23 “[T]he facade of sexual equality in contemporary Chinese society” (Li Ziyun 306) has been unmasked by writers and critics. For critical reflections on various aspects of the failure of women’s emancipation in China and critiques of the marginalization of women’s voices as signifiers of high-sounding political causes, see Tonglin Lu (ed.), *Gender and Sexuality in Twentieth-Century Chinese Literature and Society* (1993), and the section “Becoming Women in the Post-Mao Era” in Christina Gilmartin, et al. (eds), *Engendering China: Women, Culture, and the State* (1994).

## CHAPTER FIVE

- 1 This well-known concerto for violin and orchestra was composed by He Zhanho and Chen Gang in 1959. As a footnote, it is instructive to notice that this piece of programmatic music has not represented, or is unable to represent the transgender dimension.
- 2 The lyrics are collected in Qian Nanyang, *Liang-Zhu xiju jicun* 1.
- 3 Collected in Lu Gong, Zhou Jingshu and Qian Nanyang, *Liang-Zhu xiju jicun*.
- 4 The romanization of this regional opera is the same as that of the Guangdong province — “Yueju” in both cases. I shall use “Yueju opera” to refer to the Zhejiang opera and “Cantonese opera” to refer to the Yueju of Guangdong.
- 5 It should be pointed out that in terms of musical rendition, this Huangmeidiao opera film is more modernized and hybrid (Yu Siu-wah 122–5) than the other Liang-Zhu Chinese opera films which more closely follow their own individual regional operatic musical styles. This film is modern cinema supplemented with modernized Huangmeidiao opera music. We can say that in the Yueju and Cantonese opera film versions, Chinese opera comes before cinema. It is just the opposite in this Huangmeidiao film. The cinematic quality must have contributed greatly to this film’s phenomenal success.
- 6 Yuan Xuefen, arguably the most important actress in the recent history of Yueju opera, relates her own story and the early history of the opera in chapter 15, “The Girl in the Butterfly Opera” of Dymphna Cusack’s *Chinese Women Speak*. Her name is romanized as “Yuan Sui-feng” in this 1958 book.

- 7 See Lu Gong 1–2 for the original Tang and Song texts.
- 8 Zhou Jingshu, Vol. 1: 286–92, reprints many of these records.
- 9 Huang Shang's 1953 reading of these two plays is a good example of this "critique of feudalism" approach ("Liang Zhu zaji").
- 10 Fong was voted "queen of the *buadan*" in 1952 by the magazine *Yule zhiyin* [The sound of entertainment].
- 11 *Tongzhi*—a term originally used by Dr Sun Yat-sen meaning "comrades" in his nationalist revolution was later widely adopted in Chinese communist rhetoric. In 1989, Hong Kong avant-garde theatre director-writer Edward Lam started the city's first annual *Tongzhi dianying jie* [Lesbian and Gay Film Festival] and by historical contingency reappropriated the term *tongzhi* into another context for the cause of queer people. This Chinese term has now been commonly adopted across Hong Kong, Taiwan and the Mainland in referring to queer matters. "Tongzhi" should not be understood as a translation of "lesbian and gay," "homosexuals," or "queer." These terms have their various Chinese translations. The significance of *tongzhi* is that it is a locally invented sign for a local context. "The appropriation of the term '*tongzhi*' is so appropriate to its own cultural space and temporality. It implies a sense of revolutionary subversion and goes beyond the self-limitation and also repudiates the unequal power relation involved in the translation of an equivalent foreign term. The term 'fully grasps the local cultural context'" (Li Siu Leung 38). Chou Wah-shan has written extensively in Chinese on *tongzhi* issues. For an English reference, see his *Tongzhi: Politics of Same-Sex Eroticism in Chinese Societies* (2000). For a comprehensive collection of works by Edward Lam and writings about him, see his *Lin Yihua de xiju shijie* [The theatre world of Edward Lam] (2000). Rozanna Lilley's *Staging Hong Kong* (1998) includes a chapter on Edward Lam.
- 12 The two novels are collected in Zhou Jingshu, 483–665 and 666–750 respectively. For Zhao's use of male pronouns, see 726 *passim*; for Zhang's switching to female forms of address, see 605 *passim*.
- 13 For a detailed analysis of the construction of masculinity in China with special reference to the representation of the "scholar," see Song Geng's dissertation "The Fragile Scholar."
- 14 This is a transcription from the English audio track of the documentary film. I consulted the version aired on TVB (Television Broadcasts Ltd) which is bilingual. There is also a Cantonese audio track. Both Chinese and English subtitles are provided. The Chinese subtitles are transcriptions of the Cantonese track put in standard written Chinese. The English subtitles are translations of the Chinese subtitles. There are slight differences among all these renditions of the voice-over narrative of the documentary.

- 15 It should be pointed out here that the imposition of the modern notion of “gay and straight” and “homosexuality” on traditional Chinese culture is problematic. Put simply (after Foucault and the scholarship on sexuality that followed), these notions did not exist in imperial China, nor did they even exist in, for instance, early modern England. In focus here are modern reinterpretations and remakes of a traditional Chinese story, not what same-sex love really was in a certain historical moment in imperial China. In a different historical, cultural context, the Chinese did have other terms to refer to men whose sexual orientation was same-sex love: *duanxiu* [cut sleeve], *fentao* [shared peach], *longyang* [the Lord of Longyang], *nansè* [male color], *nanfeng* [southern custom], *tuzi* [rabbit], etc. But there were no terms on the opposite pole to form binaries. For recent discussions on the construction of same-sex love in imperial China in English, see Hinsch (chapter 1), Vitiello (chapter 1), Song Geng (chapter 5).
- 16 This featurette entitled *The Making of the Lovers* strangely misspelled the official English title of the musical play which should read “The Lover” without an “s,” as seen in its press releases, advertisements and the house program. This significance of the omission of the “s” is discussed in the following text. This English featurette was aired on TVB (Television Broadcasts Ltd) Pearl on January 1, 1999.
- 17 See Kei Lo, “Dang Qu Yuan yushang tongzhi” [When Qu Yuan meets tongzhi] (*Xinbao* [Hong Kong Economic Journal] June 17, 1999: 32); Poon Kwok-sum, “Mozai feibang Qu Yuan” [Stop slandering Qu Yuan] (*Ming Pao* June 21, 1999: E4); Xiaomingxiong, “Tongzhi kan lishi tongzhi” [Tongzhi looking at historical tongzhi] (*Ming Pao* June 26, 1999: E4).

## CHAPTER SIX

- 1 A color photograph is included in *Zhongguo da baike quanshu: xiqu, qiyi* [The great Chinese encyclopedia: traditional music drama, folk musical art forms] (1983), illustrations p. 8; see also *Zhongguo xiquzhi: Shanxi juan* [Annals of Chinese music drama: Shanxi volume] (1990), color plate (not paginated). Shen Congwen’s monumental *Zhongguo gudai fushi yanjiu* [Study of ancient Chinese costumes] (1981, 1992) contains a reconstructed color illustration (illustration 206, p. 434). Further photographic reprints of varied quality are found in Liao Ben’s *Song Yuan xiqu wenwu yu minsu* [Cultural relics and folk custom of the music drama of Song and Yuan dynasties] (1989), color plate 31, and in Shih’s *The Golden Age of Chinese Drama* — the frontispiece, a black and white reprint with some portion of the right margin cut off.

- 2 The wording of the two entries are almost identical. The one in *The Great Chinese Encyclopedia: Traditional Music Drama, Folk Musical Art Forms* was written by Liu Nianzi who also authored one of the first articles referring to the Yuan mural, "Yuan zaju yanchu xingshi de jidian chubu kanfa" [Some preliminary reflections on the performance practice in Yuan zaju theatre] in *Xiqu yanjiu* [Study in Chinese music drama] 2 (1957). Liu was also one of the contributing editors to *Annals of Chinese Music Drama: Shanxi Volume* (797). The entry in *Annals* is very likely adapted from the one in *The Great Chinese Encyclopedia*.
- 3 The bound feet, as a unique cultural sign in imperial China, were transformed onto the male transvestite stage through the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century in the fetishistic prop of the *qiao*, a pair of tiny wooden shoes "put on" by some of the male *dan* role-types to emphasize the femininity of Chinese women. For a detailed study of the *qiao*, see Huang Yufu's *Jingju, qiao he Zhongguo de xingbie guanxi 1920-1937* [Chinese gender relations as seen through *qiao* in Peking opera (1902-1937)] (1998).
- 4 See Shen Congwen, illustration 137.2. For Khitan men with earrings, see also Shen Congwen, illustrations 121.1, 121.4, 121.5.
- 5 For instance, the Javanese *ludruk* plays in which the transvestite actor "deliberately reminds the audience that he is a man displaying the illusion of a woman" by clearing his throat "in a deep bass" (Peacock 212). In the traditional Iranian theatre called *ta'ziyeh*, "women are portrayed by males dressed in black cloaks similar to the green and red cloaks worn by men. . . . they also wear male trousers and shoes. . . . the 'women' are dressed in virtually the same type of costume as the males, with one exception: They also wear a thin facial veil. Their veil is translucent, allowing anyone to see that the actor is male and not a female. Moreover, the persons depicting women chant in their normal, identifiably male voices" (Beeman 18). In Balinese *Parwa* dance drama, apart from the inversions and reversals of the gender of the role and the gender of the role player, "[r]arely is the gender of the performer completely disguised" (Emigh and Hunt 196).
- 6 The role-types of *fujing* (or *jing*) and *fumo* played a major part in the theatrical performance of the Song zaju and Jin yuanben. They constituted an interdependent pair of comic roles. The *fujing* (*jing*) role-type of the Song-Jin times is said to be the forerunner of the *jing* (the painted face role-type) in later regional operas.
- 7 The two photographic reproductions are of approximately the size of 7.25"x 8.75" and the reconstructed picture 7.8" x 10". The original mural measures 4.11m x 3.11m (Liao 217).

## CHAPTER SEVEN

- 1 Charlotte Furth's "Androgynous Men and Deficient Females: Biology and Gender Boundaries in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century China" (1988) gives an account of the treatment of gender in important medical writings and notation books in Ming-Qing China. See also her *A Flourishing Yin* (1999). Judith Zeitlin draws on various notation books to illustrate attitudes toward gender ambiguity in these periods ("Dislocations in Gender," *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* [1993]).
- 2 There are many explications of *xing* in classical criticism. But my formulation here is indebted to a comparative study by Chou Ying-hsiung, "The Linguistic and Mythical Structure of *hsing* [*xing*] as a Combinational Model" (1980).
- 3 Quoted in Orgel, *The Illusion of Power* 42.
- 4 In their epoch-making study on Chinese history entitled *Xingsheng yu weiji* [Prosperity and crisis] (1984), Jin Guantao and Liu Qingfeng give insightful analyses of the interrelational functioning of imperial power and the bureaucratic system in the larger context of a social-economic-political system of subsystems in the Chinese feudal society, which they theorize as an ultra-stable system with a marvelous capacity for self-recovery and self-restoration.
- 5 For instance, Emperor Qianlong. One of the major entertainments in his several imperial inspection tours across the empire was Kunqu opera. In general, late Qing emperors and the Empress Dowager (who controlled the court from 1861 to her death in 1908) were very fond of watching Beijing opera.
- 6 I have an uneasy feeling about this statement by Earl Miner: "It is a very Chinese assumption, often shared by foreign students of China, that if something exists anywhere else it necessarily and thrivingly exists also in China" (60).
- 7 From the famous Ming play *Xiuru ji* [The embroidered shirt] written by Xu Lin (1462–1538). Some acts are retained and still performed in today's Kunju opera.
- 8 The first record is probably Jiao Xun's own, while the other three records are quoted from existing works.
- 9 Qin Hui lived at the turn of the Northern and Southern Song periods when the imperial dynasty of Han rule was under severe threat from foreign races. As minister, he set up and then executed the righteous and loyal general Yue Fei who had fought bravely against the Jin Dynasty, a foreign people who had taken over the northern part of China. In traditional Chinese culture, Yue Fei and Qin Hui have become the ultimate symbols of good and evil.

In Yuan drama, their story was told in *Qin taishi dongchuang shifan* [Minister Qin's conspiracy leaked out under the east window], a *zaju* which was lost and has been attributed to the playwright Jin Renjie (?–1329) (Zhuang Yifu 1: 316–8) and also in an extant Ming edition of a *xiwen* play, also known as *naxi* [southern drama] of the same title (1:51–2). An extant Yuan *zaju* play on the same theme, entitled *Dizang wang zheng dongchuang shifan* [The Buddhist deity of salvation bears witness to the conspiracy under the east window] by Kong Wenqing of early Yuan, is collected in Xu Shusen's *Yuanqu xuan waibian* [Supplementary volumes to *Selected Yuan Plays*], vol. 2, and in *Yuan kan zaju sanshi zhong* [The Yuan dynasty edition of thirty *zaju* plays] (Xu Qinjun 2: 530–60; Ning Xiyuan 2: 82–97). The early Ming playwright Yao Maoliang's *Jingzhong ji* [Story of the loyal] is the play referred to in Jiao Xun's records. The most popular novel version of this story is the 80-chapter *Shuo Yue quanchuan* [The complete saga of Yue Fei] by the early Qing writer Qian Cai.

- 10 "The judge pitied him for his righteousness and reduced his penalty" (Jiao 203).
- 11 At the same time, the role of spectator in the production of meaning has been relatively neglected in theatre semiotics: "It is precisely this exclusion of 'audience passion' from studies of theatre semiotics that has generated a suspicion of its mode of inquiry as reductive, scientific, or somehow inappropriate to the nature of theatre . . . a semiotics of theatre needs to make space for its inclusion and write the spectator into the frame as an engaged, active receiver" (Aston and Savona 121–2).
- 12 "Once Chuang Chou dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Chuang Chou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Chuang Chou. But he didn't know if he was Chuang Chou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Chuang Chou. Between Chuang Chou and a butterfly there must be *some* distinction! This is called the Transformation of Things" (Burton Watson's translation; *Chuang Tzu* 45; original emphasis). The passage is from the chapter "Qiwulun" [Discussion on making things equal].
- 13 These incidents of representations of reality relating to Chinese opera are perhaps more multivalent than our latest imaginations of the postmodern, Baudrillardian virtual reality in American popular culture. In the 1999 hit movie *The Matrix*, for instance, a "Welcome to the real world" is extended to Neo (Keanu Reeves) early in the narrative. Regardless of the dizzying CG effects and the innovative "bullet-time" editing, the real world and the simulated world of the "Matrix" in the film are nevertheless clearly distinguished.

- 14 This is taken from Wang Chi-chen's translation, entitled *Dream of the Red Chamber* (11). I chose this translation because it is literally closer to the original than the others. (David Hawkes and John Minford's acclaimed translation is entitled *The Story of the Stone* [New York: Penguin Books, 1973–86]. Yang Xianyi and Gladys Yang rendered it *A Dream of Red Mansions* [Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 1978–80].)
- 15 Xia Xieshi in his *Lun Zhongguo xiju piping* [On Chinese dramatic criticism] (1988) follows an "allegorical" reading of this incident of playacting and interprets it as a political comment (13–4).
- 16 Tang's most famous play *The Peony Pavilion* became the focus of an international controversy when in 1998 the scheduled performances of a modernized production of the play — which was a co-production of the Lincoln Center Festival, Festival d'Automne à Paris with Parc de la Villette and Théâtre de Caen, the Sydney Festival and the Hong Kong Arts Festival and performed by the Shanghai Kunju Opera Company — was blocked by Chinese cultural officials. The production was recast and finally had its premiere at the Lincoln Center Festival in New York, July 7–25, 1999.
- 17 See Xia Xieshi 31–124, especially 87–96. With regard to this concept of capturing the essence/psyche, let me draw on a piece of commentary comparing two of the most important Chinese opera performing artists who excelled in playing the Monkey King for further illustration. Yang Xiaolou (1878–1938), a Beijing opera military-male-role performer and Hao Zhenji (1870–1945), a Kunju opera painted-face player were the greatest Monkey King actors of their time. In 1933, an essay of theatre criticism in the newspaper *Yishi bao* compared the two in this way: "Xiaolou's monkey is still a human disguising as a monkey; Hao's is virtually a monkey disguising as a human" (Hou Yushan 214).
- 18 In classical Chinese writings on acting, there are plenty of statements that sound similar to Stanislavski's theory. The expression "putting oneself in the other's position" [*sbeshen chudi*] is prevalent in the discussion of acting in traditional writings. To give another example, the eighteenth century critic Xu Dachun discusses singing/acting in these terms: "It is a must that the singer puts himself/herself in the position of what s/he is playing. Imitate that person's emotions and action, as if that person is speaking himself/herself. In this way, the verisimilitude in appearance will capture the audience's heart and mind, making the audience feel like facing that real person, forgetting that it is only a performance" (14). There is no doubt that Chinese acting theories also emphasize the performer's putting himself/herself in the position of whomever or whatever s/he is going to play. But this is where the similarity ends. The

epistemological conceptions and theatrical concerns are very different. We should also note that it is often the general types of characters with corresponding types of people-referents in the real world, not the specific individual characters in a play (the subject of Stanislavski's theory), that is being referred to. Further evidence for this argument is found in traditional writings about performers. They were always represented as good at playing certain role-types rather than individual characters (see *The Green Bower Collection*). This has undergone some changes nowadays. Inevitably influenced by Western culture in modern times, Chinese theatre criticism today does also identify a Chinese opera performer by the several dramatic characters s/he plays the best, in addition to focusing on her/his role-type's specialization. However, one should still bear in mind that on the traditional Chinese stage, individual characters tend to represent more of a type than an individual; for instance, the heroine Dou'e in the Yuan play *Injustice to Dou'e* has been read by some critics as an impersonation of morality more than a round individual character in the Western sense. For more discussion in English on the "psychological preparation" of the performer in Ming times, see Grant Shen 77–81.

- 19 In her analysis of the Takarazuka Revue using the concept of androgyny, Jennifer Robertson traces a similar concept in Japanese culture back to the classical theory of the Kabuki onnagata which "was a twist on the Buddhist concept of *benshin*, or bodily transformation or metamorphosis" (53). There are some common grounds for comparison between the Chinese and Japanese notions of "androgyny." This will require another full-length study.
- 20 There are records of incidents of sex transformation found in various classical Chinese writings from *Soushen ji* [Seeking the spirits] (from the fourth century) through official historical records to informal writings by the literati. For accounts in English, see Furth, "Androgynous Men and Deficient Females" and Zeitlin.
- 21 There are a number of contemporary critiques of the anti-theatrical debates in early modern England constituted by the writings of John Calvin, Stephen Gosson, the two treatises *Haec-Vir; or The Womanish Man* (1620) and *Hic Mulier; or The Man-Woman* (1620), John Rainoldes, William Prynnes, and Phillip Stubbes. See, for instance, Barish; Bray; Digangi; Goldberg; Jean Howard; Lisa Jardín; Kelly; Levine; Orgel; Rose; Shapiro; Shepherd; Bruce Smith; Stallybrass; Traub.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

- 1 In the sense of Timothy J. Wiles. "... I refer to the creative interaction of literary text, actor's art, and spectator's participation as 'the theater event' " (3).
- 2 K. C. Leung's English translation (69). It is useful to note that it has been argued that "One of the primary themes in late-imperial Chinese representations of the actor is the rivalry between actor and *courtesan* for the ground of femininity. . . . As the appropriation of feminine names, feminine kinship terms, and allusions commonly used to describe *courtesans* implies, the discourse on male actors in late-imperial China is largely shaped by cultural icons of the feminine, and, in particular, the representation of *courtesans*" (Sophie Volpp 139; emphasis added).
- 3 "*Chuan*" literally means "to pass on and to spread." This generation of Kunqu performers, which totaled around 40 members at the beginning, were trained in the 1920s in Suzhou when the art form was dying in southern cities. They sustained the existence of the art form and have taught subsequent generations of Kunqu artists. Many students of the *chuan* generation masters are core and active performers today. For a quick overview, see Hu Ji and Liu Zhizhong 649-66, 684-711.
- 4 Jo Riley's expression (298). She also structured her book *Chinese Theatre and the Actor in Performance* (1997) following this principle of *luan*: "... the eight chapters of this work could be read in any direction. All routes pass the central, unifying figure of Mei Lanfang. The passage across the work is not intended to be linear, but multi-layered, interconnected, like a spider's web" (11).
- 5 To translate the qualities of *caoshu* into musical terms, the renowned composer Chou Wen-chung wrote an avant-garde piece for flute and piano entitled "Cursive" (New York: C. F. Peters, 1965) which makes use of microtones and key-tapping on the flute and prepared piano to express the cursive concept.

## CHAPTER NINE

- 1 Both of them have often been invited to perform outside China. Hong Kong Chinese opera-goers are familiar with their art. Not limiting herself to the traditional form, Shi Xiaomei recently participated in a multi-media music theatrical production by the avant-garde Hong Kong theater company Zuni Icosahedron, "Sigmund Freud in Search of Chinese Matter and Mind", which ran from February 1 to 3, 2002 at the Hong Kong City Hall Theatre.
- 2 Some of these actresses have ventured into film roles. For instance, He Saifei of the Zhejiang Xiaobaihua Yueju Opera Troupe starred in Zhang

Yimou's film *Raise the Red Lantern*(1991) as the third wife of the master of the House of Chen.

- 3 I am indebted to Mr Wen Ruhua for granting me interviews with him and providing various materials about his career for my present discussion. For quick reference, I provide a brief chronology of Mr Wen here:
- 1958/11 years: Entered the National Chinese Opera School, graduated in 1966 (19 years old), specializing in the *sheng* role-type.
- 1959/12 years: Captivated by a performance by Zhang Junqiu, began privately imitating his *dan* style.
- 1965/18 years: Learning the performance of the male *dan* from Zhang as a private student, since the School did not allow the male *dan* to be taught or learned.
- 1968-1972: The Cultural Revolution, "re-education" at a military farm [*junqu nongchang*].
- 1972/25 years: Assigned to the Comrades-in-Arms Beijing Opera Troupe of the Beijing Military Region [*Zhanyou jingju tuan* ], turned to composing, scripting and producing, mainly working on model dramas.
- 1979/32 years: Performed *Wangjiang ting*, a Zhang school play.
- 1980/33 years: Performed *Chunqiu pei*, another Zhang school play, "officially" began his artistic career. Renowned Chinese opera personality and playwright Weng Ouhong regarded him highly and supported him.
- 1982/35 years: Reassigned to the Beijing Opera Company of the City of Beijing. Weng Ouhong wrote the play *Baimian langjun* [The fair-faced gentleman] for him, the story of a man who disguises himself as a woman to save his wife from villains. The role-type of the leading actor of this play is assigned to the *sheng*, Wen's "official" role-type specialization. But the male lead appears as a woman and performs in the *dan* style for most of the play.
- 1984/37 years: More than forty shows of *The Fair-faced Gentleman* were staged, signifying the revival of the male *dan*. Received a certificate of merit in the capacity of a *sheng* performer from the Cultural Bureau of the City of Beijing.
- 1985/38 years: National tour from Urumqi in the West to Harbin in the East.
- 1988/41 years: Invited to perform in Japan. Acclaimed as "a third generation Mei Lanfang" by *Asahi Shimbun*.
- 1991/44 years: On stage in Japan together with Kabuki actors. Recorded the Chinese opera tunes for the film *Farewell My Concubine*.

- 1993/45 years: Performed in Japan.
- 1994/46 years: Performed in Taiwan. In Beijing doubled for the male lead in the television serial *Mei Lanfang* as the on stage Mei Lanfang.
- 1995/48 years: *The Fair-faced Gentleman* was produced for CCTV television.
- 1996/49 years: Premiered a new play *Qiumü zhuan* [Story of Damsel Qiu] on December 8, 1996, publicly promoted as “the last male *dan* actor in professional Beijing opera troupes nationwide.”
- 1998/51: Participated in performances in memorial of Zhang Junqiu.
- 1999/52: An article in *Beijing gongren bao* [Beijing Workers' Daily] (June 3) was entitled “Wen Ruhua: China's Last Female Impersonator.” *Story of Damsel Qiu* was produced for television by CCTV.
- 2001/54 years: Released *Wen Ruhua changqiangji* [The Wen Ruhua aria collection] on CD and cassette on the CRC label. Gave three lectures at the City University of Hong Kong, hosted by the University's Centre of Chinese Culture. Staged two special performances [*zhuanchang*] at Changan Theatre in Beijing. A report (attributed to a Wang Yao) in Hong Kong's *Ming Pao Daily* carried the title “The Last Male Impersonator.”
- 4 The original couplet comes from the finale chorus of Scene 2, Act 5 of the play (*Baimao nü* 467), written by He Jingzhi and Ding Yi, music by Ma Ke, et al.
- 5 See *Zhou Enlai tongzhi qingnian shiqi zai Tianjin de xiju huodong ziliao huibian* [A collection of information on comrade Zhou Enlai's theatre activities in Tianjin in his youthful years] (1981), 76–102, for the synopsis and stage photos. Zhou Enlai is identified in three of the photos, dressed in female dramatic costume.

#### EPilogue

- 1 We can compare this to what Greenblatt says about representation and “self-fashioning”: “. . . self-fashioning derives its interest precisely from the fact that it functions without regard for a sharp distinction between literature and social life. It invariably crosses the boundaries between the creation of literary characters, the shaping of one's own identity, the experience of being molded by forces outside one's control, the attempt to fashion other selves” (3).

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