

民俗與藝術

Journal of Chinese Ritual, Theatre and Folklore

Special Issue on "Traditional Chinese Drama and Theatre"
Part II

Homeward Odyssey: Theatrical Reframing
of "The Rakshas and the Sea Market"

Liana Chen

No. 140, June 2003

Shih Ho-cheng Folk Culture Foundation, Taipei

Homeward Odyssey: Theatrical Reframing of “The Rakshas and the Sea Market”

Liana Chen

PhD Candidate

Stanford University

Department of Asian Languages

This paper examines two late-Qing theatrical adaptations of Pu Songling's classical tale “Luocha Haishi” (The Rakshas and the Sea Market); Liu Qingyun's *Tianfeng yin* (The guidance of the heavenly wind) and Guanju daoren's *Jile shijie* (The realm of ultimate bliss). “Luocha Haishi” is a shrewd social allegory that satirize the Chinese court culture. The literal implication of “Haishi”(Sea Market)—the gate to the Dragon Palace—suggests that such a wonderland never exists. In the process of reframing the story, both plays significantly turn the original sorrowful finale to a happy ending by settling the protagonist and his family in the land of immortality. *Jile shijie* further transforms the demonic Rakshas Kingdom into the land of opportunities, where the protagonist realizes all his worldly dreams.

This article focuses on cultural implications underlying similar reframing strategies adopted by the two playwrights. It takes its cue from three questions: (1) How the outlandish world is transformed into a wonderland in *Tianfeng yin* and *Jile shijie*; (2) How the division of the self and other is revealed through the playwright's imagination of the barbarian perspectives on China and Chinese culture; (3) The symbolic representation of Han people's imagination of the bestial quality of barbarians on the Chinese stage. In terms of the perception of the exotic, the two plays follow the *Shanhai jing* discourse to certain extent: both seek to exaggerate the physical and moral differences so as to assure the cultural centrality and superiority of the Han people. On the other hand, the outlandish world becomes a spiritual Utopia where the Chinese literati project their frustrated hopes and dreams. This complicate and sometimes contradictory representation of the exotic can be linked to the political and social turbulences in the late-Qing period, a time when the playwright can only entrust his/her wishes in the practice of writing. The seemingly outward voyage is thus a homeward odyssey, through which the wishes are fulfilled and the always self-contained identity is reaffirmed.

Key words: late-Qing, *Liaozhai zhiyi*, Utopia, exotic imagination.

Introduction

This paper examines two theatrical adaptations of "Luocha Haishi" 羅剎海市 (The Rakshas and the Sea Market), a classical tale by Pu Songling 蒲松齡 (1640-1715) in his *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異 (Liaozhai's records of the strange, hereafter *Liaozhai*). This tale relates a young Chinese merchant's odyssean journey to two fictional oceanic countries: *Luocha guo* 羅剎國 (The Rakshas Kingdom) and *Donghai Longgong* 東海龍宮 (The Dragon Palace of the Eastern Sea). The former is a land of the grotesque in Chinese literary tradition, and the latter, in the tradition of fiction and drama, represents a locus where the literati project their frustrated dreams in serving in affairs of state. As with most of the stories in *Liaozhai*, Pu fleshes out an otherwise clichéd expressive modes through his satiric representation of the hideous world of *Luocha* and the desirable yet surreal world of *Longgong*. He critiques insincerity and hypocrisy in his own society and thereby questions the existence of a spiritual Utopia, or refuge, for the literati. By unpacking a fixed literary expression, Pu reconstructs the topos and combines two legendary worlds into a sharp social allegory.

This shrewd social allegory is endowed with even sharper foci on Confucian and religious redemption in two theatrical adaptations—a *chuanqi* play entitled *Tianfeng yin* 天風引 (The guidance of the heavenly wind) and a *pihuang* 皮黃 play entitled *Jile shijie* 極樂世界 (The realm of ultimate bliss). These plays share some common features: both were written during the last several decades of the Qing dynasty, a time when China was suffering domestic turbulences and frustrations dealing with foreign authorities,¹ and both have probably never been performed on stage in their entirety.²

1. *Jile shijie*, was completed in 1840, when the Opium War (also called the Anglo-Chinese War) was still under way. In 1842, a year after Liu Qingyun, the female playwright of *Tianfeng yin*, was born, the Chinese were defeated and made to sign the Treaty of Nanjing, under which China ceded the island of Hong Kong to the British. During 1850-1864, there was the Taiping Rebellion, the largest peasant uprising in modern Chinese History.

2. According to Hua Wei, no evidence was found indicating that *Tianfeng yin*

The most significant above all is their similar treatment of the ending: settling the protagonist in the land of immortality, the two plays turn the original sorrowful finale to a mirthful and soothing one to both the readers and the playwrights, who may to certain extent identify themselves with the protagonist.

The similarity in their ways of reframing the original tale in *Tianfeng yin* and *Jile shijie* is by no means a coincidence, and could be attributed to the generic characteristics of drama in general. One thing to be kept in mind while examining the cross-generic transformation is the considerably high generic specificity of drama when compared to other literary genres: a playwright not only has to make his work palatable to the readers and (more importantly) the audience, but also needs to stay in tune with the theatrical conventions and innovations. In the case of Chinese drama, one needs to further consider the aura of the targeted regional operatic style in which a work is written, which is intrinsically fashioned by the local-flavored musical and dialectic components. Having these considerations in mind, therefore, when employing Patrick Hanan's idea of "simulated context" to approach the two adaptations,³ I will pay specific attention to the

has ever been put on stage in public (189). Zhang Xiulian 張秀蓮 notes that *Jile shijie* was adapted by Li Yuru 李毓如 into *Longma yinyuan* 龍馬姻緣 (Nuptial bond between the dragon and the horse), which was staged by the Fushou Troupe (Fushou ban 福壽班) and the Tongchun Troupe (Tongchun ban 同春班), two of the most famous *Pihuang* troupes of the late-Qing. In 1922, the famous *dan* actor Cheng Yanqiu 程硯秋 brought yet another version of *Longma yinyuan* (also called *Nan'an Guan* 南安關) to the Yi Theatre (Yi wutai 亦舞臺) in Shanghai, a version by Luo Yinggong 羅癭公 based on Li Yuru's work. According to "Yushuang nianpu 御霜年譜," a chronological record of Cheng Yanqiu's stage career by Cheng Yongjiang 程永江, the performance was heartily welcomed by the audience. For the stage history of *Jile shijie*, see *Zhongguo Jingjushi* 571; Zhu 706-07. For the accounts of Cheng Yanqiu's performance of *Longma yinyuan*, see Cheng 195-6.

3. Hanan has indicated that one of the great principles underlying the technique of Chinese vernacular fiction is its "simulated context," i.e., a "plausible context of situation in which the fiction may be conveyed from author to reader" (135). Therefore, when dealing with the issue of transforming works

nature, tradition, and the historical development of the medium (i.e. *chuanqi* and *pihuang* as two distinctive dramatic genres) through which the communication of the author and the readers/audience is made effective. The question at stake, then, is how the two playwrights employed different or similar strategies to reframe Pu Songling's classical tale to fit in the dramatic and theatrical discourse, so as to attract the presumed audience.

My research has shown that *Tianfeng yin* and *Jile shijie* rewrite Pu's social satire and turn the protagonist's adventure on the high sea into a homeward odyssey. The plays project the literati's visions and desires—frustrated in reality—onto a *terra incognita* over the sea. The para-Utopian discourse can be found in traditional deliverance plays or dramas that thematize the Dragon Palace. In their adaptations, the playwrights consciously follow the thematic approach prevalent in their dramatic tradition. Further, these two late-Qing plays complicate the perception of the exotic through their complex and, at times, contradictory representations of the exotic in these two late-Qing plays. On the one hand, they are vested in the tradition of *Shanhai jing* 山海經 (Classic of mountains and seas), which puts the Middle Kingdom—China—and its morality and culture at the center of the world. On the other hand, these plays transform the barbarian realm—deprived of cultural attainment—of the *Shanhai jing* tradition into a land filled with hope and unforeseen opportunities. This transformation can be linked to the political and diplomatic turbulences in the late-Qing reign, framed by a series of frustrations in the face of her militarily, materially, and culturally more advanced Western counterparts. In this light, the rewriting and reading the *Liaozhai* tales become a strategy for self-authentication through exaggerated differences in

of other literary genres into vernacular fictions, one should consider the identity of both the narrator and his audience, as well as “the precise situation in which one addresses the other” (135). See Hanan 135–39. The idea can be applied to the study of dramatic adaptations of other genres as well, since dramatic works, like vernacular stories, often have a standardized context, “a ready-made voice and a ready-made perspective” by which both the author and the audience are somewhat “conditioned.”

the bodies and cultures of the Han people and the unknown other. The ever-present self-contained identity is reaffirmed. The imaginary land of bliss and hope is a wish-fulfillment scheme. Like Odysseus' journey, this seeming outward trip to the realm of an other is an inward journey—however contradictory and questionable—to a spiritual Utopia.

I. Redefining the Strange in Pu Songling's “The Rakshas and the Sea Market”

“The Rakshas and the Sea Market” relates the story of Ma Ji 馬驥, a handsome man with great literary talent, who in his teens is asked by his father to take over the family business. His first sea voyage ends up in a shipwreck, and he is brought by the waves to the Rakshas Kingdom, where he encounters natives who are hideously deformed as monsters. He soon finds them no less terrified, for he appears to be an even more appalling figure to them. In order to make a living in this strange land where only “good-looking” people win the favor of the ruler and thus are able to support themselves, Ma Ji reluctantly accepts his friend's suggestion to disguise himself as Zhang Fei 張飛. Because of his appearance and his talent in singing and dancing he wins the favor of the King of Rakshas, and is appointed a court official. However, the fact that he gets promoted through disguising himself is discovered by his fellow officials, and as a result he decides to leave the court. Later on he follows some villagers to sail to the Sea Market (*Haishi* 海市), where he meets the Dragon Prince, who takes Ma with him to the Dragon Palace of the East Sea (*Donghai longgong* 東海龍宮). Ma's literary talent is highly appreciated by the Dragon King, who in turn asks Ma to marry his daughter. Though life at the Dragon Palace is merry and easy, Ma becomes homesick and decides to return to China to live with his parents, even though he is told that he may never come back to the palace and enjoy a reunion with the Dragon Princess during his life. The Dragon Princess gives birth to a son and a girl, and sends them back to Ma Ji. Throughout Ma Ji's lifetime he never returns to the Dragon Palace again.

“The Rakshas and the Sea Market” is among the few stories in

Liaozhai that deal with exotic foreign lands and their barbaric residents.⁴ Unlike the realms of foxes, ghosts, or immortals, who are still confined to the value system of the Chinese even though most of them are licentious beings with great power, the largely fabricated foreign countries in *Liaozhai* seem to be far more remote, more alienated from aspects of life that most of the Chinese are familiar with. Most of the foreign lands in *Liaozhai* are not mere fabrications by Pu Songling, but are elaborations of earlier descriptions found in ancient mythological sources or religious scriptures. The limited information we have concerning these legendary foreign lands leaves much room for Pu's imagination, through which he freely creates his own *terra incognita* to explore the issue of strangeness, the primary focus of the entire work.

The mythological origin of the Rakshas Kingdom, the first exotic land brought onto the stage in "The Rakshas and the Sea Market", can be traced back to the earliest Hindu mythology. The Rakshasas are depicted in various sources as hideous-looking, bloodthirsty evil spirits, who hated sages and seers who tried to bring the order of civilization to their realm.⁵ The folklore was probably introduced to China around the third to the fourth century through the translation of Buddhist scriptures, and was disseminated in the Chinese world during the Sui (581-617) and Tang (618-907) in the form of popular sermons (*sujiang* 俗講).⁶ A comparative study between "The Rakshas and the Sea Market" and a story

4. Among other stories that deals with foreign lands and foreigners are "Yecha guo 夜叉國" (The Kingdom of Yaksah), which is also about a Chinese merchant's adventure in the legendary Yaksah Kingdom; "Waiguo ren 外國人" (The foreigners), about Philippino fishermen blown ashore on an unknown island; "Heigui 黑鬼" (The Negroes), about two Negro slaves bought by a local official in Shandong Province.

5. In Hinduism, Rakshasas are "demons or anti-gods who are characterized as being those who wander at night. A fierce, giant-like sub-class of deities or demi-deities.... They number in the thousands and they may assume a number of shapes." See Bunce 437.

6. For a general introduction to the dissemination of Rakshas stories in China, see Qu 50.

about the Rakshasas in *Abhiniṣkramaṇa Sūtra* (Fo benxing jijing 佛本行集經) shows that Pu Songling actually adopted elements of the Buddhist story, such as the language, the name of the protagonist, and depiction of certain scenarios (Qu 56-8). However, Pu's story no longer carries the Buddhist preaching in the original story that asks one to abstain from luxury and carnal pleasure (Qu 57). By situating the recognized handsome youth, Ma Ji, in the Rakshas Kingdom, a country with aesthetic values completely opposite to those of China, thus making him a public horror in that country, Pu Songling questions the existence of a definite boundary between the strange and the normal, the ugly and the beautiful. The idea that the strange is a "subjective and relative concept" lies at the heart of the *Liaozhai*, and is displayed in many other stories as well.⁷ As Zeitlin points out, Pu Songling challenges the commonly accepted concept of strangeness and normality, and claims that they can only be determined through the eyes of the beholder (21).

On the other hand, the Rakshas Kingdom in the story operates like a counter-image to the familiar values in the Chinese world in which Ma Ji resides. Through Ma Ji's eyes, readers see their own world in a series of upside-down, exaggerated, or ridiculous images. The customs and cultures of this foreign country seem all too familiar and can be read as exaggerated versions of certain aspects of Ma Ji's own society. For example, he has to smear his face black to pass as a "handsome" man to gain favor from the ruler, much like the ways in which Chinese officials behave in the court, walking on the stage of the political arena in masks and never showing their real faces. The entire process of "putting on a mask to please the beauty-seeking authority" is but a literalization of certain fixed expressions⁸—a strategy often employed by Pu to construct his stories—so as to convey the moral implications of the

7. Tang Menglai's 唐夢賚 preface to *Liaozhai*, for example, discusses the subjectivity of the strange. Cf. Zeitlin, ch. 1, "The Discourse on the Strange," for a detailed analysis.

8. *Jia mianju* 假面具 (false face), for example, is a literary expression that signifies one's false characters.

story, which is disclosed at the end in the commentary of the Historian of the Strange (*Yishi shi* 異史氏):

Men must put on false, painted faces to please their superiors—such is the dreadful way of the world. There is a general fondness for this foul practice all the world over... Anyone who dares to walk in the street in his true features rarely fails to frighten people away. (*Strange Tales of Liaozhai* 233)

One other foreign land in the story is the Dragon Palace of the East Sea, which often resembles the mythical, Utopian realms in familiar folklore. It is this place in which all the best things that could ever happen in one's life are made true: Ma Ji marries the Dragon Princess and becomes a royal son-in-law; his literary fame is spread to the four seas. Pu Songling materializes Ma Ji's dream—a dream not only of his but also of all the not-yet-established Chinese scholars—but only temporarily. Pu does not offer any glimpse of hope of converting the virtual into the real, for Ma is soon forced to choose between staying at the Dragon Palace with the Princess or returning to China to perform his filial duty. He chooses the latter. The path that Ma Ji takes is one that has never been taken by his predecessors. Folktales about the Dragon King can be traced to ancient times, and in the process of dissemination it was also influenced by Buddhist stories. In Tang tales and later dramatic works, the connection between the mundane world and that of the Dragon Gods is established through the nuptial union of talented Chinese scholars (such as Liu Yi 柳毅 and Zhang Yu 張羽) and a Dragon Princess.⁹ While these legendary heroes spend the

9. There are three Tang tales that relate a romance between a Dragon Princess and a Chinese scholar, among which Li Chaowei's 李朝威 *Liu Yi zhuan* 柳毅傳 (The story of Liu Yi) is the most influential. The story of Liu Yi marrying the third daughter of the Dragon King of Lake Dongting was later adapted into many dramatic genres, such as *Liu Yi Dongting Longnü* 柳毅洞庭龍女 (Liu Yi and the Dragon Princess of Dongting), a *xuwen* play written in the Song or Yuan; *Dongting hu Liu Yi chuanshu* 洞庭湖柳毅傳書 (Liu Yi delivers the letter to the Dongting Lake), a *zaju* play by Shang

rest of their lives in the land of immortals and enjoy wealth, glory and longevity, Ma Ji chooses to return to the "real" world, and thereby has to suffer lifelong separation from his beloved. Compared to the passage that deals with Ma's homesickness when he is still in the Dragon Palace, the long passage towards the end that tells his nostalgic bemoaning of the Dragon Palace seems more profound, making us wonder if Ma Ji has taken the world under the sea as his true home.¹⁰

And yet Pu Songling makes it clear that such a dream could never come true. When reading the story one is left with doubt why it was entitled "The Rakshas and the Sea Market," rather than "The Rakshas Kingdom and the Dragon Palace," since the Dragon Palace is a much more significant destination in Ma Ji's journey. The answer probably lies in the implication of the Sea Market. In Pu's story, it is a crossroad and a busy harbor on the sea, which functions as a neutral space where the interaction between deities and human beings is allowed. The author's deliberate materialization of the familiar trope signifying the invisible and the virtual reality, however, further suggests that the world Ma Ji enters from the Sea Market is surreal and does not exist. Therefore, the Historian of the Strange's claim to entrust the quest of riches and honor to "the castles in the clouds and the mirage of the sea" is an ironic

Zhongxian 尚仲賢 in the Yuan; a *chuanqi* play *Jupu ji* 橘浦記 (The tangerine tree at the rivershore) by Xu Zichang 許自昌 in the Ming. Another *zaju* play *Shamendao Zhangsheng zhuhai* 沙門島張生煮海 (Student Zhang boils the sea at the Shamen Island) tells how Student Zhang forces the Dragon King to consent to his marriage to the Dragon Princess by boiling the sea. Li Yu 李漁, the renowned Qing playwright, combined the two stories into his *Shen-zhong lou* 蟹中樓 (A tower of mirage). Jiang Jurong 江巨榮 wrote a short essay on the Dragons in Chinese drama. See Jiang 211-27.

10. Three years after Ma Ji's parting, the Dragon Princess sends the two children back to the mundane world, as she has promised Ma Ji. On the appointed day, Ma Ji sails onto the South Sea and sees two handsome children riding on the waves. He takes them aboard and finds in a bag on the back of one child a letter by the Dragon Princess. Grief-stricken by her words, Ma Ji can only fondle the children when they ask him to go home and murmur to himself: "But where is our home now?"

one; such a place has never existed (and will never be) in the world after all.

II. The Outlandish World as a Wonderland in Tianfeng yin and Jile shijie

A close reading of "The Rakshas and the Sea Market" shows how Pu Songling makes use of various sources of the two legendary foreign countries to write his social allegory. Frustrated scholars in real life take refuge in a fabricated dreamland, such as the Dragon Palace, in which all their wishes are fulfilled. By deliberately furnishing a tragic end to the story, Pu Songling reminds us that such a place can never exist. Interestingly, the presentations of the exotic world in the two theatrical adaptations divert considerably from Pu Songling's tales: both plays show a regression to the conventional approach to the motif by rendering, once more, the exotic world the land of opportunities.

Our first play, *Tianfeng yin*, is a ten-scene *chuanqi* play written by Liu Qingyun 劉清韻 (1841-?),¹¹ a gentry woman of the late Qing. The play, published in 1900, is among the ten *chuanqi* plays that form Liu's only dramatic collection, *Xiao Penglai xianguan chuanqi* 小蓬萊仙館傳奇 (Little Penglai Divine Mansion collection of *chuanqi*).¹² Though it clearly belongs to the genre of *chuanqi*, *Tianfeng yin* displays many features that do not conform to the generic conventions. The most evident one is its rather limited, unilateral perspective, which is more often seen in *zaju* plays: the author focuses mainly on Ma Jun's 馬俊¹³ adventure, thereby allowing only the protagonist to develop into a well-rounded character. The play was not, as might have been done by many other *chuanqi* playwrights, rendered into a typical *caizi-jiaren* 才子佳人 (talented scholar and lovely young maiden) play, which usually introduces

the leading female character in the second or third scene, and continues to present part of the story from her perspective in subsequent scenes; as a matter of fact the Dragon Princess, the recognized "female lead" of this play, does not appear on the stage until the seventh scene, and is treated by the author as a rather minor character, less full-fledged even than the original figure. As indicated by some scholars, starting from the mid-nineteenth century the blurring of the generic boundary between *zaju* and *chuanqi* has become a trend, which is illustrated, for examples, by many of Liu Qingyun's *chuanqi* works.¹⁴ The infusion of certain *zaju* elements into the *chuanqi* play nevertheless makes *Tianfeng yin* a rather faithful rendering of the original story, since it is mainly about the physical and spiritual journey of a single character.

Traditional *chuanqi* plays unexceptionally end with a happy reunion. This is probably one of the reasons why Liu Qingyun departed from the original, melancholic ending and wrote a delightful one. In the tenth scene, escorted by the knights from the Dragon Kingdom, Ma Jun's parents come to the palace under the sea, where they join their son and daughter-in-law to become immortals. Turning back to Pu Songling's tale, we see that once Ma Ji decides to return to China to take care of his parents, he has no alternative but to leave the Dragon Kingdom forever. Later on, when Ma Ji's mother dies, the Dragon Princess comes to her funeral "to fulfill her duty as a daughter-in-law," as she has promised him. But her secular duties can only be performed in the world of mortals. The Dragon Kingdom seems to operate on a different set of values, something that Ma Ji, though highly venerated as a royal family member, cannot fully understand. As a result, he always seems to act like an outsider. In the *chuanqi* version, however, it is the Dragon Princess who proposes to bring Ma Jun's parents to the Dragon Kingdom, so that parents from both sides can be taken care of. The playwright conveniently solves Ma Jun's dilemma by endowing the exotic land with a value system similar to that of ours.

14. See Hua 188. One of the most salient phenomena is the decreasing length of many of the *chuanqi* plays. See Kang 93-4.

11. According to Hua Wei, the collection of Liu's dramatic work, *Xiao Penglai xianguan chuanqi*, was published in 1900, during the time she was still alive.

Therefore the date of her death can be no earlier than 1900. See Hua 184.

12. For a study of Liu Qingyun's life and dramatic works, see Hua.

13. The name of the protagonist in *Tianfeng yin* is changed to Ma Jun.

The cultural boundary that sets the Chinese world apart from the world of the bestial deities is thus effaced, and the kinship between the two families is secured. In this way, the exotic land is transformed into an ideal realm, a place where Chinese people complacently entrust not only themselves but also the whole family. The foreign land will be considered a true wonderland only when the protagonist can both realize his secular wishes and perform the Confucian duties there.

Jile shijie, the other play to be dealt with in this paper, is an 82-scene *pihuang* play by Guanju Daoren 觀劇道人 (Theatergoing Daoist Priest, 1786-?).¹⁵ The play was completed in the twentieth year of Daoguang 道光 (1820-1850) reign (1840), but was not published until 1881.¹⁶ *Pihuang* Opera, an earlier term used for Beijing Opera, got its name from *xipi* 西皮 and *erhuang* 二黃, two of its major basic tunes introduced to Beijing during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by players from Anhui and Hubei province.¹⁷ The Anhui troupes in Beijing, which mainly staged *pihuang* plays at this time, were noted for their splendid stagecraft: their prowess in acrobatics especially enabled them to present

15. Also known as Duoyuan Zhuren 惰園主人. Little is known about Guanju Daoren. According to his own preface, he was fifty-four years of age in the year the play was completed (1840, the twentieth year of the Daoguang reign.)
16. The seventh year of the Guangxu 光緒 reign. The play was published by Juzhen tang shufang 聚珍堂書坊, a book printing/publishing house situated in the Longfu 隆福 Temple area in Beijing. For a general introduction to and a list of publications by Juzhen tang, see Li 68-9.
17. The origin of the music style *erhuang* is in great dispute. Generally speaking, it spread to Anhui in the late-Ming and became extremely popular there. Well before Anhui troupes entered Beijing in 1790 to celebrate the eightieth birthday of Emperor Qianlong, *erhuang* had been employed together with *xipi* music by Anhui performers. Similar situations occurred in the Hubei Province: both the two styles of music have already been employed by Hubei actors. When they came to Beijing around 1830, they 'reinforced' the situation prevailing in the Anhui troupes there, that is, using *xipi* and *erhuang* music jointly as the major form of drama music. See Mackerras 127-128; Dolby 167-68.

brilliant fighting scenes.¹⁸ However, it is generally considered that *pihuang* opera cannot compete with earlier forms of drama like *kunqu* 崑曲 in terms of the literary value of the playtext (Dolby 179). It is exactly because of the vulgar theatrical languages of *pihuang* plays at his time that Guanju Daoren set out to compose *Jile shijie*, to set a rhetoric model for posterity.¹⁹

On the other hand, the Anhui troupes' established theatrical practice of staging lengthy plays continuously over several days during the Daoguang reign period probably motivated Guanju Daoren to develop the original *Liaozhai* tale into a play on such a large scale.²⁰ The story is still about a man's odyssean journey, but this time the protagonist is situated in more complicated circumstances: a prolonged war between two kingdoms over many years as well as conspiracies at court. The familiar war scenarios and comparable modes in this play resemble those in plays adapted from *yanyi* 演義 (historical novels), such as *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. Aside from "The Rakshas and the Sea Market", prototypes of some of the characters and sub-plots are also found in other *Liaozhai* stories, such as *Yecha guo*. *Jile shijie* relates how the protagonist Ma Jun 馬駿—this time a master of both the pen and

18. For example, Hechun ban 和春班 (The Gentle Spring Troupe) was noted for its acrobatics. See Dolby 165.
19. "*Erhuang* drama is marked by its vulgarity. In my opinion, the crux of the matter does not lie in the genre itself, but in the person who composes the scripts. Should there be someone like Wang Shifu (who wrote *Xixiang ji*), Tang Ruoshi (who wrote *Huanhun ji*) or Hong Fangsi (who wrote *Changsheng dian*) [to compose plays for *erhuang*], I am sure that all the talented scholars in the world would 'pound the table to show their admiration'... thereupon I wrote this *Jile shijie*, so as to amuse both myself and others. I don't know how well my lines compete with those of *Xixiang ji*, *Changsheng dian* or *Mudan ting*, but at least my work offsets the vulgar ones performed nowadays in the theatre." See Guanju Daoren, "Zixu 自序" (author's preface), to *Jile shijie*.
20. A text of the Daoguang reign records the characteristics of the four major Anhui troupes. Sanqing ban 三慶班 was noted for its "Zhouzi 軸子," i.e. extremely long dramas in episodes performed on successive days. Most of the plays were newly made pieces. See *Menghua suobu*, in *Qingdai Yandu liyuan shiliao* 352-54.

the sword—with the help of his first wife Longfeng 龍鳳, a woman of great military might, and his second wife Longzhu 龍珠, Princess of the Rakshas Kingdom, leads the Rakshas army to ward off the invasion of the Yaksah troops, and to overthrow the reign established by Xiao Jing 蕭敬, father-in-law to the king and the former prime minister of the Rakshas Kingdom who, at the instigation of Yaksah courtiers, assassinates the Rakshas King and seizes throne. Ma Jun's third wife Liu Xingxing 柳星星, daughter of the legendary Liu Yi and a female Daoist, assists him in killing Huangyuan Daoren 黃龜道人 (Yellow Turtle Daoist Monk) and thus helps the Prince of the Yaksah Kingdom to take back the throne. Having gone through all these twists and turns, Ma Jun finally settles down in the Rakshas Kingdom and lives a happy life with his three wives, concubines and many children. At this point he starts, enlightened by Liu Xingxing, to practice asceticism, and because of his attainment his whole family ascends to heaven in the end. As promised by the immortal judges in the beginning of the play, throughout Ma Jun's life he enjoys "the fame as a hero, a perfect love marriage, wealth, honor, and life as an immortal" (*yingxiong ernü, fugui shenxian* 英雄兒女, 富貴神仙).

Although the playwright makes it clear in the play that the realm of immortals is the only realm of ultimate bliss, it is actually in the Rakshas Kingdom that Ma Jun realizes most of his worldly dreams. Interestingly, the Rakshas Kingdom and the Yaksah Kingdom, the two legendary lands of evils, as well as their hideous residents, are presented with just a moderate degree of monstrosity in *Jile shijie*. In "The Rakshas and the Sea Market," the weird, upside-down aesthetic tradition of the Rakshasas has been kept for a long time, if not forever.²¹ In *Jile shijie*, the divergent aesthetic values of the Rakshas Kingdom is but a temporary phenomenon, of which the cause is attributed to the King himself: his weird inclina-

21. When asked by Ma Ji why they are so afraid of him, the Rakshas villagers answer: "We were told by our grandfathers that nearly 26,000 *li* to our west is a country called China inhabited by people whose features are all very strange" (*Strange Tales of Liaozhai* 222).

tion to favor the physically and spiritually ugly becomes the root of all the disturbances of the country. Physical deformity does not plague all citizens but, coincidentally, those with notable moral deficiencies. As for ordinary people in the country, no clue shows that they are in any way deformed or morally inferior. Once the King is murdered and all the "bad guys" are removed from the court, the entire kingdom soon resumes its "normal" status, and Ma Jun no longer needs to disguise himself to please those in authority. The transformation of the image of the Rakshas Kingdom from a savage, barbaric land to a cultivated one certainly endows it with the potential to be developed into "the land of ultimate bliss." The issue of blurring the boundary between the strange and the normal in the original tale is no longer the main concern.

In these two plays, the land of hope symbolized by the vast ocean and the oceanic countries can be further explored in the material and the spiritual dimensions. The Utopian imagination of the literati is influenced by multiple sources. On the material side, legendary and exotic lands overseas are known as possessing innumerable treasures. Fiction and drama that thematize the Dragon Palace or exotic and Utopian lands often incorporate the conventional scene of displaying the treasures, which occupy the spotlight of the spectacles and are sure to sell seats in theatre.²²

22. Probably inspired by Li Yu's 李漁 *Shenzhong lou* 蜃中樓 (The Tower in the mirage), the two playwrights of *Tianfeng yin* and *Jile shijie* both took the staging of the "mirage tower" as the gimmick of the entire show. In "Creating the Mirage," scene 5 of *Shenzhong lou*, Li Yu notes that "A delicate, well-made tower of mirage should be prepared in advance and be placed in the properties room at the backstage... Bring it onto the stage quickly when the smoke is spread all over. It should be done at top speed." In "An Honorable Parade" (Rongcheng 榮驛), scene 8 of *Tiangeng yin*, a three-level tower of mirage covered by black gauze is placed at the back of the stage, unveiled when Ma Ji arrives at the Sea Market. In *Jile shijie*, the tower of mirage becomes the battle formation arranged by Huangyuan Daoren. The playwright has a detailed note for the stage set: walls made by painted cloth that is as tall as a person and long enough to cover three sides of the stage. Silhouette of several beauties are painted as if standing inside the tower (Scene 43, "Illusions Conjured Up by the Spirits" [Yaohuan 妖幻]).

Detailed descriptions of the curios and valuables treasured by the Dragon Palace, such as coral beds, pearl tassels and jade trees, are also seen in "The Rakshas Sea Market." In *Tianfeng yin*, to impress his new son-in-law, the Dragon King orders mermen to display all kinds of precious goods and the mirage tower in the Sea Market. Dazzled by the grandiose coral garden and the pearl farm, Ma Jun realizes how silly it is for people of his world to "proudly treasure a worn-out broom as if it were worth a thousand crowns."²³ In *Jile shijie*, treasures from the Dragon Palace serve an even more significant role in the play: the "Wish-fulfilling Pearl" (*ruyi baozhu* 如意寶珠) is bestowed on Ma Jun by the Holy Mother of Epiphyllum (Tanhua Shengmu 曇花聖母), which is not only the token of his marriage vows to Long Feng and Liu Xingxing, but also an amulet that aids him in "acquiring fame and wealth, as he wishes, until he reaches the Land of Ultimate Bliss."²⁴ Treasures on the other shore not only bear an economic value but also a metaphoric one. It is a key to the imaginary fairyland and a token for providential promises to ordinary men.

On the other hand, the land of hope also bears out the spiritual dimension of the shared vision of those frustrated literati. Hoping to bring their talent to use and to create an ideal state, Ma Jun and Xu Shang 徐商, the only two Chinese in the land of ultimate bliss, eventually materialize this collective dream on the "other shore." Though "born in a family with excellence in military honors and aspiring to a career in scholarly learning,"²⁵ Ma Jun's career in China apparently is not on a promising path. He can barely make ends meet by serving as a martial art instructor and by teaching rhetoric and expository writing in his village. Once overseas, he plays a crucial role in fighting civil wars in Rakshas and becomes a general of the highest honor and distinction. Xu Shang (a character derived from another story in *Liaozhai*, "The Yaksah Kingdom"), an ordinary merchant in China, also finds eloquent expression of

23. Scene 8, "An Honorable Parade."

24. Scene 6, "Presenting the Pearl" (*Zengshu* 贈珠).

25. *Jile shijie*, scene 2, "Rafting on the Sea" (*Fuhai* 桴海).

his talent in the Yaksah Kingdom, where he becomes a military strategist of the state by the king's order. His opening aria is itself an expression of this mutual dream:

How many unparalleled councils to the state in times past and to come
Are covered up by dust without their names being known...
Why should it matter if the land is evil, just, Chinese, or foreign,
As long as it recognizes true talents that chart lands and opens up
heaven and earth like Pan Gu did?
I shall detail and materialize the dream with my own hands.²⁶

However, Xu Shang's fate is quite different from that of Ma Jun. He does not live to witness the day when the Yaksah Kingdom becomes the powerful, peaceful, and wealthy land of his dream. On the day he helps the prince regain his regime, he commits suicide in front of the grave of the previous king to express his heartfelt thank to the king's recognition of a "lowly merchant from China." Interestingly, though at the beginning Xu Shang sings of his dream to become "a king above all" despite his low social status like worthless "branches of a peach tree," he does not step in and realize his dream when opportunities present themselves. At the crucial point when the Yaksah King is murdered by Yizhi hua 一枝花 (Flower), his most trusted and favored courtesan, Xu Shang, instead of grasping the chance and taking up the crown, takes it as his responsibility to avenge the king. Similarly, when Ma Jun helps the Rakshas royalty regain control, he refuses the Empress Dowager's offer of kingship. He even takes such offer from her and the Chancellor as insulting and offensive to his reputation and devotion to the Rakshas:

Bloodily I carry a liver and gall that mirror my devotion,
I dare hang them high under the bright sun and blue sky.
I do not transgress even in drunken dreams,

26. Scene 32, "Feasting the Barbarian" (*Zhaorong* 召戎).

I humbly thank you for offering the potential title of a usurper.²⁷

Xu Shang and Ma Jun are the best models of Chinese courtiers. The former is a cunning military strategist, while the latter is a courageous general. Neither seeks kingship in the exotic lands. They take their reputations seriously. When Xu Shang pierces his heart and dies a courageous suicide, the Rakshas can only offer heartfelt praise: "What a chivalrous hero! He lives up to his reputation as a Chinese." To a certain extent, *Jile Shijie* figures as an ideal land, not only because the Chinese literati find eloquent expression of their talents and earn honor and wealth there. What's more important is that the "inferiority" of the exotic land provides a backdrop against which they can display their "Chinese virtues." This adaptation is influenced, apparently, by the discourse of virtue in *pihuang* plays in the late-Qing.

The author of *Jile shijie* also adopts certain elements from the tradition of deliverance play, but modifies them to a great extent to fit into his narrative scheme. A typical deliverance play usually features an ordinary man who, after experiencing all sides of life, comes to a deeper understanding of the transient nature of worldly affairs and leaves for the fairyland with the master who comes to deliver him.²⁸ Herself a Daoist immortal, Ma Jun's third wife, Liu Xingxing, figures as the one who delivers Ma Jun. The influence of the tradition of deliverance play is also evident in the ways the whole thing starts off: the immortals become aware that someone in the mundane world is destined to be delivered and ascend to heaven (Idema and West 306). *Jile shijie* begins with Li Bo 李白, now a member in the court of heaven, tells why the spirit of Ma Jun is sent down to the earth: in his previous incarnations he has been Qu Yuan 屈原 of Chu, Jia Yi 賈誼 of the Western Han, Mi Heng 彌衡 of the Eastern Han, Du Mo 杜默 of the Tang and Chen Dong 陳東 of the Song—all frustrated figures in public and private life. Fame,

27. Scene 73, "Offering the Kingdom" (Rang guo 讓國).

28. For a detailed account of the convention of deliverance plays, see Idema and West 305-08.

honor and wealth—all that Ma Jun is going to enjoy in this coming life are offered as compensation for his suffering in previous lives. While positing itself within the tradition, *Jile shijie* also departs from the tradition of deliverance play, in which the ordinary man is delivered alone, disconnected from all familial ties. However, the concluding scene of *Jile shijie* portrays an ideal scenario of "one man delivered, the entire family redeemed." Guanju Daoren's life-long aspiration has been "heroism, romance, wealth, and immortality," since he was beset by poverty and failures all his life, as noted by the postscript to the play. Play writing, therefore, becomes a wish-fulfillment act for him.

III. In the Eyes of the Beholder: Barbarian Perspectives on China

The legendary exotic lands in the two plays are the land of happiness for frustrated Chinese literati in exile, while the Chinese mainland itself inevitably becomes the subject of stereotypical re-framing from the "barbarian's" perspective. The division between the self and other is broken down after the first encounter with the legendary foreigner, but at times it can also be strengthened. However this division is to be altered; it starts where the stereotypes are founded. Both playwrights have taken advantage of the exotic settings of the plays, which promote a cumulative multiple subjectivity. The first audience of the plays experience the exotic through Ma Jun's or Xu Shang's travels. However, the show and gaze of theatre are also turned against themselves, as the residents and rulers in these oceanic countries also look at an imagined China. This China and its people in the eye of the barbarians is nonetheless saturated with the Chinese playwrights' own cultural horizon. Therefore, despite an effort to neutralize the exotic lands (which at times become a land of opportunities), the gaze upon the other and the gaze from the other (upon the Chinese subjectivity) are still framed in the Sino-centric cultural and mythological traditions since *Shanghai jing*. In its discourse, physical deformity is associated with cultural inferiority of foreign lands.

In "The Rakshas Sea Market", Rakshas is a land of extremes

and reversed aesthetics. Even the system to select civil officials is a reversal of its Chinese counterpart. Rather than leaning toward intelligence or even poetic talent, the Rakshas judge by outward appearance. That judgment, however, is also informed by a reversed aesthetics. The Chinese look awfully ugly and terrible in the eye of the Rakshas beholders. Interestingly, however, this judgment does not entail moral inferiority. Chinese, in the mind of the less sophisticated Rakshas villagers, are nothing more than "people of grotesque looks." While this image sounds neutral, the more informed view by Zhiji lang 執戟郎 holds China highly, which is a superior land with superlatives. Zhiji lang explains the difference in conceptions between him and fellow countrymen by stressing his access to knowledge and international contacts. He is a diplomat, but he has regrettably never been to China. This economy of knowledge and stereotype also apply to the Rakshas Kingdom in Pu's story, in which the "heavenly court" or "superior land" figures as cultural valence of China abroad. Pu's distortion of the grotesque and the natural is deeply vested in Sino-centrism. Ultimately, it is the unsophisticated and under-privileged villagers from remote regions of the foreign country who are blocked from accessing the reality.

In Ma Jun's involuntary exile, the hurt pride of Chinese-ness goes deeper still. In the fourth scene, "Chanting Banquet," of *Tianfeng yin*, Ma characterizes his situation at the Rakshas court as a "noble bird residing in a thorny bush" and thinks himself "dealing with the [unworthy] ghosts." In the second scene, "Rafting on the Sea," of *Jile shijie*, before going overseas, Ma Jun feel romantic toward the sea voyage, which he takes as embodying the heroic: swinging the sword, drinking from the bottomless cup, singing to the moon. However optimistic, Ma cannot break away from his Sino-centric subjectivity and, at a second thought, takes the trip to be a "punishment" and "exile" to the wilderness.

On the other hand, the barbarians' imagination of China is articulated through a Chinese eye. These imaginations either coincide with the Sino-centric placement or breaks away from the stereotype. The Yaksah people regard Xu Shang's heroic death, for

example, as befitting his honor of being a Chinese. In scene 11, "Chief Chancellor's admonition" (Zhu Jian 柱諫), of *Jile shijie*, worrying that Ma Ji and local hunters would gang up against the Rakshas court, Chief Chancellor Tiezhu 鐵柱, questions Ma Jun: "A man from China must be well versed in etiquette between the emperor and the courtier. Why does someone with great ambitions like you want to live with a flock of owls?" Ironically, in *Tianfeng yin*, as powerful and invincible as the Dragon King is, he can not find an ideal son-in-law from China. One of the reasons offered is that China is far out of his reach. A similar plot also appears in the court play, *Feng tianming Sanbao xia Xiyang* 奉天命三保下西洋 (Acting on the emperor's order, Sanbao travels to the Western Ocean) of the Ming dynasty. China's subsidiary countries do not have comparable navigating skills to bring their tribute to China. They can only wait for the technologically and culturally advanced sailors from China to arrive at their lands and take them to the "heavenly court." It is difficult to say that *Tianfeng yin* follows its track, since plays about sea adventures are indeed rare. Regardless of the real reason that drives Ma Jun to the exotic land, it is fair to conclude that in their imagination of the world at that time, Chinese always possess more mobility and more control over the ocean—even more than the supposedly omnipotent god of the waters, the Dragon King. This is probably linked to the historic fact of Zheng He's 鄭和 oceanic explorations.

In these two plays, the Chinese do not always appear as positive figures. In *Jile shijie*, the playwright exerts more direct and straightforward criticism of China. In scene nine, after being informed of Ma Jun's frustration in China, Longfeng laments:

China has boasted of its glory in vain.
Kings and chancellors are but drunkards in a dream.
The talented, as usual, are deserted and trapped in the mundane blizzard.²⁹

29. Scene 9, "Taming the Tiger" (Fuhu 伏虎).

Longfeng becomes the playwright's mouthpiece, condemning the corrupt Chinese officials and holding them responsible for the frustration of literati like Ma Jun. Even by the late Qing, it is difficult to imagine how well such a criticism (however veiled within a play) would be received. This probably accounts for the reason why the play has never been staged in its entirety. Even though *Jile shijie* is set in a fictional foreign country, and even though its protagonist ends up in a conventional denouement (becoming a Daoist immortal) typical to the genre of Daoist-Buddhist drama, its treatment of the "barbarians" is unique. The play marks a new direction in the representation of cultural others, as it suggests the potential existence of a Utopian other outside the spiritually and culturally superior world of ours.

IV. Staging the Exotic

Tianfeng yin and *Jile shijie* resemble each other in their ways of constructing an exotic world through juxtaposing fictional countries from ancient sources with legendary fairyland. How, then, is the exotic world in these two plays dramatized? The fact that the accounts of theatrical performance of the two plays cannot be found does not imply that they belong, as do many other late-Qing *chuanqi* and *zaju* plays, to *antou ju* 案頭劇, i.e. plays written primarily for the pleasure of reading. As a matter of fact, both have ample, detailed stage directions that allow us to reconstruct the earliest possible productions.

The most effective way to dramatize *the exotic* is, of course, through exaggerating the physical appearance of the foreign figures. Han people's imagination of the bestial quality of barbarians is represented symbolically in the two plays through costume and make-up. No evidence shows that the barbarians here bear any resemblance to the foreigners in real life. In *Jile shijie*, the assassinated Rakshas King is impersonated by the *chou* 丑 (clown) role, who has painted face (*hualian* 花臉) and wears short, variegated beard (*duan huaxu* 短花鬚). The Rakshas Queen Xiao Saihua 蕭賽花, the famous "beauty" in the country, is played by *fujing* 副淨 (assistant *jing*), who has "blue face, red hair, white eyebrows, and

black lips." The Yaksah people, the "opposite side" in the story, are further marginalized by their costumes, worn conventionally by northern barbarians on stage: the King of Yaksah, played by *fujing*, has "blue face, white beard" and wears pheasant feathers, fox-fur strips hanging from both sides of the headdress, and military dress. In *Tianfeng yin*, the physical deficiency of the Rakshasas is signified by the grotesque masks (*qixing huamianju* 奇形花面具) that they wear. This becomes a particularly ironic device, since it is exactly those mask-wearing courtiers who accuse Ma Ji of disguising himself with a false face.³⁰

On top of exaggerating the physical appearances of the barbarians by make-up and costumes to show their deformity, the playwright of *Tianfeng yin* adds cultural details to the banquet scene, in which the tunes of *kunqu* opera and those of other local operas stand out as opposing poles. In the original story, at the family banquet, Ma Ji's Rakshas host orders sing-song girls to entertain Ma Ji with local songs and dances, which Ma Ji finds extremely queer. In return, Ma Ji "beats time on the table and obliges him with a tune" (*jizhuo wei du yiqu* 擊桌爲度一曲). It is not quite clear whether Pu Songling refers to any specific kind of regional aria here, but "beating time on the table" seems to be a practice often employed by *Kunqu* singers when singing without the accompaniment of drums and clappers. In *Tianfeng yin*, the song assigned to the Rakshas singers is "Yuyang xiaoling 漁陽小令." This is actually a local ballad that Li Yu, the famous Qing playwright, incorporated in scene 24 of his play, *Shenzhong lou*, as songs performed by the shrimp singers and crab dancers of the Dragon Palace to entertain the Chinese scholar Ma Jun, on the other hand, sings "Gulun tai" 古輪臺, a typical *kunqu* aria. The culturally encoded nobility of the *kunqu* tune, interestingly, contrasts with the vulgar taste of local ballads sung by the barbarians. During the time when Liu Qingyun composed her play, *kunqu* had already given way to *pihuang* drama and other forms of regional operas. Still, it was regarded by the literati as a superior form of drama and a most befitting entertain-

30. Scene 5, "Throwing Away the Mask" (Juzhi 具擲).

ment for the elite class. The Rakshasas, naturally, would never sing a Chinese local ballad like "Yuyang xiaoling." Audience and readers of the time, however, would recognize the cultural significance underlying this special arrangement. The cultural opposition of *huabu* 花部 and *yabu* 雅部³¹ is implicated in the culturally specific conceptions of late Qing gentry class and literati societies. Through their eyes, then, the representation of exoticism here is achieved through the boundary established between the cultivated and the uncultivated.

Conclusion

In the process of adapting Pu Songling's "The Rakshas Sea Market" into *Tianfeng yin* and *Jile shijie*, both Liu Qingyun and Guanju Daoren were deeply vested in the convention of dramatic subgenres as well as the fashion and discourse of contemporary theatrical performances. Liu Qingyun apparently patterned after *Shenzhong lou*, Li Yu's *chuanqi* play in the theme of Dragon Palace, in her selection of arias to be used in certain scenes so as to display special theatrical effects. *Jile shijie* reflects relatively complicated sources of influences from conventions in drama and in theatre. The closing part is a reinvention of the format of traditional deliverance plays. On top of that, the warfare between the two kingdoms of Rakshas and Yaksah are developed into a narrative discourse much similar to that of the Three Kingdoms plays on the stage. The focus was placed on fabulous, eye-catching military scenes, cunning schemes, issues of loyalty to the country and the lord, etc. The play would have been a refreshing experience for its first audience who was accustomed to lengthy productions adapted from *The Three Kingdoms* or *The Outlaws of the Water Margins*. The play enacts the same discourse—set against a new backdrop of oceanic countries not found in those novels. On top of this, the three female protagonists are all assigned important roles in the play,

31. *Yabu* (elegant drama), the term used in the Qing to specify *kunqu*, as opposed to *huabu* (flower drama), used to refer to all other styles of theatre. See Mackerras 6-7.

ranging from assisting Ma Jun in his career to pointing to him the land of ultimate bliss. They even take over martial scenes. For example, Ma Jun is not involved in as many martial scenes as Longfeng. This reflects the abundance of talented *dan* 旦 actors, during this period, in theatre troupes based in Beijing.³²

Tianfeng yin and *Jile shijie* change the tragic ending of the original story into a happy one, which, albeit its dramatic effect, remains a wish-fulfillment plot for the dramatists. Liu Qingyun was beset by poverty and illness in her later years.³³ Her aspiration to a perfect life or life after death is reflected in many of her other *chuanqi* works as well: both *Yinyun chuan* 氤氲釧 and *Yingxiong bei* 英雄配, for example, are concluded with "the whole family ascending to the heaven," a scenario that we are already too familiar with. Guanju Daoren, as well, projected all his unfulfilled dreams on the heroes he portrayed. The exotic land in traditional folklores is turned into the land of magic where all the good things would happen.

Although China had already had quite a few contacts with foreign countries and their people at the time the two plays were written, the two playwrights, as had been done by the authors of some vernacular fictions in the early-Qing, still resorted to traditional Chinese imaginations when creating images of the exotic oceanic countries (Idema 76-8). Legendary, fabricated foreign countries become the foci of the play, and the cultural inferiority of their people is often marked by their physical deformity. All of these are set, without doubt, to accentuate what was perceived as "Chinese-ness." In both plays, the Chinese as culturally and morally superior beings are characterized by their literary talent and military prowess, their omnipotent mobility on the high sea, and their Chinese virtues. Interestingly, these merits are not displayed in the plays objectively as "historical truth," but are displayed from

32. Mackerras has noted that five major sources on the actors of Anhui and other *huabu* troupes of Beijing from 1790 to the late 1820s all described exclusively *dan* actors. It seems, at least from the perspective of the spectators, to reflect the predominant role of *dan* actors in Beijing during the period (125).

33. Her situation is unfolded in some of her later poems. See Hua 51.

the gaze of the other. This kind of virtually objective, pseudo-intercultural discourse on "Chinese-ness" is but a projection of the "ideal Chinese" in the minds of the playwrights.

On the other hand, positive and negative descriptions of cultural others and the other shore reflect contradictions in reality. The discourse of deformity in association with cultural inferiority is no longer universally valid. Rather, it can only be found in a few morally debased characters who according to the theatrical convention of hyperbole, are painted with faces that signify certain extreme personalities. In *Tianfeng yin*, Ma Jun and the people of Rakshas are on fair terms. He even befriends a few. In *Jile shijie*, Ma Jun takes Rakshas as his final destination. The exotic land is no longer what is implied by its name (like Rakshas or Yaksah): an ugly and hopeless land. It is a land of hope. *Jile shijie* even launches a general critique of the corruption of Chinese emperors and their courtiers, which has forced the truly talented to make careers in remote, exotic lands.

Dramas of late Qing are usually divided into two phases, with the first one (1840-1898) generally recognized by scholars like Kang Baocheng as having "less connection with current affairs" and having followed the "old path of *chuanqi* tradition." There is a boom of plays about current affairs since 1898, which even feature both contemporary Chinese and foreign histories.³⁴ These two plays apparently belong to the earlier phase of late-Qing drama. However, just as Hua Wei proposes, 'spirit of the new age' already presents itself in some of the old-fashioned *chuanqi* plays (239). *Tianfeng yin* and *Jile shijie* do not feature current affairs or "real" history per se, but the exotic, transformed from Pu Songling's "land of ugliness," has become a metaphor of Utopia and a land of hope. The dramatists project their appreciation of current affairs onto the spatial and social scheme in the adaptations and thereby make Ma Jun's journey into the exotic a homeward-odyssey. This seemingly outward voyage is an inward drill toward the consciousness of Chinese-ness.

34. Kang 11-14. See also Hua 238-239.

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Jile shijie 極樂世界.

Guanju Daoren 觀劇道人. Beijing: Juzhen tang shufang, 1881.

Liaozhai zhiyi jiaozhu 聊齋誌異校注.

Pu Songling 蒲松齡. Ed. and Annot. by Sheng Wei 盛偉.

Taiyuan: Shanxi renmin chubanshe, 2000.

Menghua suobu 夢華瑣簿.

Yang Maojian 楊懋建. In Zhang Cixi 張次溪, ed., *Qingdai*

Yandu liyuan shiliao 清代燕都梨園史料. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1988. pp. 347-81.

Shenzhong lou 蜃中樓.

Li Yu 李漁. In *Li Liwong shizhong qu: Shi'er jia ping dian* 李笠

翁十種曲 十二家評點. Shanghai: Chaoji shuzhuang, 1918.

Strange Tales of Liaozhai 聊齋誌異選.

Trans. Lu Yunzhong, Chen Tifang, Yang Liyi and Yang Zhihong. Hong Kong: The Commercial Press, 1988.

Tianfeng yin 天風引.

Liu Qingyun 劉清韻. In *Xiao Penglai xianguan chuanqi* 小蓬萊仙館傳奇. Shanghai: Zaowen shuju, 1900.

Secondary Sources

Bunce, Fredrick William.

An Encyclopaedia of Hindu Deities, Demi-Gods, Godlings, Demons and Heroes. New Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2000.

Cheng Yongjiang 程永江.

"Yushuang nianpu (1)—Cheng Yanqiu shenghuo he chuanguo dashi 御霜年譜(一)—程硯秋生活和創作大事." *Xiju yishu luncong* 戲劇藝術論叢 2 (1980): 187-96.

Dolby, William

A History of Chinese Drama. London: Elek Books Limited, 1976.

Hanan, Patrick

"The Making of *The Pearl-Sewn Shirt* and *The Courtesan's Jewel Box*." *HJAS* 33 (1973): 124-53.

Hua Wei 華瑋

"Xilun Liu Qingyun Xiao penglai xianguan chuanqi zhi neirong sixiang 析論劉清韻《小蓬萊仙館傳奇》之內容思想." *Zhongguo*

- wenzhe yanjiu jikan 中國文哲研究集刊 7 (1995): 183-243.
- Idema, Wilt L.
 "Canon, Clocks and Clever Monkeys: Europeana, Europeans and Europe in Some Eighteenth Century Chinese Novels." In *White and Black: Imagination and Cultural Confrontations*. Amsterdam: Royal Tropical Institute, 1990, pp. 55-82.
- Idema, Wilt L., and Stephen H. West.
Chinese Theatre 1100-1450: A Source Book. Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1982.
- Jiang Jurong 江巨榮
 "Zhongguo gudai xiqu yu long 中國古代戲曲與龍." In Lu Zhun 魯諄, Wang Cai 王才, and Feng Guangyu 馮廣裕, eds., *Long wenhua yu minzu jingshen 龍文化與民族精神*. Shanghai: Shanghai renmin chubanshe, 2000, pp. 211-27.
- Kang Baocheng 康保成
Zhongguo jindai xiju xingshi lun 中國近代戲劇形式論. Guilin: Lijiang chubanshe, 1991.
- Li Zhizhong 李致忠
 "Qingdai Beijing chuban zazu 清代北京出版雜俎." *Beijing chubanshi zhi 北京出版史志* 6 (1995): 65-77.
- Mackerras, Colin P.
The Rise of the Peking Opera 1770-1870: Social Aspects of the Theatre in Manchu China. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972.
- Qu Jinliang 曲金良
 "'Luocha haishi' yu 'Luocha guo': Cong Pu Songling dui fojing gushi de gaibian kan qi shidai sixiang zhi yili 《羅剎海市》與《羅剎國》: 從蒲松齡對佛經故事的改編看其時代思想之一例." *Pu Songling yanjiu 蒲松齡研究* 3 (1994): 50-58.
- Zeitlin, Judith T.
Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- Zhongguo jingjushi bianji weiyuan hui 《中國京劇史》編輯委員會, ed.
Zhongguo Jingju shi 中國京劇史. Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1990.
- Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄, ed.
Liaozhai zhiyi ziliao huibian 聊齋誌異資料匯編. Henan: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1986.