Finding the Appropriate Fit:
An Interdisciplinary Rereading of Daoist Nuns in *Hearing Zither in Bamboo Dock*

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Abstract of Thesis

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This study offers an interdisciplinary reading of one particular Yuan drama *Hearing Zither in Bamboo Dock*. After comparing the Confucian notion of female chastity, the Quanzhen Daoism tradition, as well as the unity of the three teachings in the drama with its historical counterparts, I argue that as Confucianism and Daoism both share the idea of moral and spiritual perfectibility, when facing a moral dilemma either as laymen or Daoists, the females during the Yuan are relatively free to take refuge in either religion. These effortless conversion and secularization reflect the inclusive atmosphere of the society towards religion, which became one of the accelerators for the development of Daoism, especially Quanzhen Daoism. However, their returning to lay life at the end implies that guarding their female chastity is the ultimate driving force. Therefore, when the dilemma gets resolved, they would unhesitatingly or "unconsciously" return to the world that is primarily dominated by the Neo-Confucianism ideology.

Table of Contents

Abstract of Thesis ……..……....iii

Chapter 1: Introduction …..……...……..1

Chapter 2: Yuan Drama a Few Controversies …….……...…..4

Chapter 3: Female Chastity in Late Imperial China ..……....18

Chapter 4: Ideal Daoist Life in the Cottage ……....25

Chapter 5: "Polluted" Daoist life: Sense and Sensibility …….……..39

Chapter 6: Conclusion ...……..……..……..…52

Bibliography ……..54

Chapter 1: Introduction

In recent years, interdisciplinary research has gradually become a trend in the humanities.[1] In other words, the traditional boundaries of academic disciplines have started to dissolve, and scholars are intentionally looking for more possibilities. Although the modern academic study of the Yuan drama and Daoism already has its early roots,[2] this ever more integrated approach allows us to not only view issues from new perspectives but also encounter problems that we tended to overlook in the past. One of the recent books written by Mark Meulenbeld on the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) novel *Canonization of the Gods* (*Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義) presents that literature of canonization during the Ming dynasty works as a narrative accompaniment to establish and re-establish the ritual environment, especially Daoism, at the time.[3] Considering this historical relationship between Daoist rituals and martial/theatrical performances, we could trace back and assert that drama played an essential role in the rising popularity of Daoism during the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368).

Primarily inspired by this magnificent interdisciplinary encounter of literature, gender, and religion in present-day academia, this study focuses on the textual analysis of Yuan drama through religious lenses. Since it is unrealistic to analyze every related piece

[1] Menken, Steph, and Machiel Keestra. "Introduction." *An Introduction to Interdisciplinary Research: Theory and Practice*, Amsterdam University Press, 2016, pp. 13–16.

[2] Hawkes, David. "Quanzhen Plays and Quanzhen Masters." *Bulletin De L'Ecole Fran Française D'Extrême-Orient*, vol. 69, no. 1, 1981, pp. 153–170.

[3] Meulenbeld, Mark R. E. "Introduction: Novels and the Work of the Gods." *Demonic Warfare*, University of Hawai'i Press, 2015, pp. 1–26.

in the vast corpus of existing Yuan drama,[4] we will be focusing on one piece and strive to get the best out of it. *Hearing Zither in the Bamboo Dock* (*Zhuwu tingqin* 竹塢聽琴) attributed to the playwright Shi Zizhang 石子章[5] is by far the best choice due to its plentiful portrayal of Daoist nuns[6] and their stories before converting. In the following chapters, it first sketches a general picture of Yuan drama and strives to shed some light on a few controversies. Having solved some basic puzzles, in the chapters to come, a detailed textual analysis of the play will follow. At face value, one might take certain parts of the story as literary satire targeting female Daoists at the time, while others make light of the whole story as mere stage entertainment. Disagreeing with these interpretations as overly

[4] The texts of Yuan drama selected for analysis in this thesis are all taken from, Wang Jisi, *Quan Yuan Xiqu* 全元戲曲 (hereafter QYXQ). Renmin Wenxue Chubanshe, 1999. This is a version based primarily on the *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選, *Yuanqu xuan waibian* 元曲選外編, and *Guben xiqu congkan* 古本戲曲叢刊. A more detailed account of the differences among these works/editions will be given in the next section. Ji's edition includes those critical differences among these editions in its footnote, so it is easier for us to make a comparison.

[5] The dates of birth and death remain unknown. Wang, Guowei. *History of Song and Yuan Drama*. Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 1998. According to the Wang, he lived from the Jin dynasty to the early Yuan dynasty. In *Register Recording Ghost* (Lugui Bu 錄鬼簿), Zhong Sicheng (c. 1279-1360), a Yuan literati and qu poet, lists two of his works: Raining from Bamboo (Zhuchuang yu 竹窗雨) and Hearing Zither in Bamboo Dock (Zhuwu Tingqin 竹塢聽琴), while the latter is the only extant one. "With a long spear, Zizhang battles among the poem grove; while drinking wine, (he) writes poetry, feeling delighted to find a bosom friend; with pride and freeness, he acts in an unimpeded manner," from Zhong's comment, we get a glimpse of Shi's unconstrained personality, which is also reflected through those characters in his writing.

[6] Other Yuan dramas include *Wangjiang Pavilion* (*Wangjiang Ting* 望江亭) and *Mandarin Ducks Embroidered Quilt* (*Yuanyang Bei* 鴛鴦被). In *Wangjiang Pavilion*, Auntie Bai is an old Daoist nun who only appears in the first Act. In *Mandarin Ducks Embroidered Quilt*, although the Daoist nun plays a comparatively more critical role, she is still primarily confined to the wedge and the first two acts. Compared to these two, in the story of *Hearing Zither in Bamboo Dock*, there are three Daoist nuns of different backgrounds. More significantly, since the heroine has the experience as a Daoist nun, we could get more insight into her daily religious practice as Daoist nuns at the time.

simplistic, I opt for a grander viewpoint to spot those interconnections between spoken-sung parts and plots, as well as the interreligious dialogue in the historical context.

What are the common traits that characterize Daoist nuns in *Hearing Zither in the Bamboo Dock*, and how much does it align with reality? In other words, how could we reinterpret the dramatic sympathy and irony embedded in these female religious personas from a more historically contextualized view? Meanwhile, to what degree, does Confucian norms complement with Daoist or Buddhist religious practices and ideals as presented in the drama, especially considering the diffusion of religions as an ongoing process in premodern China? There I argue that as Confucianism and Daoism both share the idea of moral and spiritual *perfectibility*,[7] when facing a moral dilemma either as laymen or Daoists, the females during the Yuan are relatively free to take refuge in either religion. These effortless conversion and secularization reflect the inclusive atmosphere of the society towards religion, which became one of the accelerators for the development of Daoism, especially Quanzhen Daoism. However, their returning to lay life at the end implies that guarding their female chastity is the ultimate driving force. Therefore, when the dilemma gets resolved, they would unhesitatingly or "unconsciously" return to the world that is primarily dominated by the Neo-Confucianism ideology.

[7] Kirkland, Russell. *Taoism: The Enduring Tradition*. New York and London: Routledge, 2004, p. 133, cited in Grant, "Women, Gender and Religion in Premodern China: A Brief Introduction," *Nan Nü*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2008, p. 15.

Chapter 2: Yuan Drama and a Few Controversies

Wang Guowei has singled out that song and dance rituals stemming from the practice of shamanism before the Zhou dynasty (1122-221 B.C.) as the possible origins of Chinese drama.[8] After centuries of development of either religious practice or in-court performance,[9] Chinese theatre began to take shape. We have discovered various forms of traditional theatre genres throughout history.[10] All of these genres have set the theatrical foundation for Yuan drama, also called variety plays (*zaju* 雜劇). Besides, religious

[8] Wang, "Drama from Ancient times to Five Dynasties 上古至五代之戲劇," in *Song-Yuan xiqu shi*, pp. 1-13. The male and female shamans date back to before the Zhou dynasty (1122-221 B. C.).

[9] Here refers to court jesters whose roles are the regular performance, making satirical observations, telling jokes and stories, and impersonating historical and contemporary figures.

[10] Zhongwen, Shi. "Historical Background and Social Milieu" in *Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Zaju*. Princeton University Press, 1976, pp. 3–18; Dolby, William. "Yuan Drama." *Chinese theater: from its origins to the present day*. University of Hawaii Press, 1988, pp. 32–33; also, Crump, James I. "The Elements of Yuan Opera." *The Journal of Asian Studies*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1958, pp. 417–434. The theatre genres include: "hundred entertainments" (*baishi* 百事) at least as early as the first century, "the big face" (*damian* 大面) and "the stomping-swaying wife" (*tayao niang* 踏搖娘) during the six century, "the military counselor" (*canjun* 參軍) during the Tang period (618-906), and "variety plays" (*zaju* 雜劇), in which the structure and role system are already quite similar to Yuan drama, Yuan-ben, and southern plays during the Song period (960-1279). The Song *zaju* consists of four parts: a prologue, two middle acts, and an epilogue; as for the role system, in Song *zaju*, there were four or five characters and a musician: the leading male role, the director, comic performer, the secondary male role, the role of an official, and the musician. Yuan-ben 院本 was in Jin times (1115-1234) merely a different name of the variety play (*zaju* 雜劇). Dialogue in Yuan-ben is rhymed with a rough meter; the song is performed by all four actors, and each verse is in a different rhyme. The surviving southern plays vary significantly in length and are not divided into acts. The roles are quite different from those in the Northern genre.

materials and secular stories of Tang[11] and the oral storytelling of the Song times[12] had also enlightened and filled the dramatic literature of the Yuan dynasty.[13] All of these various theatrical and literary traditions developed in the preceding centuries align with the particular historical and social conditions during the Yuan dynasty, which created the first highly stylized Chinese drama/literature.[14]

A Historical Development of the Study of Yuan Drama

It has been around 100 years since the versatile Chinese historian and scholar Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877-1927) published his study on the history of drama and arias in the

[11] E.g., "transformation texts" (*bianwen* 變文) of the early Tang period. According to Shi, "transformation texts" is a literary form used by Buddhist monastic priests to attract the semi-literate or illiterate audience by converting esoteric scripture into appealing tales. Existing texts of "transformation texts" include both religious and secular stories.

[12] Contemporary accounts report that oral narratives were of several types: historical tales, popularization of Buddhist scripture, meditation, and enlightenment, "small talk" (*xiaoshuo,* 小說), dealing with love (*yanfen* 煙粉), spirits (*lingguai* 靈怪), marvels (*chuanqi* 傳奇), lawsuits (*gong'an* 公案), combat with knives (*bodou* 搏鬥), immortals (*xian* 仙), magic powers (*yaoshu* 妖術).

[13] An example of this process of wholesale borrowing can be seen through the comparison of "Tale of the marvelous" (*yingying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳) written by Tang author Yuan Zhen (779-831), "Flirtation Song" (*tiaoxiao ling* 調笑令) written by Northern Song author Qin Guan (1049-1101), "The western chamber medley" (*xixiangji zhugongdiao* 西廂記諸宮調) by Dong Jieyuan (1190-1280), and "The romance of west chamber" (*xixiang ji* 西廂記) by Yuan playwright Wang Shifu (1260-1336). The latter three were written based on the first version of the story.

[14] As far as *Yuanqu xuan* is concerned, it usually consists of four acts with the option of a demi-act, "wedge," which can appear between any two acts. For example, in *Hearing Zither in Bamboo Dock*, there are four acts preceded by an introductory wedge. Within each act, all arias were sung to tunes of the same mode, and only one character will have a singing role in any one act. The prose in the form of dialogue and verse in the form of arias alternate throughout the works. As for role types, it features particularly specialized roles: female leader (dan 旦), male leader (sheng 生), painted face (hua 花), and clown (chou 醜).

Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1279-1368) dynasties in 1912 and ultimately laid the foundation for the study of the Yuan drama.[15] Given the long literary and dramatic tradition of the previous dynasties as Wang studied,[16] readers of Yuan drama might wonder where we should position it as a unique product of tradition and time. Due to his modern literary training and background, Wang Guowei is able to better appreciate this particular form of traditional art. He establishes Yuan drama's literary value in terms of its naturalness (*ziran* 自然), e.g., a true reflection of its time, the sense of tragedy, and the artistic conception (*yijing* 意境).[17] Nevertheless, for a long time, literary historians have held a biased view towards Yuan drama and interpreted it as an anti-traditional art.[18] In other words, the study of Yuan drama in its homeland had its limit.

[15] As Wang Guowei writes in the preface of *Song-Yuan xiqu shi*, each time period is known for a distinct form of literature in Chinese history: the *sao* (騷) form of the Chu, the rhapsody (*fu* 賦) of the Han, the parallel prose (*pianyu* 駢語) of the Six Dynasties, the poem (*shi* 詩) of the Tang, the poetic meters (*ci* 詞) of the Song - each is considered the literature of its age, which later generations were not able to match.

[16] Wang, *Song-Yuan xiqu shi*, pp. 2–61. Wang first traces the origins of Yuan drama back to the Remote Ages (*shanggu* 上古) and Five Dynasties (*wudai* 五代). Then he devoted six chapters to present a dramatic picture of the Song and Jin drama, including comical drama (*huajixi* 滑稽戲), varieties drama (*zaxi* 雜戲), musical arias (*yuequ* 樂曲), courtyard scripts (*yuanben* 院本) flourished at the time. Wang eventually concluded that there were only musical operas (*gewuju* 歌舞劇) and comical dramas in the Tang dynasty, and drama that is purely for storytelling only appeared in the Song and Jin dynasty. Therefore, we can say that the "real drama" originated in the Song dynasty. However, although the structure of Song and Jin drama is as we discussed above, there is no such thing as the original, so it is not clear whether there were any operas by first-person narrators on that day. Therefore, the "real drama" cannot but start from the Yuan drama.

[17] Wang, *Song-Yuan xiqu shi*, 98–104.

[18] Vetrov, Viatcheslav. "The Element of Play In The Textual Structure Of Yuan Drama." *Monumenta Serica*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2008, pp. 373–393.

In the first half of the twentieth century, some Chinese and Japanese scholars[19] have done their pioneering studies. However, their interpretations often still fall into the prevailing Marxist ideology, attributing the production of Yuan drama to its chaotic social conditions and to class and ethnic antagonism.[20] From the 1950s on, Western sinologists brought a new wave of academic study in traditional vernacular literature.[21] They started to explore various aspects of Yuan drama. Their major topics include first, the specific social condition under Mongol conquest and its influence especially on the literati community; the second includes those differences between Yuan and Ming drama editions as well as the skepticism towards these dramas' literary value; the third, they discuss the dramatic and literary tradition of the previous period, especially a general survey of the theatre convention on the grounds that Yuan drama was originally written for a stage performance. However, much is still unknown and is left for the scholars of the following generations.

Approaching towards the end of the twentieth century, the highly respected scholar William Dolby provided his readers a general but informative introduction of Yuan drama[22] that is still valuable to this day. Dolby also contributes another article to find out what is still missing about Yuan drama to direct our attention to what we should be hunting

[19] To name a few, this group of scholars includes Shionoya On 鹽穀溫 (1878-1962), Masaru Aoki 青木正児 (1887-1964), Sun Kaidi 孫楷第 (1898-1986), Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898-1958).

[20] Wilt L. Idema, "Why You Never Have Read a Yuan Drama." *Studi In Onore Di Lionello Lanciotti*, vol. 2, 1996, pp. 767–768. In the Marxist analysis, Yuan society was not only driven apart by class antagonism, but also by the ethnic antagonism between the Chinese population and their Mongol conquerors. In essence, the relative degree of progressivity of the author could be gauged from his sympathy for the downtrodden Chinese and his hatred for the Mongol oppressors.

[21] Ibid, pp. 766-767.

[22] Dolby, "Yuan drama," pp. 32–59.

for the future scholars.[23] In twenty-first century, many studies on Yuan Zaju focuses their analyzation on characterizations of those major characters, scene settings, or general plotlines, while those religious women are generally overlooked. The renowned feminist scholar Ursula King points out a general problem of "double blindness" in Western academic studies: On the one hand most contemporary gender studies, whether in the humanities, social sciences, or natural sciences, remain extraordinarily "religion-blind;" on the other hand many studies in religion continue to be profoundly "gender-blind."[24] While more western scholarship exploring the topic on Chinese women and traditional Chinese religions, such as Daoism[25], in recent years, the "double blindness" still remains in the study of Yuan drama.[26] More specifically, there is a general lack of analysis that combined gender, religion, and literature.

[23] William Dolby, "Some Mysteries and Mootings about the Yuan Variety Play." *Asian Theatre Journal*, vol. 11, no.1, 1994, pp. 81–89. Throughout the article, Dolby has discussed seven topics or issues: the social circumstances that sparked the conception of the Yuan drama; the authorship, including a brief investigation on the habit of full-scale authoring of dialogue; the different social milieu and theatre conventions of Yuan drama and Beijing opera performance through the ages; the absence of detailed Yuan historical analyses or records of costume in earlier generations; the reasons why women have been so predominant in the historical records related to Yuan drama; the common charge against the literary value; and the rare stage presentation of Yuan drama in recent times and its potential solutions.

[24] Cited in Kang, Xiaofei. "Women and the religious question in modern China." *Modern Chinese Religion II: 1850-2015*, vol. 1, pp. 491–559, from King, Ursula, "General introduction: gender-critical turns in the study of religion." *Gender, religion, and diversity: cross-cultural perspectives*. New York, 2004, pp. 1–2.

[25] E.g. Despeux, Catherine and Livia Kohn. *Women in Daoism*, 2011; Raz, Gil. "Birthing the self;" Jia, Jinhua. "The Identity of Tang Daoist priestesses;" and Valussi, Elena. "Female Alchemy." The above three articles are all in Jia, Jinhua, et al., editors. *Gendering Chinese religion: subject, identity, and body*. State University of New York Press, 2014.

[26] Limited related articles could be found. Zhao, Xiaohua. "Love, lust, and loss in the Daoist nunnery as presented in Yuan drama." *T'Oung Pao*, vol. 100, 2014, pp. 80–119.

The Survival of Yuan Drama and its Categorifications

Ironically, it is fair to say that most of Yuan drama available for readers nowadays are Ming dynasty productions, especially considering the heavy editing by Ming literati/playwrights. Tracing back to the 1920s, Wang Guowei and his teacher Luo Zhenyu 羅振玉 (1866-1940) unearthed a set of Yuan-period woodcut editions of Yuan operas called *Yuankan zaju sanshizhong* 元刊雜劇三十種 (*Yuankan* hereafter).[27] The tremendous differences between this Yuan edition and those Ming versions detected by various scholars[28] has evoked an extensive discussion among academic circles. The discussion is centered around how much they could rely on the rest of available editions to recover the actual images of Yuan drama, i.e., the authenticity of the existing versions is in question. In this regard, a handful of scholars have attempted to dig out the critical gaps among the different version by doing case studies on plays, such as the well-known tragedy *Injustice*

[27] Dolby, "Some Mysteries and Mootings about the Yuan Variety Play," pp. 82–84; also, see, James I. Crump, "The Elements of Yuan Opera," pp. 422–424. There were thirty truncated operas in the box, and it was marked "Collection B." The plays included in this edition provide hardly any of the interspersed spoken or recited dialogue and consist of little more than the core song framework that is more stage-oriented and more integrated with the discussion there originally was.

[28] The Japanese sinologist Masaru Aoki 青木勝 (1887-1964) compared the thirteen operas in the *Yuankan* with those have the same titles in *Yuanqu xuan* 元曲選, which is the most available edition, and found that 95 complete arias had been cut out and 65 entirely new ones had been added by its compiler Zang Jinshu as we mentioned earlier.

to Dou E[29] and the detective drama *Moheluo Doll*.[30] To sum up, these exemplary case studies on the different versions of a single Yuan drama tell us that from a simple form of theatre performance originally. Arias were written down probably just for the audience or main roles at the time of writing. Yuan drama underwent fundamental transformations up until the end of the Ming dynasty.

Wilt L. Idema chronologically divides earlier editions of Yuan drama into three stages: the thirty plays found in *Yuankan*, those fragmentary texts of plays produced during the first half of the fifteenth century,[31] as well as a considerable number of manuscript texts

[29] West, Stephen H. "A Study in Appropriation: Zang Maoxun's Injustice to Dou E." *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 111, no. 2, 1991, pp. 283–302. After comparing the three versions, i.e., *Gu mingjia* 古名家 edition of 1588, *Yuanqu xuan*, and Meng Chengshun's *Gujin mingju hexuan*, which is the latest editions of Yuan drama, West concludes that while Zang's version foregrounds the concerns of orthodox Confucian morality and didacticism so central to the literati class, the master metaphors of the original play (radically changed by Zang) are those of economic transaction and personal commodification, reflective of the merchant townsmen who formed the larger part of Yuan audiences. The original play also plainly stresses sexual desire and the workings of karma as critical elements in the plot, both of which are concerns excellently written out of the play in Zang's version.

[30] Besioa, Kimberly. "The Moheluo Doll Revisited: Yuan Drama in the Late Ming." *Chinoperl*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2005, pp. 25–45. The author compares its changing forms in three different milieus in which the genre developed— the Yuan commercial-stage, Ming court performance, and print anthologies edited by late Ming literati. Through the comparison, we observe the formation and different expressions of the zaju over time. While the lack of textual mediation tells us little about how the play might have been in the Yuan dynasty, Ming editions insert textually what might have been inserted dramatically when the plays were originally staged. Meanwhile, even though the plays performed on the Ming court emphasize the comic and tends to support values which aided the imperial agenda, late Ming Yuan drama anthologists like Zang Jinshu and Meng Chengshun 孟稱舜 (ca. 1599-1684) still shaped Yuan zaju to better conform to their own aesthetic standards and ideological consideration.

[31] This includes thirty-one dramas by Zhu Youdun 朱有墩 (1379-1439) who is the grandson of Hongwu emperor. For more thorough studies on Zhu Youdun's play, see Idema, Wilt L. *The Dramatic oeuvre of Chu Yu-tun (1379-1439)*, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1985.

and at least six collections dedicated to Yuan drama produced during the Wanli period (1573-1619). Comparing to these earlier editions, *Yuanqu xuan*, which were published in 1616 and 1617, achieves its continuous popularity due to its evident literary quality,[32] availability, and political considerations[33] as well. Despite the differences, many scholars, such as Sun Kaidi 孫楷第 (1898-1986),[34] Dolby, Hawkes, and Idema, still hold their faith in Zang's original intention in reserving the Yuan drama as he understood it and even when reviving them during and after his days.

With the significant number of existing Yuan drama, the variety of its subjects also requires our attention. Since there have been different criteria for thematic grouping for the sake of personal interest, the most representative example could be the twelve categories in *The Sounds of Universal Harmony* (*Taihe Zhengyin Pu* 太和正音譜) from the hands of

[32] Idema, "Why You Never Have Read a Yuan Drama," pp. 768–775; also, see, *Fubao tang ji*. Shanghai, 1958, pp. 91–92; also, *Ciyu conghua*, in *Zhongguo gudian xiqu lunzhu jicheng*, Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1959, vol. 9, p. 271, both are cited in Dolby, "Yuan Drama," pp. 37–38. The compiler Zang simplified and standardized the stage directions, removing anomalies and infractions of the convention of Yuan drama, changed the wording of the dialogue, regularly changed the wording of the songs, added many songs of his own making as discovered by Aoki as well, and even rewrite some of the plays into grand reunion scenes; while taking his delight in altering almost every piece of the two-hundred Yuan drama copied from the Ming Imperial Play Institute, and "mastering the knacks and techniques of the Yuan men" as he honestly put in the preface of *Yuanqu xuan* and his letters, Zang unavoidably has received criticism from his contemporaries for consigning chosen songs to oblivion based on his aesthetic taste or understanding.

[33] As Idema reminds us in his article, censorship should also be under our consideration since it ensured that the full text of all the parts in each play would be written out.

[34] *Yeshiyuan gujin zaju kao*. Shanghai: Shangza chubanshe, 1953, p. 150, cited in Ibid, p. 38. Sun Kaidi might be right to assume that apart from Zang's highly edited work, most of the versions of Yuan drama are based very closely on the Ming palace editions. The process itself would give us some clue to the question of why there is such a vast difference between *Yuankan* and other editions.

Zhu Quan (1379-1348).[35] Zhu Quan is the seventeenth son of the first emperor of the Ming dynasty and himself a playwright. Meanwhile, the thematic system in a Yuan source *The Green Mansions* (*Qinglou ji* 青樓記) by Xia Tingzhi 夏庭芝 (ca. 1300-1375) varies significantly.[36] These classifications nonetheless sketch those interesting social aspects presented in the Yuan drama available corresponding to their time. The recently deceased scholar, Shi Zhongwen 時鐘雯 (1922-2014), also took her effort to reclassify the enormous corpus of extant Yuan drama into five main groups.[37] After carefully examining each of these five, she drew a conclusion that is essential for this study as well. As in all drama, the playwrights are deeply interested in exploring problems involving the central values,

[35] Zhongwen Shi, "Themes," in *Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Zaju*, pp. 68–69; also, Crump, "The Elements of Yuan Opera," pp. 419–422. Zhu Quan was engaged with Daoist ideas and practices, and his works also included some wide-ranging Daoist texts, which would then explain why he places the two Daoism-related categories, "becoming gods and immortals" (*Shenxian Daohua* 神仙道化) and "living as recluses and immortals" (*Yinju Ledao* 隱居樂道) as the first. The rest ten categories in *The Sounds of Universal Harmony* include: (3) "wearing robes and holding the official scepter" (*pipao binghu* 披袍秉笏); (4) "faithful ministers and valiant warriors" (*zhongchen lieshi* 忠臣烈士); (5) "filial piety, righteousness, integrity, and chastity" (*xiaoyi lianjie* 孝義廉潔); (6) "admonishing the traitorous and denouncing the flatters" (*chijian machan* 叱奸罵饞); (7) "exiled officials and orphaned sons" (*zhuchen guzi* 逐臣孤子); (8) "swords and clubs" (*badao ganbang* 拔刀趕棒); (9) "wind and flowers, snow and the moon" (*fenghua xueyue* 風花雪月); (10) "grief and joy, separations and reunions" (*beihuan lihe* 悲歡離合); (11) "misty flowers, powder and eyebrow paint" (*yanhua fendai* 煙花粉黛); and (12) "gods' heads and ghosts' faces" (*shentou guimian* 神頭鬼面).

[36] Ibid, Xia Tingzhi mentions several categories including: (1) "plays about kings" (*jiatou zaju* 架頭雜劇); (2) "plays about melancholy ladies" (*guiyuan zaju* 閨怨雜劇); (3) "plays with females with painted faces" (*huadan zaju* 花旦雜劇); (4) "plays about persons of the green-wood [outlaws]" (*lulin zaju* 綠林雜劇); and (5) "soft *mo-ni" (ruanmoji zaju* 軟末泥雜劇).

[37] They are love theme, which takes up the majority, Confucian themes, Daoist and Buddhist themes, the recluse theme, and social justice.

both moral and religious, of the culture. Thus, various aspects of the individual's relation to Confucian, Daoist, and Buddhist teachings are dramatized in many of the plays.[38]

The classification of artistic production by their subjects allows scholars of later generations to conduct research on a specific type and get a general idea. For example, the British sinologist and translator of note, David Hawkes (1923-2009), compares the various images of Quanzhen Daoist Wang Chongyang (1113-1170) and Ma Danyang (1123-1183) in two Yuan plays with their historical counterparts.[39] While celebrating the fruitful result by conducting type studies, we also need to be cautious that it might lead to the "blindness" of some degree towards those minor but unique elements that tell a different story. To give a related example, *Hearing Zither in Bamboo Dock* is traditionally considered a love drama since it integrates common elements that a Yuan love drama should have. The drama includes: a resourceful and frank treatment of love, centering on physical fulfillment, the

[38] Ibid, pp. 70–112.

[39] David Hawkes, "Quanzhen Plays and Quanzhen Masters," *Bulletin De L'Ecole Française D'Extrême-Orient*. Vol. 69, no. 1, 1981, pp. 153–170. Considering the unreliability of the spoken parts as we discussed above, Hawkes divided the discussion into two parts, spoken part and sung part. He made it clear to the readers that although there is no reason to suppose that they represent the words used in the playwrights' day, nevertheless, they are of some interest as an indication of what was popularly believed about the Quanzhen master a couple of centuries after his death. What he found after making the comparison is rather interesting. First, in the sung part of *The Crazy Ren* by Ma Zhiyuan 馬致遠 (ca. 1251-1324), there is little in the text of the Yuan edition that can be identified as typically Quanzhen terminology; while in the spoken part, although it cannot with any confidence be attributed to Ma Zhiyuan, there is nothing in them that a Quanzhen follower of Ma Zhiyuan's day would have found exceptionable. Second, in *Liu Hangshou* generally attributed to Yang Jingxian 楊景賢 (dates unknown), there is an extraordinary contrast between the comfortable familiarity with esoteric Quanzhen teachings found in the sung parts and the absurd travesty of historical facts in the spoken ones. Derived from Hawkes's discussion, we could quickly detest the inconsistency of the spoken parts in *Yuanqu Xuan* and the sung parts in the original *Yuankan zaju sanshizhong*.

intervention by a friend of parents, the painstaking awaiting of the female protagonist, the male protagonist's success in CSE, and stress on a happy ending. While focusing their analysis on the patterns of significant characters, scene settings, or general plotlines, people are likely to overlook its unique religious elements in the single play. This may be true, especially in terms of Confucian moral ethics and the practice of Quanzhen Daoism.

Historical Background and Social Milieu

Over the thirteenth century, northern China experienced dramatic changes and underwent alternate cycles of turmoil and prosperity.[40] Scholars' oceans of ink spilled on pieces about Mongolians' coercive actions and how they had changed the social bearing towards Confucian values and teachings. This effect occurred through the prolonged suspension of the civil service examination (hereafter CSE) for seventy-eighty years (1237-1314), and the ethnic discrimination and national oppression seem unbearable for Confucian literati.[41] It was also said, though reportedly in jest, that the Yuan statutes classified society into ten grades in order of honor.[42] This ethnic division eventually formed

[40] Chao, Shin-Yi. "Good Career Moves: Life Stories of Daoist Nuns of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries." *Nan Nü*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2008, pp. 124–125.

[41] Zhan, Shichuang. *Daojiao yu xiju* 道教與戲劇. Xiamen daxue chubanshe, 2004, pp. 99–100. In the highly mix up of nationalities, Yuan governors divided people within their territory into four priority levels: the optimum are Mongolians; the second is so-called *se-mu* 色目 people, which refers to those remaining Europeans, Xixia people, Hui people, and other minorities in the western side; the third are Han people, including Qidan 契丹, Nüzhen 女真, and the rest who were once under Jin's rule; the last are southern people, referring to Han people who were once under the government of Southern Song and people from the Southwest.

[42] Dolby, "Yuan drama," from Fangde Xie (1226-1289), quoted in Luo, Jintang, *Xiancun Yuanren zaju benshi kao*, 閑村元人雜劇本事考. Taibei: Zhongguo wenhua shiye gongsi, 1960, p. 426. The ten grades start with

the basis for discriminatory policies in the official government and the practice of a spoil system at school.[43]

As for how drama flourished under such turmoil, we have heard varying opinions from the Ming playwright and drama theorist Zang Jinshu 臧晉叔 (1550-1620), the Ming writer and bureaucrat Shen Defu 沈德符 (1578-1642)[44] and Wang Guowei.[45] The Japanese scholar Shionoya On (1878-1962) advanced this theory further by suggesting the three factors combined. In essence, These factors include unrestricted freedom of thought, the frustration of the people under foreign rule,[46] and encouragement from the Yuan court.[47] It seems that derived from that substantial historical evidence, the conclusion drawn by modern scholars tends to situate Yuan literati as the oppressed of the time, and Yuan drama arose as this group of playwrights striving for a living or as a protest against the foreign conquerors.

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mandarins and other officers, and artisans, singing-girls, scholars, and beggars seventh, eighth, ninth, and tenth, respectively.

[43] Yang, Richard F. S. "The Social Background of the Yuan Drama." *Monumenta Serica*, vol. 17, no.1, 1958, pp. 331–352.

[44] Zang, Jinshu, the Preface of *Yuanqu xuan.* Zhonghua shuju, 1958; As for Shen Defu, cited in Zheng, Zhenduo, *Zhuoguo wenxue shi* 中國文學史. Jilin renmin chubanshe, 2013, p. 157. both believed that Yuan drama was a direct result of the examinations which required skill in composing songs

[45] Wang, *History of Drama and Arias in the Song and Yuan*, p. 77. Wang Guowei argued that what gave a stimulus to the drama was not the examination system but rather the suspension of it during the early years of Yuan.

[46] Zheng also express the same idea, see *Zhuoguo wenxue shi*, pp. 156–158.

[47] Shionoya On 鹽穀溫, *Yuanqu gaishuo* 元曲概說, translated by Sui Shusen 隋樹森 (1906-1989) (Shangwu yinshu guan: 1958), p. 23.

Nevertheless, some scholars suggest a different point of view. Guofu Wu explains the suspension of CSE as, in part, the result of the Confucian scholars' unserviceability.[48] The Mongol empire is a state with vast territory and multi-nation that needs all kinds of labor forces. While towards the end of the Song dynasty, Confucian scholars were only satisfied with their interpretation of those Confucian classics.[49] From a more macroscopic view, human ecologist E. N. Anderson discovers that the Mongolian's continuous success of conquest came from their ability to draw on kinship, ethnic, religious,[50] and military ties to build large forces by working their networks to the hilt.[51] That is to say, the Mongolians played an exemplar role for this group of Confucian scholars who are also part of this game. Both have the thirst to alter their way of living to fit in this new environment where there is a high demand for entertainment due to the fast-changing society and their economic growth.[52]

Confucian scholars at the time combined their knowledge of both classical literature and vernacular language with the state of real-life to write picturesque and somewhat poetic

[48] Wu Guofu, *Quanzhenjiao yu Yuanqu* 全真教與元曲. Jiangxi renmin chubanshe, 2005, pp. 24–25.

[49] Ibid, pp. 24–25, cited from *Qingrong jushi ji* 清容居士集, vol. 41. Original texts are as follows: 自宋末年，尊朱熹之學，唇腐舌敝，止於《四書》之注，故凡刑獄、簿書、金穀、戶口，靡密出入，皆以俗吏而爭鄙棄; also see, Hinsch, Bret. "Song Dynasty (960-1279): Cultural Capital and Manhood." *Masculinities in Chinese history*. Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2013, pp. 91–109.

[50] Most Mongols were shamanistic.

[51] Anderson, E. N. "The Mongols and the Yuan Dynasty." *Food and environment in early and medieval China*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2014, pp. 182–202.

[52] Dolby, "Some Mysteries and Mootings about the Yuan Variety Play," pp. 81-89. Considering the vast entertainment area on the outskirt of the Yuan capital Dadu, Marco Polo (ca. 1254-1324)'s remarks on the diversion of foreign ambassadors and the like reminds us of drama's immediacy of its impact. Compared to poems or other traditional forms of literature, stage performance is generally less demanding on the audience's imagination.

arias to attract the native audience as well as the cultural novice. Not to mention evidence shows that the Mongols and their non-Chinese allies in China appear to have looked favorably upon playacting for their amusement. Even before their conquest of China and the influence of Mongol Yuan court, which patronized drama and the composition of Yuan drama extensively,[53] the Mongols enjoyed playacting. Therefore, we should give the Mongols and their allies some credit for furthering the advancement of Chinese drama.

[53] Dolby, "Yuan Drama," p. 34.

Chapter 3: Female Chastity in Late Imperial China

Confucianism and Female Chastity

Originated from the teachings of Confucius (551-479 BCE), Confucianism has developed a system of thought and rituals that focus on personal cultivation within the social framework. Its main doctrine rests on the cosmological concepts of Heaven and Earth. Confucianism also involves social morality and ethics such as humaneness, loyalty, and filial piety. Once this harmony is achieved within oneself, it will then expand to one's family, the state, and ultimately the universe. Classical Confucianism is one dominate traditional Chinese philosophy, until the establishment of Neo-Confucianism during the Song and Ming dynasties. In this and the following section, we will first introduce Neo-Confucianism and then look closely at those historical transformations of female chastity from classical Confucianism to Neo-Confucianism that is essential for this study.

During the Song dynasty, there was the spread of printing and an expansion of the civil service examination. There soon emerged a new literati class that encouraged relevant scholarship and secular education. By then, the commitment to self-cultivation and the possibility of human perfectibility remained the same. However, the principal method to gain knowledge as encouraged is through a combination of the classical study of Confucian classics and practical learning. Complying with Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107)'s rejection of Chan Buddhism and Daoism, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) further elaborates that Buddhism and Daoism have no fixed principles or criteria for evaluating and defining solutions to the human problem.[54] Meanwhile, Zhu Xi devoted a considerable amount of effort to the

[54] De Bary, Wm. Theodore. "The Neo-Confucian Stage." *East Asian Civilization: A Dialogue in Five Stages.* Harvard University Press, 1988, pp. 43–66.

systematic preparation of learning materials suitable for education on all levels. One of the most influential texts among them is undoubtedly his editing of and commentaries on the four classical Confucian texts, namely *Great Learning*, *Analects*, *Mencius*, and *Maintaining the Perfect Balance*. His emphasis on the process of investigation of myriad things, as revealed in his commentaries to *Great Learning,* conforms to what he called the school of principle (*lixue* 理學). Although Zhu Xi's doctrines did not gain substantial popularity during his time, those literati during the Yuan and Ming dynasties still found a sense of belonging.

On the other hand, the school of heart (*xinxue* 心學) found by Ming Neo-Confucian scholar Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529) developed the idea of innate knowing. Originated from Mencius's teaching of Heart-and-Mind (*xin* 心), Wang Yangming expounds that every person knows from birth the difference between good and evil. He rejected the pure investigation of knowledge, but carved his philosophy of action that knowledge and action should be unified as one.[55] Even so, after the fall of the Ming dynasty, the reaction against Wang Yangming's teaching as subjective, Buddhistic, anti-intellectual and amoral was compounded by the charge that his heterodox views were responsible for the dynasty's collapse.[56] Since then, Zhu Xi's curriculum was reaffirmed and became dominant throughout the official court and society.

[55] Gardner, Daniel. *The Four Books: the Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition*. Hackett, 2007, pp. 3–8.

[56] Chen et al. "Self and Society in the Ming." De Bary, Wm. Theodore and Irene Bloom. Editors. *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, pp. 841–855.

In both classical Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism, there are some shared and enduring traditions. Among them are chastity (*zhen* 貞). People might find it surprising that in early China, *zhen* was a term used to refer to men as often as it was to women. For Confucius, it refers to the "perfect balance" between a moral dilemma and its solution.[57] In the lessons for her daughter, Ban Zhao (45-c. 116 CE) instructed that the way a husband and wife is connected as the two cosmological forces, Yin and Yang. Women should stay in their proper place to serve their husbands with respect and caution and to their parents-in-law with whole-hearted devotion and implicit obedience.[58] As Lao correctly points out, in the earlier stage, Confucian notions of the body have little theoretical or philosophical interest in the body itself. Remarriage was entirely legitimate, common and remained acceptable in early imperial China.[59] The suicidal practice of the chastity cult in late imperial China would very much violate one's filial obligation.[60] Ban Zhao's lessons, along with many other earlier Confucian writings on womanly virtue, would have such significant influences, both broad in geography and prolonged in time. However, under the influence of various factors, the correlative balance between men and women later tilted, and the perception and expectation towards female chastity altered.

The entering of the Buddhist scripture into China during the late second and early third centuries brought with it the Buddhist doctrine of the pure body. Chastity is understood by Buddhism as physical chastity and has acquired an ontological status,

[57] Lao, "Conversion to Chastity: A Buddhist Catalyst in Early Imperial China," pp. 26–29.

[58] Nancy Lee Swann. Translator. *Pan Chao: Foremost Woman Scholar of China*. New York: Century Co., 1932, pp. 82–90.

[59] Lao, "Conversion to Chastity: A Buddhist Catalyst in Early Imperial China," p. 33.

[60] Mencius, in *Classic of Filial Piety* (*Xiaojing* 孝經), says that "Our body, skin, and hair are all received from our parents; we dare not injure them. This is the first priority in filial duty."

rejecting the notion of the body as an instrument of filial piety.[61] Towards the sixth century, Buddhists were correlating the five Confucian virtues with the five Buddhist precepts.[62] Buddhist and Confucian notions of chastity appeared to have become integrated into one. During the Song dynasty, Neo-Confucianism had defined later-day female chastity for the most part. There were some critical changes in terms of law and ritual practice. It included the cancelation of female inheritance rights from her natal family, bans on cross-cousin marriage, the shifts of the female role in mourning rituals, the rising intolerance towards widow marriage, and so on.[63] They all pushed Chinese families towards patrilineal ones that considerably loosen women's attachment to their natal families and, therefore, intensified women's dependence on their husband's family.

The cult of female chastity elevated during the Yuan dynasty when Neo-Confucianism was adopted as government ideology, and the government began to promote female chastity and wifely sacrifice. Widow remarriage was strictly forbidden. An analysis of the examples in the "Biographies of Women" in the official histories for the Song and Yuan provides dramatic evidence that it was the Yuan dynasty that supplied the precedents for state policies— promoting female chastity and suicide under the subsequent Ming and

[61] Lao, "Conversion to Chastity: A Buddhist Catalyst in Early Imperial China," pp. 43–55.

[62] Ibid, pp. 44-45. The five Buddhist precepts in *Scripture on brahmin Fanmoyu* (*Fanmoyu* 梵摩渝經) are abstention from killing, stealing, sexual promiscuity, cheating, and intoxication. At the same time, the five Confucian virtues are humaneness, contentment, chastity, trustworthiness, and filial devotion.

[63] Du, Fangqin Du and Susan Mann. "Competing Claims on Womanly Virtue in late Imperial China." Dorothy Ko, et al. *Women and Confucian Cultures in Premodern China, Korea, and Japan*. University of California Press, 2012, pp. 223–225.

Qing regimes.[64] There was then a sharp increase of incidences involving female chastity and suicide in later dynasties. There were 732 recorded cases during the Yuan, 35,829 cases during the Ming, and 12, 323 cases during the Qing.[65] Those so-called "women martyrs" in late imperial China defended their chastity by remaining faithful widows for their whole life or committing suicide. During the Ming dynasty, suicide was even singled out more for praise than other kinds of virtuous behavior.

Although we could never overstress the influence of Neo-Confucianism[66] on the historical alterations of female chastity discourse, we must not overlook the fact that the chastity cult is the product of joint factors. The tale of Lady Sun, as recorded in the official history of the Ming, would well illustrate this point.[67] When asked by an official why she would rather remain a widow and go through those difficulties than remarry, she quoted from Zhu Xi: "Starving to death is a minor matter, whereas losing one's chastity is a crucial matter."[68] She has been taking this quote at face value while losing track of the specific context, just like many other female martyrs did. Therefore, we conclude that female

[64] See the two tables in Ibid, pp. 225–227. The tables are based on the *History of the Song Dynasty* (*Songshi* 宋史). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977, vol. 46, pp. 13477–93; and also, *History of the Yuan Dynasty* (*Yuanshi* 元史). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976, vol. 200-201, pp. 1483–516.

[65] Ibid, p. 223. Dong, Jiabin. "Statistics on Chaste Widows and Female Martyrs through History" (*Lidai jiefu lienü de tongji* 歷代節婦烈女的統計) , 1937, reprinted in Bao, Jialin. Editor. *Collected Essays on the History of Chinese Women* (*Zhongguo funüshi lunji* 中國婦女史論集). Taipei: Daoxiang chubanshe, 1979, vol.1, p. 112.

[66] Ebrey, Patricia Buckley. *The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

[67] Ibid, 229, from *History of the Ming Dynasty* (*Mingshi* 明史). Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1974, vol. 301, p. 7697.

[68] Zhu, Xi, *A Letter to Chen Shizhong* (*Yu Chenshizhong shu* 與陳師中書) in *Qinding Siku Quanshu* 欽定四庫全書, *Huian ji* 晦庵集, vol. 26.

chastity discourse must have undergone changes under the influence of dynamic political, social, cultural, and religious circumstances. In the following, we will examine the wedge of *Hearing Zither in Bamboo Dock* to see how female chastity discourse could influence the female protagonist's life and how she finally finds an appropriate fit between a moral dilemma and its solution.

Wedge: The Conversion into a Daoist Nun

The leading female role (*Zhengdan* 正旦) Zheng Cailuan lives alone after her parents' death. Before their death, her parents told her that when her father held a post at the Ministry of Rite (*Libu* 禮部), she was betrothed at birth with the son of Qin family from the Ministry of Works (*Gongbu* 工部). The son's name is Qin Xiuran, leading male role (*Zhengmo* 正末). However, she had already lost contact with Qin's family for years. There is an old Daoist nun Mistress Zheng, the old female role (*Laodan* 老旦), who once taught her calligraphy and how to play the zither. She used to be one's wife, but the old couple was separated during a highway robbery many years ago. One day, there came an imperial decree: any female who has reached twenty has to be married within one month or she will be punished. To escape the punishment, Cailuan moves to a thatched cottage where she trains as a Daoist nun under mistress Zheng.

A comparison of different editions tells us that the imperial decree is very likely Zang's creation. In the earlier Ming versions, the reason for Cailuan's conversion is somewhat ambiguous: one day, Cailuan simply says, "I'd rather follow Mistress Zheng and become a Daoist nun." This explains her conversion as purely a result of religious interest. In Zang's version, by giving the one-month time limit through the decree, it not

only adds to the urgency but also rationalizes the conversion as the appropriate fit between a moral dilemma and its solution. Without exception, the ideology of female chastity as promoted by the Yuan and Ming governments also apply to Cailuan's case. Many cases of female suicide recorded in the *History of the Ming Dynasty* tells the story of betrothed girls committing suicide when their fiancés die. Cailuan is obviously caught on the horns of a moral dilemma. Since there are no signs showing that scholar Qin is dead, there is not enough reason for her to commit suicide. As a daughter of a government official, she was probably facing a higher level of social pressure that left her no choice but to remain faithful to her still-missing betrothed. However, the political decree cruelly put an end to her waiting and forced her to take further actions. Under such extreme circumstances, she decides to seek shelter from other religions/belief systems. By converting into a Daoist nun, Cailuan escapes her way out of political punishment while still conforming to the Confucian ideology of female chastity. By rewriting some parts in the earlier editions, Zang's version greatly reinforces Cailuan's image as a chaste fiancée, which would perfectly align with the historical tendency of chastity cult from the Yuan, or early Ming, to the late Ming dynasty as discussed earlier.

Chapter 4: Ideal Daoist Life in the Cottage

In Act I, scholar Qin comes to Zhengzhou to take civil service examinations and visits Liang Zhouyin, now governor of Zhengzhou, who was his father's old friend. Governor Liang invites him to live in his own house so that scholar Qin can concentrate on preparing for the examination. As for Cailuan, she truly appreciates her religious life in the thatched cottage as a Daoist nun:

> *Since I converted to Daoism, I felt so peaceful and sincerely happy!*[69](Sings:) **[Xianlü mode: Speck on the Crimson Lip]** Leaving behind my copper drinking cup along with all my family property, shedding the extreme wealth (*potian* 潑天, Daoist term) and the abyss of misery (*huoyuan* 火院, Buddhist term), in the end [I found myself in infinite freedom] without any restraint. Enveloped in the fragrance of the incense, I cultivate and purify my heart-and-mind (*xin* 心, Confucian term) every day.
>
> 自從出了家，到大來好是安靜快樂也呵！（唱）【仙呂·點絳唇】棄了個銅鬥兒似家緣，撇下個潑天也似火院，到大來無拘倦。每日間不斷香煙，將一片真心煉。

When her acolyte tempts her to return to the secular world and marry a scholarly official, she simply replies:

> *Little acolyte, that is not right.* (Sings:) **[The Village Receives Drum]** [Although] you might think it is better for me to take leave [and get married], I must instead

[69] The italicized font here indicates spoken dialogue. I will follow this different-size type format for distinguishing speech from the song in all translated passages below.

devote my whole heart-and-mind to self-cultivation. Do not covet fame and wealth as they are insignificant as fly's head and snails' horn. It is better to hide from those right and wrong, forget the favor and disgrace, and have no arrogance and resentment. Why [bother to] ask who gets the official posts, who meets their luck, or who earns money? Alas! (How are they) going to escape from the life and death moment [differently from the rest]?

小姑，你說的差矣。（唱）【村裡迓鼓】你道我不如歸去，我待要至心修煉。則他這蠅頭蝸角虛名利，休貪休戀。倒不如躲是非，忘寵辱，無驕怨。問甚麼誰得官,誰得祿，誰得錢？呀，到後來死生關臨頭怎免？

… **[Same Tune to Win Gourd]** How can it compare with me sleeping until the sunbeam through the east window slanting on the floor, and resting in unclouded peacefulness? The fool fools himself, while the wise [behaves] wisely. [One would] refine the cinnabar (*dansha* 丹砂) by going through those nine turns, hold the two volumes of *Yellow Court* in his sleeves, and chant the five thousand words of *Laozi*.

【麼篇】爭如我睡徹東窗日影偏，高枕只安眠？愚者自愚賢者賢。煉丹砂九轉，袖黃庭兩卷，誦老子五千言。

In *The Sounds of Universal Harmony*, Zhu Quan draws an analogy between Shi Zizhang's works and the legendary island of immortals Penglai 蓬萊. In addition, he also compares them with the fairy grass Yaocao 瑤草 in Chinese myths and legends. Both of these analogies allude to Shi as a disciple of Daoism. The above three arias from *Hearing Zither in Bamboo Dock* show that Shi has sufficient knowledge of some major Daoism traditions.

For example, the use of cinnabar and the text *Yellow Court* in the third aria would remind us of the Upper Clarity tradition that once popularized during the Han dynasty in southern China. In the Upper Clarity tradition, the hierarchy within the divinity consists of two levels: the perfected and the transcendence. There were two fundamental aspects in terms of achieving transcendence. On the one hand, it developed a systematic theory of divine elixir and external alchemy practice by making use of materials from nature, such as cinnabar.[70] While on the other hand, according to *Yellow Court*, it advocates concentrated visualization and meditation to nourish the internal organs and interior gods and achieve spiritual realization.[71] The recitation of the *Laozi* text here conforms to the Numinous Treasure tradition of the time. In this Daoist tradition, the practice of visualization and meditation persisted.[72] In addition, under the influence of Buddhism, they believe that recitation of Daoist text would achieve the idea of universal salvation. Therefore, it became one of the leading principles in the sect.[73] Through the references to these earlier Daoist traditions, Shi showcases a fuller picture of Cailuan as a newly converted Daoist nun who is well-versed in Daoist texts and able to resist temptation. Both

[70] *Instructions on the Scripture of the Divine Elixir of the Nine Tripods of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangsi jiuding shendan jing* 黃帝九鼎神丹經), in Robson, *The Norton Anthology of World Religions: Daoism*, pp. 218–222.

[71] *The Most High Jade Scripture on the Internal Vie of the Yellow Court* (*Taishang huangting neijing yujing* 太上黃庭內經玉經), in Ibid, 210-214; also, *Scripture of the Three Primordial Perfected Ones, by the Imperial Lord of the Golden Portal* (*Jinque dijun sanyuan zhenyi jing* 金闕帝君三元真一經), in Ibid, pp. 298–304.

[72] *The Array of the Five Numinous Treasure Talismans of the Most High* (*Taishang lingbao wufu xu* 太上靈寶五符序), in Ibid, pp. 215–218.

[73] *The Wondrous Scripture of the Upper Chapters of Limitless Salvation* (*Lingbao wuliang duren shangpin miaojing* 靈寶無量度人上品妙經), in Ibid, pp. 305–314.

of these Daoist traditions would later fade into the history by the Yuan dynasty. However, they all became sources for the later development of inner alchemy in the Quanzhen Daoism. More importantly, nearly all the "Daoist" plays in the surviving corpus of early Yuan drama are in fact plays of conversion. They could more accurately be described as "Quanzhen plays."[74] In what follows, I will give a brief account of the dynastic development of Quanzhen Daoism since Song dynasty along with its connections with the idea of inner cultivation in the second aria.

Self-Cultivation and Inner Alchemy

As Robson puts it, the history of the Song dynasty is a combination of both "unification" due to its cultural and economic growth and "fragmentation" due to the political and geographical divisions. Fortunately, political instability did not slow down the growth of Daoism. The Song dynasty witnessed the birth of many new Daoist movements.[75] One of the most critical monastic forms of Daoism appeared during the late Song dynasty— Complete Perfection (*Quanzhen* 全真). The rise of the Quanzhen during the Yuan dynasty[76] met its peak around the thirteenth century, i.e., the height of Daoism. Although Daoism has had a monastic organization as part of its practice since the sixth

[74] Hawkes, "Quanzhen Plays and Quanzhen Masters," pp. 157–58.

[75] Robson, "The Resurgence and Diversification of Daoism: the Song (960 C.E.-1279 C.E.) and Yuan (1260-1368 C.E.) Dynasties," in Ibid, pp. 455–461.

[76] For a detailed historical account of the new Daoist religious sects emerged during the Yuan, please refer to Chao, "Good Career Moves: Life Stories of Daoist Nuns of the Twelfth and Thirteenth Centuries," pp. 124–128.

century in the middle ages,[77] it did not fully come into its own until the twelfth century. Quanzhen Daoism built their identity through several significant aspects: the lore of the ascetic life, the symbolic system of names, the institutional realities of corporate Quanzhen organization, and so forth.[78] It adopted and modified many traditions from both earlier Daoism traditions and Buddhist monastic rules and practice, especially the inward-looking meditation from the Chan tradition.

Shi or Ming playwrights' imagination of Cailuan's religious life is quite reasonable, especially under practical consideration. The role of the young acolyte very much adds a layer of master-disciple relationship to the whole religious atmosphere in the play. According to Goossaert's estimations of Quanzhen organization's size: there were approximately 4,000 Quanzhen monasteries, and most were called *guan*, *gong*, or *an* (Cailuan calls her family temple the thatched nunnery (*Cao'an* 草庵)). The largest monasteries had over a hundred residents, but village establishments only housed a few, usually between one to three residents. The percentage of women varies, but on average, it was around one-third.

There are two general developments across various Daoist lineage and ritual systems. The first is Thunder Rituals (*leifa* 雷法), which is an exorcistic ritual practice to

[77] Cited in Kohn, "Monastic Rules in Quanzhen Daoism: As Collected by Heinrich Hackmann," p. 367, from Kristofer Schipper, "Le Monachisme Taoïste." Lanciotti, Lionello. Editor. *Incontro di religioni in Asia tra il terzo e il decimo secolo d. C.* Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Studi Storico-Religiosi, Venezia, 16-18 novembre 1981. Firenze: Leo S. Olschki, 1984, pp. 199–215.

[78] Goossaert, Vincent. "The Invention of an Order: Collective Identity in Thirteenth-Century Quanzhen Taoism." *Journal of Chinese Religions,* vol. 29, no. 1, 2001, pp. 111–138. This institutional mechanism proves that not only did Quanzhen order created an integrated Taoist monastic tradition, but it also modified in many parts of China the relation of the Daoist clergy to the temples and to the lay congregations in terms of liturgical services, teachings, and temple management.

"capture the unruly and uncanonical spirits that enthrall local communities and to transform them into bona fide sacred beings aligned with cultural institutions," such as Daoism.[79] The second is internal alchemy (*neidan* 內丹), which complements the earlier practice of external alchemy. The primary method to practice internal alchemy is through pure meditation, instead of relying on any external materials. It is believed that one's original nature is pure and empty. Therefore, through successful meditation, one would produce an inner elixir and reach a state of union with the Dao/Way itself.[80]

"Why [bother to] ask who gets the official posts, who meets their luck, or who earns money? Alas! How are they supposed to face the life and death moment [differently from the rest]?"[81] Realizing the emptiness of the material possessions and the limit of one's current life, Cailuan pays no more attention to fortune and fame. Casting off those worldly desires, she chooses to cultivate her inner realm to purify her Mind-and-Heart. Again, we see the playwrights masterfully portray a Daoist nun who seems to have already grasped the essence of inner alchemy.

After the collapse of the Yuan dynasty, during the Ming dynasty, a highly centralized official bureaucracy, Daoism was featured in its submission to the state control, penetration into disparate areas of philosophy and religion, increase in the standardization and unification of different schools of thought, and the dissolved boundaries between various Daoist lineages and traditions.[82] Another aspect concerned the communal networks

[79] Meulenbeld, "Introduction: Novels and the Work of the Gods," p. 2.

[80] Trans. by Wang, Eva Wang, *Seven Daoist Masters: a Folk Novel of China.* Shambhala Publication Inc., 1990.

[81] Ibid, p. 237.

[82] Robson, "The New Standardization and Unification of Daoism: from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644 C.E.) through the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912 C.E.)." *The Norton Anthology of World Religion: Daoism*, pp. 557–

between those larger institutions and regional cults, as presented in the popular literature of canonization during the Ming dynasty.[83] Meulenbeld argues:

> that while local communities may have enjoyed relative autonomy in some ways, late imperial territorial cults in the Jiangnan region, as in much of South and East China, consciously tap into the powers of larger networks, especially those of Daoism and its ritualists.

This mutual relationship would not only apply to the religious landscape of the Ming, but also that of all the other dynasties. As many other scholars have argued, institutionalized religious traditions such as Daoism have long-standing ties with local, territorial cults.[84] Although we have not detested any government regulation or the influence of regional cults on Daoism in the play so far, it is already very interesting to see several Daoist traditions embodied within a single character.

A Discussion of The Unity of Three Teachings

As we can clearly observe from the first aria, the playwright did not limit himself merely within the Daoist tradition. The Daoist term *potian*, the Buddhist term *huoyuan*,

561. One surprising but entertaining aspect is the substantial support Daoism got from several Ming emperors. Although the emperors made policies aimed at controlling Daoist, they still sought legitimacy and martial support by closely connecting with Daoism and actively engaging in Daoism practice, including consuming elixirs and sexual rites.

[83] Meulenbeld, "Introduction: Novels and the Work of the Gods," pp. 17–23.

[84] As cited in Ibid, Lagerwey, John. *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*. Macmillan, 1987; Dean, Kenneth. *Taoist Ritual and Popular* Cults. Princeton University Press, 2016; Davis, Edward L. *Society and the Supernatural in Song China*. University of Hawai'i Press, 2001, p. 14; Lai, Chi-tim. *Guangdong Local Daoism*. Zhongwen daxue chubanshe, 2007; Matsumoto, Kōichi. *Sōdai no Dōkyō*. Minamimanshū Tetsudō Chōsabu, 1942, especially pp. 250–276; Ratz, Paul. "Zhongguo dizhi," pp. 439–476; Duara, Prasenjit, *Culture, Power and the State*. Jiangsu renmin chubanshe, 2010, p. 15, p. 31.

and the Confucian term Mind-and-Heart, all appear in a single line. Putting it this way, the unity of the three teachings were quite obvious as shown in this play. In what follows, we would have a detailed discussion of the historical interreligious relationship between the three teachings to deepen our understanding of the phenomenon as appeared in the quoted aria. In the historically contextualized setting, the diffusion of different religions that once were all in relatively easy access to the crowd is crucial to our fundamental understanding of Chinese religions.

People who are interested in Chinese religions should be quite familiar with the concept of the unity of the three teachings (*sanjiao heyi* 三教各一), which refers to Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism as a harmonious aggregate. Some decades before the fall of the Han dynasty in 220 CE, the Daoist religion was born, and Buddhism was introduced to China. The earliest literary reference to the discourse of three teachings dates back to the fourth century. Members of religious institutions such as Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314-371) or Huiyuan 慧遠 (334-416) claimed that the three teachings look different from the outside but lead to the same goal.[85]

During most of China's history after the Sui dynasty (581-613), the three religions have been state-supported in various degrees. It was quite common for the rulers to employ representatives of all three teachings at court to conduct specific rituals for the court. More often is that the state or the emperor would favor one over the other and allowed one institution to control the other. For instance, although during the Tang dynasty (618-907),

[85] Sun, Chuo, *Yudao lun* 喻道論 in *Hongming ji* 弘明集, as cited in, Gentz, Joachim., "Rational Choice and the Chinese discourse on Unity of the Three Religions (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一)." *religion*, vol. 41, no.4, 2011, p. 536.

both Buddhism and Daoism had state-financed monasteries implanted throughout the empire. There is evidence showing Daoism gained formal precedence over Buddhism on the grounds that the latter was a foreign religion. During the Song dynasty (960-1276), the emperor Huizong 徽宗 (1082-1135) not only created a whole new network of Daoist temples throughout the empire, but also attacked the religion of the people by eliminating thousands of cult sites and prohibiting male and female mediums.[86] Therefore, as Gentz argued in his article, throughout the history of Chinese religions, the competition among those native and foreign religions is double-sided. It resides in both religious and political institutions.

Meanwhile, Gentz also notes the coherence or deviations between religious discourses and religious practices, and hypotheses that a harmonious unity of the three traditions as envisioned by the unity of discourse of the three teachings has never existed in practice. There has been many scholarly bickering on unity or diversity in Chinese religions. Still, we would all agree that despite all the possibilities, the weight of both ends together shows the integrity and complexity of Chinese religious reality. Having this in mind, we can then move on to examine those inconsistencies between the discourse and the reality in more detail.

The traditional view towards the relationship between Confucianism and Daoism tends to interpret them into a complementary relationship.[87] However, as we mentioned

[86] Lagerwey, John. "Religion and Politics, Church and State in Chinese History." *Religion and Politics: European and Global Perspectives*, Edinburgh University Press, 2014, pp. 157–167.

[87] Li, Zehou. "Taoist-Confucian Synthesis." *The Chinese Aesthetic Tradition*. University of Hawai'i Press, 2010, pp. 76–116. Li Zehou suggests the notion of "naturalization of human" put forwards by the Taoists and Zhuangzi as on the surface opposed to but eventually complements the idea of the "humanization of nature" emphasized by the rites and music tradition of Confucian humanists; Rongjie Chen et al. "The Way of Laozi

earlier, there are specific shared ideas between the two, such as moral and spiritual perfection assumed of everyone, and this is only one of the many examples. Early in the Warring State Period (475–221 BC), Mencius first raises the idea of *qi* 氣, the vital force physically filling one's body and morally providing a full realization to one's mind and heart. The *qi* is also what "fills up the space between Heaven and Earth."[88] Later in the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179–104 BC), a Confucian scholar and official, launched moderate reformism with minimal state involvement in the economy. He fully developed the idea of *qi* into one of the two cosmological forces. With the blood and the vital force as microcosmic metaphors in one's body, he correlated them with the political order and comprehended the state as one's body. In essence, the accumulation of vital force to a state is to accumulate worthy men and foundation of Mind-and-Heart to the ruler.[89] Meanwhile, the Daoist cosmology of Yin and Yang is also adopted to round out the macrocosmic models of Heaven and Earth. The norms of the people's rulers are derived from and modeled based on Heaven, so they do rewards and punishments to stabilize his government. The norms of the people's ministers are derived from and modeled on earth so that they would nourish the ruler and act loyally and trustworthily. It appears, in very early stages, there has already been subtle correspondence between Daoism and Confucianism in terms of their cosmological views towards the self, the state, and nature.

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and Zhuangzi." De Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*, pp. 77–79. To borrow the metaphor from De Bary, the doctrines of Confucianism and Daoism run side by side like two powerful streams through all later Chinese thought and literature.

[88] Gardner, *The Four Books: the Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition*, pp. 53–103.

[89] De Bary and Bloom, "The Imperial Order and Han Synthesis," in *Sources of Chinese Tradition: From Earliest Times to 1600*, pp. 292–300.

Early in the third century, Buddhism missionaries arrived from India. To seek a fundamental answer to the political and military disarray during its introduction, early Buddhism brought its wholesale theory of suffering and enlightenment through meditation and preaching. It remained largely disengaged from political and social concerns, but instead, it underwent a process of Sinification and domestication through the spread of religious devotion and practice in the domestic sphere.[90] As a result, many of the beliefs, practices, and social roles within Chinese Buddhism were initially designed to resolve contradictions between native Chinese values, such as Confucian filial piety, and an imported Indian faith.[91] In some cases, Buddhism even reinforced some of the Confucianist values. According to Yueqiang Lao's essay on the Buddhist contribution to the construction of the ideal Confucian woman, it was not until the introduction of Buddhist notions of the "uncontaminated body" that the notion of chastity as to a woman's success at defending herself against sexual violation took shape and was absorbed into the Confucian lexicon.[92] While in the political sphere, evidence shows that during the reign of the Dowager Empress Wu (624-705), there was the rapprochement between Buddhism and the ruler. In the late eighth century, Buddhism began to suffer a decline and eventually met its persecution during the ninth century mainly due to the attenuation of the Buddhist church itself both institutionally and doctrinally.[93] Nevertheless, the approach of

[90] Yao, Ping. "Good Karmic Connections: Buddhist mothers in Tang China." *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in Early and Imperial China*, vol. 10, no. 1, 2008, pp. 57–85.

[91] Hinsch, Bret. "Confucian Filial Piety and the Construction of the Ideal Chinese Buddhist Women." *Journal of Chinese Religions*, vol. 30, no. 1, 2002, pp. 49–75.

[92] Lao, "Conversion to Chastity: A Buddhist Catalyst in Early Imperial China," pp. 22–56.

[93] De Bary, "The Buddhist Age," *East Asian Civilization: A Dialogue in Five Stages*, pp. 21–42.

meditation developed in Zen Buddhism still had a certain influence on the inner-directed Neo-Confucianism during the later dynasties.

The relationship between Daoism and Buddhism is far more revealing. As Daoism began to take shape as an organized religious tradition, Daoism gradually developed into the practice of Daoist masters and laypeople who used breath control and other spiritual training to strengthen the body and prolong life. Starting from earlier Daoist sects, such as the Way of Celestial Masters, the Upper Clarity, and the Numinous Treasure, Daoism achieved its popularity during the Tang, Song, and Yuan dynasties (618-1368), and ultimately became one of the formalized religions. During its process of formalization, there was a copious amount of "inter-religious transit" between Daoism and Buddhism, namely that of Daoist appropriation of Buddhist divinities and saints.[94] A comparison of monastic life as pictured in the medieval and later-day Daoist materials also reveals that the medieval monastic institution was a continuation of the tradition of earlier schools in a Buddhist-inspired framework. Whereas, Quanzhen adopted and modified not only its outer trappings but also its internal organization and goal from the Chan tradition.[95] Nevertheless, the borrowing is not unidirectional as it shows.

Regarding the above discussion on the interreligious relationship between the three religions, many scholars would agree on the inclusiveness of Chinese religions. Examples of mutual influence and appropriation among them are conspicuously in evidence. Especially during the Ming dynasty, the boundaries between the "three teachings"

[94] Sørensen, Henrik H. "Looting the Pantheon: On the Daoist Appropriation of Buddhist Divinities and Saints." *The Electronic Journal of East and Central Asian Religions*, vol. 1, 2013, pp. 54–80.

[95] Livia Kohn. "Monastic Rules in Quanzhen Daoism: As Collected by Heinrich Hackmann." *Monumenta Serica*, vol. 51, no. 1, 2003, pp. 367–397.

continued to dissolve. This dynasty features such inclusions as the "three-teaching commentaries." What happened is that the three teachings are intermingled to elucidate each other, i.e., the other teachings are used as commentarial readings of one's canonical works.[96] Mainly, Neo-Confucianism, which borrowed at will from both Buddhism and Daoism, gained in importance and influence at court and throughout the society.

On the other side of the story, we have also spotted some textual evidence and historical events that prove just the opposite—the exclusiveness. In some essays on the three teachings, we find that metaphors often imply subtle hierarchies and seldom express equality or unity.[97] One of the examples Gentz gives is from Shi Daoan 釋道安 (312-385). Although Shi's "Essay on the Two Teachings" describes Confucianism and Buddhism as complementary, we find that at the end the inner realm (i.e., Buddhism) compared to the outer realm is by far superior.[98] Additional textual evidence comes from a court official named Zhen Luan 甄鸞 (535-566). In attacking the Conversion of the Barbarian (*huahu* 化胡) theory,[99] the author ruthlessly ridicules and criticizes the Numinous Treasure

[96] For a more detailed discussion, see, Gentz, "Rational Choice and the Chinese discourse on Unity of the Three Religions (*sanjiao heyi* 三教合一)," pp. 541–543.

[97] Ibid, pp. 538–541.

[98] Cited in Ibid, 540, from Kohn, Livia. *Laughing at the Dao: Debates among Buddhists and Daoists in Medieval China*. Princeton: Princeton University, 1995, pp. 179–180. Gentz also lists other evidential text, such as Liu Mi 劉謐 (Song or Yuan dynasty)'s "Essay on viewing the Three Teachings with a balanced mind" (*Sanjiao pingxin lun* 三教平心論). Other figures include Lin Zhao'en 林兆恩 (1517-1598), Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546-1623), Qisong 契嵩 (1007-1072).

[99] For more details about the Daoist "Conversion of the Barbarian" theory, see Wang, Fu 王浮 (fl. Western Jin dynasty). *The Conversion of the Barbarian*, in Robson, *The Norton Anthology of World Religion: Daoism*, pp. 188–193. It is initially about the claim that "Buddhist" teachings were, in fact, the preaching of Laozi after he left China for India.

Tradition as well as earlier practices of the Celestial Masters.[100] Buddhist charges against the made-up theory of Laozi was followed by more complaints against Daoist priests for copying Buddhist temples. Together with their loss of the public debate with Buddhist masters before the throne in 1258, these series of charges and calamities significantly diminished Daoist influence at court. Daoism was not able to regain the imperial privilege for the generations to come. In summary, although there is a general trend towards the amalgamation of the different religious traditions in the later stages of history, we do have some inconsistencies in terms of religious discourses and practices. Competitions and struggling for imperial power are always the other side of the mirror, i.e., the unity of the three teachings.

[100] Zhen, Luan 甄鸞. "The Essay to Ridicule the Dao" (*Xiaodao lun* 笑道論), in Ibid, pp. 349–356.

Chapter 5: "Polluted" Daoist life: Sense and Sensibility

Hearing Zither in Bamboo Dock and the Departure of Scholar Qin

In the second part of Act I, Cailuan "finally" encounters scholar Qin by accident. One day on his way back from a spring outing, scholar Qin stops over at the thatched cottage for the night. In the bamboo dock, he hears someone playing "Flowing Waters and High Mountains" (*Gaoshan liushui* 高山流水) on the zither. In reference to music and zither, James I. Crump devotes an article to these musical conventions in Yuan drama. Shi also devoted one chapter in her book talking about the mode system, songs, and song-sequences, as well as the use of the instrument in Yuan drama.[101] It is worth noting that three types of instruments were used as instrumental accompaniment, classified as string, wind, and percussion. An instrument sometimes appeared in the play as part of the story; often, this was zither due to its conventional association with the literati. In *Hearing Zither in Bamboo Dock*, the zither performance was creatively used to intensify the tension between the two protagonists.

Noticing someone is overhearing, Cailuan figures out at last that this young scholar is none other than her fiancé Qin Xiuran. Under the persuasion of scholar Qin, Cailuan decides to let him in:

> *In that case, this is not a place to talk. Let's go to the side room.* (sings:) **[The Marigold]** Here, the shadow of flowers feels more serene, and the cypress darkened under the blue mist; the two pillars are just as convenient; indeed, the steamy adventure is as bold as the sky. Tonight, there is no Milky Way hindering (us from meeting each other), aren't there the reunions of people and the moon? As for what

[101] Shi, "Music," pp. 180–197.

I mean by “free and pure Daoist self,” it is all ruined by you of me as a “wondering immortal.”

既然如此，這所在不是說話處，咱去那耳房裡說話去。（唱）【金盞兒】這搭兒裡花影更幽然，檜柏鎖著煙；則這兩椿兒好與人方便，果然是色膽大如天。今夜又無甚星河相間阻，莫不著人月兩團圓？我可甚麼“清閒真道本”，則被你壞了我也“無事的散神仙”。

The next morning, scholar Qin takes the initiative by asking when he could come to visit the next day. Cailuan tells him that he can sneak in at night through the side door. She then signs:

Qin Xiuran, for you, alas! (Sings:) **[Taking Advantage]** [I] Built the Altar for Seven Daoist Masters constructed the Hall of the Three Pure Ones. In the past, I sincerely cultivated my pure Mind-and-Heart, little did I expect this melodious piece played by the jade zither, would bring the lovers together. Shoulder to shoulder, under the moon and stars [we] swear to each other that the love would last forever. [Now] I do not dare to visit the Penglai or Langyuan and feel ashamed when facing the alchemical stove and Daoist sutra; what brings me melancholy is that when I sleep alone by the window, one night just feels like a year.

秦修然，我為你呵！（唱）【賺煞】建起座七真壇，新蓋了三清殿。往常我醞釀真心不淺，不想這一曲瑤琴聲婉轉，包藏著那美滿姻緣。並香肩，月下星前共指三生說誓言。我也到不的蓬萊閬苑，羞對著藥爐經卷，我愁的是小窗孤枕夜如年。

Paper cannot cover the fire. In Act II, governor Liang discovers the love affair. With worries that the young nun will distract scholar Qin, he let his servant lie to scholar Qin that Cailuan is actually an evil ghost haunting the cottage and possessing handsome men to their death. Hearing this, scholar Qin feels so scared and despaired that he immediately takes leave and goes to take civil service examination.

Combined Images of the Daoist Nun: Sense and Sensibility

The eminent scholar, Andrea Goldman, in her essay on two versions of one "*Si-fan*" play from late imperial China, explores the reason why the nun's transgressive behavior is captivating. She considers *qi* and *qing* as the two critical discourses that seem to work at odds with each other.[102] The *qi* here refers to the distancing effect for the audience, while *qing* refers to the sympathetic portrayal of the defiant nun. The *qing* pulls the audience and creates sympathy for the protagonist nun, and the *qi* makes the audience feel the other towards the character. Derived from her theory, I would like to propose another polar force: sense and sensibility, which would make more sense for Cailuan's case. In the following, I shall examine the representation of Daoist nuns' characterization in light of these two discourses.

As we have discussed, before her acquaintance with scholar Qin, Cailuan was content with her life as a Daoist nun in her cottage. She actively familiarizes herself with primary Daoist texts and practices Daoist traditions. She is also able to empty her worldly desires and turn inward to seek transcendence. When a young scholar is overhearing her

[102] Goldman, Andrea. "The Nun Who Wouldn't Be: Representations of Female Desire in Two Performance Genres of 'Si-Fan.'" *Late Imperial China*, vol. 22, no. 1, 2001, pp. 71–183.

playing zither, she shows no affection but alertness. She rationally queries his intention for showing up at a nunnery this late:

> *Hey young scholar, where do you come from? What is your name? Why do you come to my nunnery? If it makes sense, everything will be fine; but if not, I will send you to Daolu Si,*[103] *You would never be able to get away from the punishment!*
>
> 兀那秀才，你是那裡人氏？姓甚名甚？因甚來到俺這庵觀？說的是，萬事都休；說得不是，送你到道録司，不道的饒了你哩！

After the acquaintance with her fiancé, when scholar Qin asks for a stay with her overnight, she rejects at first:

> *Don't be rude! Although we were betrothed, I must not have sex with you without proper rituals. What if others find out about this? Wouldn't there be gossip about us as elopement?*
>
> 秀才休得無禮！我與你雖有盟約，卻不可造次苟合，萬一外人得知，豈無私奔之誚？

It is for scholar Qin's insistence that she finally decides to let her fiancé and, more importantly, the affection in. This image of Cailuan as a devoted and rational Daoist nun perfectly conforms to the force of sense.

Since scholar Qin leaves without any notice, the sympathetic portrayal of Zheng Cailuan flows after that:

> *Among the thirty-three heavens, the heaven of saying goodbye is the highest; among the forty-four kinds of sickness, lovesickness is the bitterest. This lovesickness is*

[103] Daolu Si 道録司 refers to an official department that takes care of Daoist-related affairs.

killing me! (Sings:) **[Drunken Spring Wind]** I now have fastened the monkey of mind with yarns and tied the horse of will with the fiber of lotus root. People say, Daoists all should cut off their thoughts of affection, while I say they are all nonsense, nonsense. When would we be able to sleep on the moon together, appraise the melody of jade Chopard, and ride the phoenix together?

"三十三天離恨天最高，四十四病相思病最苦。則被這相思害煞我也。"（唱）【醉春風】我如今將草索兒系住心猿，又將藕絲兒縛定意馬。人說道出家的都待要斷塵情，我道來都是些假、假。幾時能夠月枕雙歌欹，玉簫齊品，翠鸞同跨？

Her poetic talent and lovesickness turn her into a victim of the unfair judgment by the governor Liang. From the earlier stage of sense into the later stage of sensibility, the author develops a character in a way that would easily arouse people's sympathy. Like much of Quanzhen imagery, references to "the monkey of mind" and "the horse of will" were probably Buddhist in origin. Because of the Quanzhen masters' insistence on pure Mind-and-Heart, they emphasized the need to keep the monkey and the horse under control.[104]

After the scholar left, Governor Liang pays a visit to Cailuan's cottage. Impressed by her beauty and talents, he invites her over to the White Clouds Nunnery next to his official residence to hold her until scholar Qin comes back. What Cailuan says, which is also the end of Act II, shows her sense of being a true Daoist nun again:

I am willing to go. (Sings:) **[Playing with Children]** With all sorts of things in mind, [I] have no absorbing concernment, merely sitting on the lower square bed.

[104] Hawkes, "Quanzhen Plays and Quanzhen Masters," pp. 162–163.

Unexpectedly [I] must [from now on] set myself in the roaring space and willingly take White Clouds Nunnery as my residence. Then noticing my coarse clothes and light meals, do not laugh at me being poor; as for your stout horse and a light fur coat (indicating an extravagant way of living) do not show off your wealth. Take a look at the bottom of Northern Mang Mountain [where there are buried generations of nobles], what left are all those broken steles and deserted graves, and old trees with the remnant of sunset glow.

貧姑情願去。（唱）【耍孩兒】我心頭百事無牽掛，淨坐在方床矮榻，偏生要喧嘩場裡避喧嘩，白雲庵情願為家。則我這粗衣淡飯貧休笑，你那裡肥馬輕裘富莫誇。看北邙山直下，盡都是些斷碑荒塚，老樹殘霞。

In front of governor Liang, Cailuan seems to have control over her “monkey” and “horse” again. She now appears to be able to sheer away from those “noises.” This aria would echo the end of the aria **[The Village Receives Drum]** that we quoted in the last chapter. If this is not so obvious, the aria below would undoubtedly remind us of what we read earlier:

[The Epilogue] How would it compare to me locking green moss with layers of doors and sweeping away fallen flowers in my tranquil courtyard? Holding Yaoqin and lying under the pine shade, even if I will not become an immortal, I would still be quite joyful.

【尾聲】怎如俺重門鎖綠苔，閒庭掃落花？抱瑤琴高臥在松陰下，便做不得神仙我也快活煞。

To provide a quick recap, in Act I, when the acolyte tempts her, she counters, “how can it compare with me going to bed when the sunbeam through the east window was slanting on the floor, and resting in unclouded peacefulness?” In the aria above, Cailuan expresses

a similar ideology. The earlier transition from a true Daoist nun to a Confucian fiancée has now undergone a reversal process. This kind of effortless transformation will appear even more dramatic in the next act.

Ironic Polarity: the Double Identities

After months passed, scholar Qin won first place in the examinations and has been appointed as controller-general of Zhengzhou. Governor Liang intends to arrange a banquet in the White Clouds Nunnery. When governor Liang inquires if Cailuan is willing to lend the White Clouds Nunnery to hold the banquet, the contrast before and after she realizes that the guest is scholar Qin is evermore apparent:

（1）Before realizing:

Cailuan: *This should not be the Taoist temple for the birthday celebration. If it is so, this temple will not have an indecent appearance, and the cooker will be polluted by meat.*

Governor Liang: *Even if it is polluted, who would know?*

Cailuan: *Do you permit this kind of blasphemy? It will not be allowed to pollute the cooker!*

Governor Liang: *You are really unwilling to do this?*

Cailuan: *No, no! Even if my seven generations of fairy spirits jump out, I will not do it!* [105]

（2）After realizing:

Cailuan grabs scholar Qin's sleeves: *Young gentleman, you may have a seat here.*

[105] QYXQ, p. 249, Act III.

Governor Liang: *This should not be the Taoist temple for the birthday celebration. If it is so, it will be indecent.*

Cailuan: *Who knows?*

Governor Liang: *It will pollute your cooker. Do you permit this kind of blasphemy?*

Cailuan: *There is a small pot outside!* [106]

The playwright tentatively applies this ironic polarity to add to the dramatic effect. Character portrayal in Yuan drama emphasizes either the symbolic or the typical within the framework of the literary, ethical, and theatrical traditions.[107] It allows the audience to predict the traits of the stage characters easily. With certain exceptions, the inspiring and poetic writings of individualized behavior and speech unquestionably "transcend their basic type." People can still appreciate their work while finding some enjoyable surprises. The contrast made through the sense and sensibility of the character Cailuan not only allows the character to develop along the plotline, but also may add on some ironic effect to make the piece more entertaining.

If we carefully examine this ironic effect, we would find that it is the double identities of Cailuan and the dilemma she is now facing that make the difference. Earlier in Act I, with her fiancé still missing, Cailuan finds the appropriate fit between the Confucian moral dilemma and the political decree by converting to Daoism. While immersing herself into the Daoist learning, scholar Qin suddenly shows up. This is when all the conflicts emerge. In the Confucian realm, she is a fiancée who holds the love towards the other along with those wifely duties; in contrast, in the Daoist realm, she must discard

[106] QYXQ, pp. 249–250, Act III.

[107] Shih, "Characterization," pp. 47–67.

any worldly attachment and purify herself from within. When scholar Qin returns, in the Daoist realm, she at first puts her foot down and rejects the request. The pure nunnery will inevitably be "polluted" if it holds any worldly events such as the birthday celebration. Once she realizes that the guest is scholar Qin, her other identity immediately comes forth. The conflict between these two identities explains why she has such an apparent contrast that sets everybody laughing. The appropriate balance between the moral dilemma and its solution is not apparent.

Searching for the Appropriate Fit: Return to lay life

Cailuan does not merely celebrate their reunion, but instead, she blames the scholar for his sudden departure. Unexpectedly, the scholar recognizes her and says, "you evil ghost, stay back!" Hearing this ridiculous charge, Cailuan feels she has been cheated for the whole time:

> **[Rolling the embroidered ball]** Those scholars every time lie about things and break their faith, how lustful! They are the same sort, so girls, stay away from this kind of pedantic scholar. You travel around four seas (the world) with the zither and classics. The mountain passes through thousands of miles, and you are nowhere to be seen. There you have drawn this young lady's soul along!
>
> 【滾繡球】那秀才每謊後生、好色精，一個個害的是傳槽病症，囑咐你女娘們休惹這樣酸丁。恁琴書四海遊。關山千里行，您去處渺無蹤影。則被你引得這倩女離了魂靈！

Different from the sympathy we feel towards the female protagonist in the earlier chapter, we have now experienced empathy towards both protagonists. As we were told, governor

Liang let his servant lie to scholar Qin, and he keeps it as a secret to Cailuan as well. Both of them know only part of the facts. They are somehow the innocent victims of governor Liang's scheme. Seemingly, the spoken and sung parts are both creating tensions between the characters. It would, in fact, arouse the audience's empathy and make them wonder how the misunderstanding would get resolved.

At this point, governor Liang comes back. Earlier, he deliberately leaves them "alone" but was eavesdropping on the conversation outside. He now exposes the veil of truth and denounces their inappropriate conduct:

> *Young nun, do you know? "The Way that can be spoken of, is not the constant way; the name that can be named, is not the constant name."*[108] *When people practice Daoism nowadays, they no longer follow the "rightful Way"* (*zhengdao* 正道). *Be less greedy and resentful and do not exercise craftiness. Your (referring to Cailuan) Heart-and-Mind is rightful without any evil thought, and this is precisely what we called "rightful Way." As for you, Zhuangyuan,*[109] *what a scholar, with your ten years' study, you jumped over the dragon gate at one stroke. Now you forget about the Golden Billboard Day, and only wait for the private meeting in the Chu balcony with the beautiful fairy?*[110]
>
> 姑姑，你曉的麼？"道可道，非常道。名可名，非常名。"今人修道，不依正道，少使貪嗔，莫使奸狡。姑姑心正不邪，這個便是正道。新狀元，你好個

[108] Translated by D. C. Lau in Robson, p. 87.

[109] The first ranked scholar in civil service examination. Here refers to scholar Qin.

[110] The story of Lord Chu's dream with the beautiful fairy is a classical allusion indicating the love affairs between the couple.

讀書人，憑著你十年窮蠹簡，一舉跳龍門。劃地不思金榜日，只待暗約楚台雲？

The young couple stands abashed at these sarcastic remarks by governor Liang. We could imagine it is even more embarrassing for Cailuan. Earlier, she was firm enough to resist both her acolyte and others' temptations and show her determination to distance herself from the worldly affairs. Now, she is caught at the spot. Governor Liang then comes up with a poem to condemn her behavior. Since there can be only one singer in a given act, the poem is part of his spoken lines:

> Your coarse robe cages the night moon, the bun holds the autumn cloud. You ought to be like a cold breeze and bright moon, but now yearn for the courtier at the Jinma Gate and Yutang Hall. One is the Han Sima who listens to the zither playing; the other is the Zhuowen Jun who cultivates the Way. Though you often eat veggies, you never really abstain from the "meat dishes." Not to mention, you also abstain from reading Daoist scriptures, you only desire for the marriage. Night after night, there are flowery-candle dates; day after day, it is the bridal-chamber spring. The "dung" when one clangs the bell signals the worship of heavenly gods. Rush to wear the Taoist robes; hurriedly tie the Dharma skirt; there is no time for the clothing inside, and the hair looks chaotic. Never mind washing your hands before burning the incense. You are so disrespectful of the Sanqing Hall, why do you not overthrow the statue of Laozi?
>
> 你那布袍籠夜月，丫髻挽秋雲。本是清風明月容，倒養著金馬玉堂臣。一個是這聽琴的漢司馬，一個是這修道的卓文君。你雖常餐素飯，原不斷真葷。那肯看經卷，單想結婚姻。宵宵花燭會，夜夜洞房春。一聲明鐘響，需索拜

天尊。火速穿道服，連忙系法裙；裡衣無暇著，頭髮亂紛紛；不曾將手洗，便去把香焚。你也這般褻汙三清殿，何不推翻李老君？

The problem of Cailuan's double identities finally surfaced, and it is explicitly pointed out by a government official of high position. It prevents her from doing things right on both sides. After spending time with her fiancée, she still needs to perform Daoist rituals which separate her from her loved one. While performing the Daoist rituals, her prior preparation is not proper, not to mention her Mind-and-heart are impure. Cailuan is once again caught on the horns of a moral dilemma. Governor Liang, on behalf of the government, pushes her to take further action. He leaves her two choices. The first is to stick to her role as a Daoist nun, but he will denounce her publicly; the second is to return to the secular world and marry scholar Qin. Under the governor's "threat," Cailuan chooses the latter. From there, her double identities finally get resolved.

From the next and final act, we will see that Cailuan's decision of returning did not bring her any necessary social criticism, except some harmless sarcastic remarks from one of her previous servants. After her young master returns to the secular world, the younger acolyte announces her intention of seeking pleasure with a monk:

The young master returns to the secular world, leaving me here alone. How can I pass those many days all by myself? Let me find a monk.

The image of this acolyte is so out of the ordinary that it turns her into a bizarre but entertaining spectacle. Mistress Zheng recovered from heartache and came to visit Cailuan's cottage only to find that she is not there. After finding out the truth, she rushes to Cailuan's residence and denounces her behavior. When Cailuan turns to governor Liang for help, Mistress Zheng immediately recognizes him, her husband! She declares at once

her decision to resume secular life. The story ends with a grand reunion of the two couples, the young and the old, a conclusion common in romantic comedies.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Reconverting from Daoist nuns to laypeople becomes a common ending for all the Daoist nuns in this play. For both Cailuan and Mistress Zheng, the initial conversion to Daoism is the result of the compromise between the need to endure the Confucian moral ethics, female chastity in specific, and the relative freedom of the individual. Most of our discussion has focused on Cailuan. This kind of compromise has been made by Mistress Zheng as well. After she was separated from her husband during the highway robbery, she still had to conform to the Confucian notion of bodily chastity. The earlier cosmological interpretation of chastity in Confucian tradition had already undergone significant changes under the influence of various perspectives, such as the Buddhist doctrine of the pure body. Especially when Neo-Confucianism was adopted as the government ideology during the Yuan dynasty, the notion of female chastity and wifely sacrifice was widely promoted. Remaining faithful to the "late" husband in Mistress Zheng's case or even fiancé in Cailuan's case would be praised by society or vice versa. Therefore, finding the appropriate fit between the moral dilemma and its solution is crucial. In Zang Jinshu's version, he deliberately rewrites the play's later religious life as a result of political pressure. Zang Jinshu, himself as a late Ming writer and bureaucrat, underlines the influential role of official bureaucracy in both the social and religious spheres.

The appropriate fit involves a conversion into another widely recognized religion/belief system, Quanzhen Daoism, that would release that social awkwardness or political pressure while still conforming to the chastity discourse. The rise of the Quanzhen Daoism during the Yuan dynasty through those identity-building practices provides the possibility of conversion. Quanzhen Daoism adopted and modified many traditions from

both earlier Daoism traditions and Buddhist practices. One of the practices it borrowed from Chan Buddhism is an inward-looking meditation practice, and Quanzhen Daoism further developed it into what we called "inner alchemy." Instead of relying on external materials, it is believed that through self-cultivation and meditation, one's pure nature will be purified and reach a state of union with the Dao. In her religious life, Cailuan actively cultivates her inner realm to purify her Mind-and-Heart by casting off those worldly desires.

The viability of conversion is also supported by the unity of three teachings at the time of writing. Throughout the history of Chinese religions, the competition among Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism resides in both religious and political institutions. The examples of deviation between religious discourses and religious practices are in evidence. Nevertheless, we find the interactions between different religions eventually brought them into an integral and complex whole. For example, there has already been subtle correspondence between Daoism and Confucianism in terms of their cosmological view towards myriad things in an earlier age; the approach of meditation developed in Zen Buddhism had an influence on the inner-directed Neo-Confucianism during the later dynasties. It is exactly this inner-directed trait in the Neo-Confucianism that would then aligns with the inward-looking method in the practice of internal alchemy. Historically, the interreligious relationship allows the boundaries between religions to dissolve. Therefore, it is the shared idea of moral and spiritual perfectibility that allows the females in the play to take refuge in Quanzhen Daoism.

Two bipolar discourses embody Cailuan and Mistress Zheng playing the role of Daoist nuns: sense and sensibility. The first discourse is reflected in their devoted effort studying Daoist practice as well as their ability to resist temptations. However, once scholar

Qin enters Cailuan's life, the sympathetic portrayal of Cailuan floods the reader, and her "monkey of mind" clearly loses its control. Although the play barely mentions Mistress Zheng until the last act, the playwright has a smart excuse — three years of heartache. If we ponder on the heartache, we can assume it is very likely because of her lost husband. In the later part of the story, Cailuan's roles as the fiancée in the Confucian realm or nun in the Daoist realm dramatically transform back and forth, which functions as an ironic polarity that makes everyone laugh. The double identities of both Cailuan and her master once again leave them in an awkward position, but ready to be resolved. The interference of governor Liang, also representing an official bureaucrat, finally puts this awkwardness to an end. The returning to lay life of both Cailuan and Mistress Zheng nonetheless delivers a similar message. In essence, the shared idea of inner cultivation in Neo-Confucianism, Quanzhen Daoism and the unity of three teachings allow them to take shelter under the umbrella of Daoism when their social roles lose their support. Nevertheless, guarding their female chastity is the ultimate driving force. Therefore, when the dilemma gets resolved, they would unhesitatingly or "unconsciously" return to the world that is primarily dominated by the Neo-Confucianism ideology.

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