DERIVATION IN CHINESE LITERATURE:

THE ARCHETYPAL STORY OF THE UNFAITHFUL SCHOLAR-HUSBAND

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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ABSTRACT

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This study is an attempt to explore one instance of the derivation of archetypal models in Chinese fiction and drama from the Song to the Ming dynasty. In the golden days of the civil service examination system in the Song dynasty, there appeared a type of story which casts doubt upon the virtue of the talented examination winner. This is the archetypal story of the unfaithful scholar-husband who deserts his wife after he successfully passes the civil examinations. From the Song through the Yuan to the Ming dynasty, this archetypal story undergoes a process of modal adaptation, transformation and inversion.

The introduction investigates the dialectical relationship between archetypal models and their mutations as set forth in Chinese and Western literary criticism. The derivation of archetypal models is related to the problem of tradition and innovation in Chinese literature.
The first chapter examines the rise of the particular archetypal story to be studied. The earliest archetypal model is characterized as a story of revenge and retribution.

The second chapter analyzes the structural and thematic conversion of the earliest archetypal model in the southern-style drama (nanxi) in the Southern Song era and the variety play (zaju) in the early Yuan period. The earliest model of revenge and retribution is converted into a story of reunion.

The third chapter explores the inversion of the early archetypal models in the southern-style drama in the Yuan era and the dramatic romance (chuanqi) in the Ming era. A structural and thematic inversion of the early archetypal models transforms the unfaithful scholar-husband into a faithful protagonist.

The conclusion inquires into the causes of the modal changes of the archetypal story and attempts to explain these changes in terms of generic constraints.
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Introduction: Archetypal Models

The Archetypal Story

I still vividly remember a scene I witnessed in 1978 when I was an undergraduate student at Liaocheng Teachers College, Shandong, China. It was when students went to the college canteen for dinner. Their sympathy was aroused by the figure of a tiny old peasant woman standing alone with snow flakes falling all over her. Standing in front of the canteen door, she was speaking at the top of her voice to everyone who passed by into the dining hall. Some curious and compassionate students gathered around her, listened to her story, and offered their support, consolation, advice. Even those uninterested in a stranger’s life story could not help hearing the name “Chen Shimei 陈世美,” which she repeated so often. Without listening to her narration of the details of the story, the students knew by the name “Chen Shimei” that this was surely a story about a man who deserted his wife.

The old woman’s story concerned one of the students in the Department of English, who intended to divorce the old woman’s daughter. Together with her daughter, the old woman had been to the college authorities, asking them to prevent the student from “deserting” his wife. The college authorities tried to solve the student’s “ideological
problem," but fell short of persuading the student to drop his plan for a divorce. After the college authorities refused to expel the student from school, as the old woman and her daughter had requested, the old woman came out to the public. Although she failed either to stop the young man from "deserting" her daughter or to have him punished for his "desertion," her story led to a heated debate among the college students. In the dining hall, students pointed their fingers at the student-husband and commented on his behavior.

One student said, "The student in the Department of English is a modern Chen Shimei. He is not only unfaithful to his wife, but also ungrateful to her. The old woman said her family had supported him financially." A classmate replied, "Maybe it's too simplistic to call him a Chen Shimei. Don't you remember Engels' saying that marriage without love is immoral. Why should he be tied in marriage if he no longer loves his wife? We are not living in a feudal society, so he should have the freedom of choice." Another student remarked, "His wife is a victim, a Qin Xianglian 秦香蓮." Another fellow student responded, "Victim of what? Victim of male power or of social hierarchy? It seems to me she is rather the victim of a Qin Xianglian complex. She purposefully plays the role of a deserted wife in order to show off her moral superiority, to win the sympathy of the society, and to have her husband punished." Still another student observed, "The college authorities are so weak that
they cannot solve this problem. Chen Shimei was beheaded by Bao gong 包公 (Judge Bao). If that student’s wife had appealed to Judge Bao!” Another student disagreed, “The college authorities should not play the role of Judge Bao. This is a private matter between the student and his wife. The college authorities should not have even tried to intervene.” These and other moral questions were debated by the students in the dining hall.

The above anecdote shows how people use literary and cultural archetypes in their daily life to negotiate the meanings of social behavior. And to some degree, these literary and cultural archetypes condition their pattern of behavior. That the old woman’s invocation of “Chen Shimei” could win instant sympathy from some students speaks of the cognitive power of cultural archetypes. Her and her daughter’s attempt to seek arbitration from the college authorities, which bears obvious similarity to Qin Xianglian’s effort to seek justice from Judge Bao, indicates the impact of the archetypal story on their behavior.

The story of Chen Shimei and Qin Xianglian belongs to folk tradition. Even an illiterate villager who has never traveled outside his home village knows this story. If the subject is brought up in a conversation, the villager will have no difficulty recognizing that Chen Shimei is a heartless husband who abandons his wife after achieving success, that Qin Xianglian is a virtuous wife, and that
Judge Bao represents social conscience and justice. He will also be able to draw moral lessons from the story, repeating such age-old maxims as “one should not abandon one’s wife from the days when one ate bran.”¹

The story of Chen Shimei and Qin Xianglian first appears in Sai Pipa 賽琵琶 (Surpassing The Lute), a play produced in the eighteenth century. No script of the earliest version of this play has survived.² Its plot outline is recorded by Jiao Xun 焦循 in his Huabu nongtan 花部農譚 (A Peasant’s Talks on

¹. This maxim comes from Song Hong’s 宋弘 famous reply to Emperor Guangwu 光武帝 of the Eastern Han dynasty. When his newly widowed sister, Princess Huyang 湖陽公主, took a liking to Song Hong, Emperor Guangwu tried to persuade Song Hong to divorce his wife and marry the princess. To the emperor’s marriage proposal, Song Hong replied, “One should not forget one’s friends from the days when one was poor and humble; one should not abandon one’s wife from the days when one ate bran. 貧賤之知不可忘，糟糠之妻不下堂。” See Houhan shu 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1965), juan 26, 4:905. As a counterexample of the unfaithful husband, Song Hong’s story is often cited to criticize the fickle scholar.

². Whether there was a written version is a question, for the “huabu 花部” (variegated plays), a general term covering various types of newly developed regional plays, are produced by professional actors, not literati dramatists. Professional actors pass down their repertoire through personal coaching, in many cases without the aid of a script. See Zhang Geng 張庚 and Guo Hancheng 郭漢城, eds. Zhongguo xiqu tongshi 中國戲曲通史 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 2nd ed., 1992), 919.
Variegated Plays). Later, two versions of the story developed from the earliest version familiar to Jiao Xun. According to the better known stage version of the story, Chen Shimei is a scholar in the Song era who marries the emperor’s daughter after he passes the civil service examinations. Meanwhile, his wife Qin Xianglian takes care of his parents in his hometown and buries them when they die. Together with her two children, Qin Xianglian comes to the capital to look for Chen Shimei. Chen Shimei not only refuses to acknowledge her as his wife, but also sends one of his officers to assassinate her and the two children. Instead of murdering her and her children, the officer kills himself after he learns the truth. Qin Xianglian brings her case to Bao Zheng, the prefect of Kaifeng who is better known as “Bao gong” (Judge Bao) in popular literature. Although the emperor’s daughter and her mother try to intervene, Bao Zheng orders Chen Shimei to be beheaded. The latter half of the story, that is, the events concerning Bao Zheng, is the most familiar episode of


4. The less known version exists in such regional plays as “han ju 漢劇,” “xiang ju 湘劇,” and “huai ju 淮劇.” The first half of the story in the two versions is essentially the same. The latter part of the story is different in the two versions. See Huang Shizhong, Luoxu wangtian, 169.
the story, usually independently performed in Peking opera under the title Zha Mei an 銼美案 (The Case of the Beheading of Chen Shimei). It is also one of the best known court cases judged by the legendary Bao Zheng in Chinese popular literature.

To a modern audience, the story of Chen Shimei and Qin Xianglian may be the only familiar story in which a scholar deserts his wife after he passes the civil examinations. To students of Chinese literature, however, the story of Chen Shimei and Qin Xianglian is just one version of a familiar story-type. Surpassing The Lute, the play which Jiao Xun saw and commented on, alludes in its title to another famous Chinese play The Lute 琵琶記. Written at the end of the Yuan dynasty by Gao Ming 高明 (c. 1305-c. 1370), The Lute tells the story of Cai Bojie who marries the Prime Minister’s daughter after he passes the examinations. But The Lute is still not the earliest work of this type; it is a rewritten version of Zhao Zhennü Cai Erlang 趙貞女蔡二郎 (Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang), a play produced in the Song dynasty. These three plays, Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang, The Lute and Surpassing The Lute, represent the formation, transformation

5. Jiao Xun notes the similarities between The Lute and Surpassing The Lute and compares the two plays. See his Huabu nongtan. Quoted in Huang Shizhong, Luoxu wangtian, 166.
and inversion of an archetypal story, the story of the examination winner who deserts his wife.

This archetypal story has appeared at different times and in different literary genres. It was a popular story from Song to Qing times and its echoes can also be found in modern fiction, drama and film. However the period in which it is most prominent is the times from the Song to the Ming. In narrative fiction, it appears in both “chuanqi 傳奇” (classical-language tale) and “huaben 話本” (vernacular short story). In dramatic literature, it can be found in “nanxi 南戲” (southern-style drama), “zaju 雜劇” (variety play), and “chuanqi 傳奇” (dramatic romance). The genres in which the archetypal story dominates are the latter two, which may be covered under a more general term “Nanqu 南曲” (southern-music drama).

Although these diverse literary works share one general masterplot, their different treatments of the general masterplot produce different archetypal models. By exploring these archetypal models, we can understand better the thematic and structural aspects of these works. As pointed out by Laurent Jenny,

We grasp the meaning and structure of a literary work only through its relations to archetypes which are themselves abstracted from long series of texts of which they are, so to speak, the invariants. These archetypes, each deriving from a “literary act,” encode the usages
of that "secondary language" (Lotman) which we call "literature." The literary work's relation to these archetypal models is always one of realization, transformation, or transgression. To a great extent, furthermore, it is this relationship which defines it.⁶

The study of archetypal models not only helps us grasp the meaning and structure of individual literary works, it also enables us to understand the intertextual relations between these works. John Frow says, "Texts are not structures of presence, but traces and tracings of otherness. They are shaped by the repetition and the transformation of other textual structures."⁷ If we understand his "other textual structures" as archetypal models, we would agree with his argument that "these absent textual structures at once constrain the text and are represented by and within it, they are at once preconditions and moments of the text."⁸ Thus the study of archetypal models will connect "one poem with another and thereby helps to unify and integrate our literary


8. Ibid.
experience."\(^9\)

Archetypes endure through the ages because they express the concern and anxiety of a people. They are not only literary images and structures, but also cultural symbols. As Annis Pratt points out, "Although archetypal narratives endure through the centuries because of the perennial dilemmas they express, the exact nature of these dilemmas can be lost sight of through the process of retelling and transmission."\(^10\) Through the study of archetypes, we will be able "to reconstruct the cultural codes which are realized (and contested) in texts."\(^11\)

When we study archetypal models, the approach we adopt will be a pragmatic, inductive one. As Annis Pratt argues,

Archetypal patterns, as I understand them, represent categories of particulars, which can be described in their interrelationships within a given text or within a large body of literature. A dogmatic insistence upon preordained, invariable sets of archetypal patterns would distort literary analysis: one must not deduce categories down into a body of material but induce them from images, symbols, and narrative patterns observed in a significantly various


\(^11\) John Frow, ibid., 46.
selection of literary works.\textsuperscript{12}

The archetypal models and their transformation concern the question of tradition and innovation which will be discussed later.

The present thesis is an attempt to explore the variations of the archetypal story of the unfaithful scholar-husband as they appear in Chinese fiction and drama from the Song to the Ming dynasty. The thesis consists of three chapters, an introduction and a conclusion.

In the present chapter, "Introduction: Archetypal Models," the concepts of archetypal models and their derivations are discussed. The continuity and mutation of archetypal models are related to the problem of tradition and change in literary history. The essential ideas developed in fictional semantics are introduced, which will provide a theoretical framework for the analysis of individual literary works.

In "Chapter One: Revenge and Retribution: The Earliest Model," the formation of the archetypal story is explored. Two stories written in the classical language, "Wangkui fuxin Guiying sibao 王魁負心桂英死報" (First Winner Wang Betrays Guiying Who Dies to Take Revenge) and "Man Shaoqing 滿少卿" (Assistant Minister Man), are analyzed. The southern-style

\textsuperscript{12} Annis Pratt, ibid., 5.
play Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang is briefly discussed. In the earliest model, the male protagonist is an unfaithful scholar who deserts his wife after he passes the examinations. His desertion leads to her death, and her ghost comes back for revenge. The story is one of revenge and retribution.

In “Chapter Two: From Retribution to Reunion: The Converted Model,” one southern-style play, Zhang Xie zhuang yuan 張協狀元 (First Winner Zhang Xie), and one variety play, Xiaoxiang yu 潇湘雨 (Rain on the Xiaoxiang), are examined. In each of these two plays, the scholar-husband tries but fails to desert and murder his wife. He is forced into reunion with her at the end of the play. Thus, the earliest model of revenge and retribution is converted into a model of reunion. The method of the structural conversion will be examined.

In “Chapter Three: From an Unfaithful Scholar-Husband to a Faithful One: The Inverted Model,” one southern-style play, Jingchai ji 荆釵記 (The Thorn Hairpin), and two dramatic romances, Zichai ji 紫釵記 (The Purple Hairpin) and Fenxiang ji 焚香記 (Burning Incense), are studied. In these plays the motif of desertion in the early models is de-authenticated and the unfaithful scholar-husband in the early models is transformed into a faithful husband. The denigration of the examination winner in the early models is thematically inverted. The devices of this thematic inversion will be discussed.
In “Conclusion: Derivation and Change in Literary History,” the causes of the transformation of the archetypal models are explored in terms of the generic constraints of traditional Chinese drama.

Models and Derivations

The golden age of dramatic romance lasts a little more than one hundred years: from the late sixteenth century to the end of the seventeenth century. *Burning Incense* is one of the hundreds of dramatic romances written in this period. The structure of this play is obviously modeled on that of previous southern-style plays and dramatic romances. As is pointed out by one of its contemporary critics, “The outline of the plot resembles that of *The Thorn Hairpin*, whereas its micro-structural arrangement sometimes imitates *The Lute*, *Xiangnang* (*The Perfume Pouch*) and other plays. 此傳大略近於《荆钗》，而小景布置，間仿《琵琶》《香囊》諸種。”


The general comment, together with some post-chapter comments, appears in both *Li Zhuowu ping Fenxiang ji* 李卓吾評焚香記 and *Xinke Yumingtang piping Fenxiang ji* 新刻王茗堂批評焚香記. The attribution of these comments to Li Zhi 李贽 or Tang Xianzu 湯 賢祖 is not supported by any other evidence. See Wu Shuyin, “Preface” to *Fenxiang ji Toujia ji*, 2.
The play resembles certain previous dramatic works in terms of its structure; some of its motifs were also familiar to contemporary viewers. Having praised the playwright for his rendering of several moving scenes, the commentator observes,

Jin Lei’s alteration of the letter, the [male protagonist] setting out on the journey, the [female protagonist’s father] taking of a son-in-law, the news of Wang Kui’s death -- these are rather like clichés. Besides, there is quite a lot of fortune-telling. Nevertheless, these kinds of twists [of the plot] are necessary for performance on the red carpet. This play is extraordinary in its interweaving and structuring, which frees its organization from diffuseness. It is rare among all those common plays.

The traditional commentator recognizes that certain motifs in Burning Incense are familiar motifs in theater, yet by no means does he condemn the playwright for the imitation and repetition of what has been done before. He acknowledges that these structural devices are required by theatrical conventions. What he values is how the playwright can make

14. It was a common practice, particularly in the Ming times, to perform a play on the red carpet that was laid out in a high official’s courtyard.

15. Fenxiang ji Toujia ji, 1.
good use of the familiar motifs. He points out that the playwright is good at "interweaving and structuring" these old motifs so that they acquire a new significance in a different context.

The above comment on Burning Incense touches a series of problems concerning convention and innovation, imitation and creation, tradition and transformation, continuity and mutation. The traditional critic's view on these problems, as we shall see, forms a sharp contrast with the view held by a prominent modern critic.

It is a common view among modern scholars that Chinese literature is static. With respect to Chinese fiction, Lu Xun 魯迅 says,

Many historians have told us that the history of mankind is evolitional, and China naturally should be no exception. But when we look at the evolution of China we are struck by two peculiarities. One is that the old makes a comeback long after the new has appeared -- in other words, retrogression. The other is that the old remains long after the new has appeared -- in other words, amalgamation. This does not mean there is no evolution, however. Only it is comparatively slow, so that hotheads like myself feel that "one day is like three autumns." The same applies to literature, including fiction. For instance, today we still find dregs of the Tang and Sung [Song] dynasties in modern writing, or even the ideas and behavior of primitive man. In my talk I mean to ignore these dregs -- popular as they still are -- and try to find the trend of development in our regressive and chaotic literature.
Lu Xun is representative of those modern scholars whose understanding of history is influenced by the idea of "evolution." In their adaptation of the Darwinian concept of evolution, the historical process is regarded as a linear, progressive process. The value system implied by this historical understanding favors the new at the expense of the old, as can be seen from Lu Xun's derogatory description of the history of Chinese fiction as a "retrogressive" process.

Lu Xun's view of tradition and creation, which is characteristic of the radical iconoclasm of the May Fourth intellectuals, forms a sharp contrast with traditional Chinese aesthetics. The difference between traditional and modern Chinese theories of literature does not lie in the

ideal of innovation and creation, for there is certainly no lack of statements advocating the new and the original in traditional Chinese poetics. The crux of the problem is how to define and how to achieve innovation. Does innovation mean to create out of nothing or to generate the new from the old? Is innovation to be realized by the creative transformation of the tradition or by a radical interruption of the tradition?

Reverence for the classics and for tradition is a salient feature of traditional Chinese thought and aesthetics. "There is no more bookish civilization than China's, no civilization more prone to revere its ancient writings...."¹⁷

To learn how traditional Chinese critics deal with the problem of literary tradition and creation, an appropriate starting point is Liu Xie 劉勰 (465-522). Liu Xie lived in the Six Dynasties period when a self-conscious aesthetics was developed for the first time in China. His Wenxin diaolong 文心雕龍 (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons) is a rare attempt in traditional Chinese literary culture to build a systematic theory of literature. In his comprehensive treatise on literature, Liu Xie gives generous treatment to

the problem of tradition and its creation. His views of literary history are best expressed in one of his major theoretical tenets: "zong jing 宗經" (revering the Classics).

Liu Xie's tenet of "revering the Classics" is based on his theory on the origins and nature of literature. In the first chapter of his book, "The Source in the Way 原道," Liu Xie elaborates a metaphysical theory of literature in whose framework literature is considered as "a manifestation of the principle of the universe," the Dao or the Way. Literary history is said to begin with the sages who observed the pattern of the heavens and manifested it in their writings: "From Fu Hsi [Fu Xi], the mysterious Sage who founded the canon, up to the time of Confucius, the uncrowned king who transmitted the teaching, all took for their source the mind of the Way to set forth their writings. 爱自風姓，暨於孔氏，玄聖創典，素王述訓，莫不原道心以敷章。"19

Since the Sages grasp the Dao and set it forth in their writings, their writings become Classics. Classics, like the


Dao they manifest, are permanent and enduring: "The Tao [Dao], through the sages, perpetuates literature, and the sages, by means of literature, manifest the Tao [Dao], so that it can prevail everywhere without hindrance and be used daily without destitution. 之道沿聖以垂文，聖因文而明道，旁通而無澁，日用而不匱。"²⁰

On the basis of this metaphysical theory of literature, Liu Xie develops his tenet of "revering the Classics 宗經," which is the topic of the third chapter of his book. As the origins of all literary forms, the Classics are the inexhaustible sources to which later literature must return in order to renew itself. As the manifestation of permanent truths, the Classics provide perfect models for later writers to emulate:

Thus, though they come from far in the past, the flavor that remains in them is renewed daily. The later-born seek within them and learn from them, without thinking it too late [for the Classics to be of use]; earlier worthies have long used them, not thinking it was too soon.

是以往者雖舊，余味日新，後進追取而非晚，前修文用而未先。²¹

From the perspective of literary history, the Classics

²⁰ Wenxin diaolong zhu, 1:3. The English translation is James Liu's, in his Chinese Theories of Literature, 24.

²¹ Wenxin diaolong zhu, 1:22. The English translation is Stephen Owen's, in his Readings in Chinese Literary
are the origins as well as prototypical models of a literary tradition and later works are variations or "mutations" of these models. Liu Xie understands the relationship between tradition and mutation as a dialectical one. In the "zan 贊" (Supporting Verse) at the end of Chapter 29, he summarizes his view on the problem of tradition and change in literary history:

The rule of literature is to move in full cycle,
Its accomplishment is found in daily renewal:
By mutation it can last long;
By continuity nothing is wanting.

文律運周，
日新其業。
變則堪久，
通則不乏。\(^{22}\)

Liu Xie's concepts of "continuity" and "mutation" come from Zhouyi 周易 (Book of Changes). In the section entitled "Xici zhuan 系辭傳" in the Book of Changes, it is stated that "when it [i.e., a phase of process...] is exhausted, it mutates; by mutation it achieves continuity ("carries on"); by continuity it endures long. 窮則變，變則通，通則久。"\(^{23}\) This

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\(^{22}\) Wenxin diaolong zhu, 2:521. The English translation is Stephen Owen's, in his Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 230.

\(^{23}\) Zhouyi (Shisanjing zhushu 十三經注疏 edition, reprinted in Zhouyi zhushu ji buzhen 周易注疏及補正. Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1963), 10. The English translation is
general principle of continuity and mutation can be used to interpret the historical process of literature. Mutation is necessary because it is through mutation that the continuity of a literary tradition is achieved. Without mutation a literary tradition cannot last long. However, mutation is the variation of the "constant," that is, the Classics or the prototypical models they represent. In Liu Xie's view, the models provided by the Classics are the necessary precondition for literary creation,

When one casts and molds according to the model of the Classics, or soars and roosts among the techniques of the thinkers and historians, then one will comprehend the mutations of the affections, and one will have revealed the forms of literature in the minute particulars. Only then can one cause fresh concepts to sprout; only then can one carve out and paint wondrous phrases. Having the forms revealed means that concepts will be fresh but not in disarray; comprehending the mutations means that phrasing will be wondrous without getting muddy.

若夫熔鑄經典之範，翔集子史之術，洞曉情變，曲昭文體，然後能孚甲新意，雕畫奇辭。昭體故意新而不亂，洞曉故辭奇而不贅。

Stephen Owen's, in his Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 224.

24. "Jing 經," the word for Classics, means "constant."

Without following previous models, one may meet with failure in one's creation: Liu Xie warns that "if...a writer strides proudly over all former rules to go rushing after fresh creations - in such cases, even though one may attain some clever concept, danger and ruin usually follow. A hollow construction of strange words, full of error, cannot become a Classic. 而略舊規，駄騁新作，雖獲巧意，危敗亦多。豈空結奇字，紛繆成經矣。"²⁶

Liu Xie's general view on the problem of tradition and change can be summarized as follows: literary accomplishment is achieved by the successful variation of the constant models which are the Classics. The literary tradition is first created in these constant models and continues through variations of these models.

Liu Xie's views on the dialectical relationship between tradition and creation are echoed in the writings of later critics. One of the central problems for later critics is how to achieve variation within tradition.

Wang Changling 王昌龄 (690-756), a famous poet of the high Tang period, deals with this problem in terms of imitation and transformation. His emphasis falls on how to manipulate the old materials in new ways. He says: "Imitate

²⁶. Wenxin diaolong zhu, 2:514. The English translation is Stephen Owen’s, in his Readings in Chinese
old writings, but don’t follow their old ideas, or you will never advance far. In all cases you must crisscross and zigzag, transform and appropriate the material in a hundred ways. 學古文章，不得隨他舊意，終不長進，皆須百般縱橫，變轉數出。”

Sikong Tu 司空圖 (837-908), a famous critic in the late Tang period, views this problem in terms of tradition and creation:

The more you go forward along with it,
The more you understand it truly.
If you hold to it without ceasing,
You join with the old and produce the new.

乘之愈往，識之愈真。如將不盡，與古為新。

Sikong Tu’s formulation, “join with the old and produce the new,” will appear in a slightly different version as a central tenet in the poetics developed in the Song era.

Since the Tang poets raised the art of poetry to a formidable height, the challenge that faced the Song poets

Literary Thought, 223.


was how to break new grounds in the shadow of their great predecessors. The relationship of tradition and innovation becomes a central problem for them. To respond to the challenge, Song poets developed a poetics of appropriation which advocates the tenet "to make the old into the new.

This tenet is advocated by Mei Yaochen 梅堯臣 (1002-60), one of the major early Song poets who cultivated a distinctive style for Song poetry. According to Chen Shidao's 陳師道 record,

A scholar in Fujian likes to write poems and he does not employ used and commonplace phrases. When he copied his poems and sent them to [Mei] Shengyu [Yaochen], Shengyu wrote back to him, saying, "Your poems are well done, but you are still incapable of making the old into the new, or making the vulgar into the elegant."

閩士有好詩者，不用陳語常談。寫投梅聖俞，答書日：「子詩誠工，但未能以故為新，以俗為雅爾。」

This position on tradition and innovation is also held by Su Shi 蘇軾, the best known of the Song writers. He says, "When employing allusions, one must take the old and make it new and take the vulgar and make it elegant. To be fond of the wondrous and the new is the defect of poetry.

29. Chen Shidao, Houshan shihua 後山詩話, in Lidai shihua, 188. The tenet "to make the vulgar into the elegant," which in the Song poetics often goes together with the tenet "to make the old into the new," is a complicated topic which will not be discussed here.
The most systematic advocate of the poetics of appropriation is Huang Tingjian 黃庭堅 (1045-1105), generally accepted as the founder of the Jiangxi School of Poetry. “To make the old into the new” is a central tenet in his poetics. He says, “Because [Yang] Mingshu is interested in this literature, let me lift up just one net to stretch out its ten thousand meshes: It is to make the vulgar into the elegant and the old into the new. 因明叔有意于斯文，試舉一網以張萬目：蓋以俗為雅，以故為新。”

In this view, “to make the old into the new” is one of the essential devices by which the poet can achieve innovation. Huang Tingjian places a very high value on this method of creation. He says,

In Du Fu’s composing of verse and Han Yu’s composing of essays, there is not one word that does not come from somewhere. Probably, because later generations do not read enough, they say that Han Yu and Du Fu made these expressions up themselves. Those of old who were able to compose literature were able to mold myriad phenomenon. They took the expressions of the ancients and


entered them into brush and ink -- it was like a pill of Spirit Cinnabar [lingdan], which spots iron and turns it into gold.

The metaphor "to turn iron into gold" reveals the emphasis Huang Tingjian places on the process of creative transformation. Past poetic expressions are raw materials like "iron" which the poet can transform into "gold" through creative manipulation.

Huang Tingjian also describes two ways to achieve this creative transformation. He says,

[The meaning of] poetry is inexhaustible, and yet human abilities are limited. Even [Tao] Yuanming and Shaoling [Du Fu] were unable to achieve mastery using limited talent to pursue inexhaustible meaning. Not changing the meaning of a prior poet but creating language [by reformulating past phrases] that matches his [original] phrase [zao qi yu] is called "the method of changing the bone." To penetratingly imitate the meaning of the prior poet and yet further nuance it is called "seizing the embryo.

Through either of these two ways, a poet can create original poetry out of past poetic models. Huang Tingjian's theory is popular and influential in the Song dynasty precisely because it provides a solution to the problem of how to borrow from and transcend the great Tang poetic tradition.

In the Ming dynasty, the main stream of literary thought is the archaist movement. The representative poet-critics of this movement are the "qian qizi 前七子" (Earlier Seven Masters) and "hou qizi 後七子" (Latter Seven Masters). In the view of the archaists, poetry reaches its highest point in the High Tang era and begins its degeneration in the Middle Tang period. In order to revive poetry, they devise an ambitious reform program which consists of establishing an orthodox poetic tradition and setting up correct poetic models. Their attitude towards the literary heritage is to go past the decadence of Song and Yuan periods and take the high Tang poets as perfect models to emulate. Their position on the problem of tradition and innovation is summarized in the dictum, "niyi yi chengqi bianhua 擬議以成其變化" (to achieve

33. Huihong 惠洪, Lengzhai yehua 冷齋夜話 (Changsha: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1939), 1:5. The English translation is David Palumbo-Liu's, in his The Poetics of Appropriation, 66.
variation through imitation). They believe that by emulating perfect models of past poets, a poet will master those models and produce great poems similar to those models. In their view, innovation is achieved within tradition.

The above brief review of Chinese criticism from the Six Dynasties to the Ming dynasty reveals a consistent emphasis on following the past. This emphasis on following tradition is certainly not restricted to Chinese literary culture, for we can also find similar opinions in the Western literary tradition.

With regard to the notion of imitation of past models in European Renaissance, it has been pointed out that

The enormous prestige of Classical literature, and the similar prestige of Petrarch, encouraged, when it did not oblige, sixteenth century writers to return incessantly to the same

34. The dictum has been advocated by both He Jingming 何景明 (1483-1521), leader of the Earlier Seven Masters, and Li Panlong 李攀龍 (1514-1570), leader of the Latter Seven Masters. He Jingming, “Yu Li Kongtong lun shi shu 與李空同論詩書.” In Mingdai wenlun xuan 明代文論選, ed. Cai Jingkang 蔡景康 (Beijing: Renming wenxue chubanshe, 1993), 115. Li Panlong, Preface to his “Gu yuefu 古樂府,” Cangming xiansheng ji 滄溟先生集, ed. Bao Jingdi 包敬第 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chuabnshe, 1992), 1. See also Liao Kebin 廖可斌, Mingdai wenxue fugu yundong yanjiu 明代文學復古運動研究 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), 125 and 298-299.

sources. Not only allusions to Classical mythology and so on, but actual imitations of Classical (or Petrarchan) models were the rules rather than the exception in poetry, drama, satire and other ancient genres. Originality in the sense of doing something completely new, and sincerity, in a simple biographical sense, are irrelevant concepts for most of the literature under discussion. Variations on a theme and the ability to express emotion within the strict conventions of style are the Renaissance norms.\textsuperscript{36}

As in traditional Chinese theories of literature, creation is not understood as creating something that is completely new. Imitation is not conceived in a derogatory sense.

The concept of imitation has been in ferment throughout European Renaissance. The idea of returning to ancient sources and models was almost universally appealing; the great debate was over precisely how this should be done. Should there be strict adherence to one model, as the Ciceronians (and the thoroughgoing Petrarchans) believed, or should writers seek out a variety of models - and if so, how and to what degree should they be followed, assimilated, and acknowledged? \textsuperscript{37}

Imitation is not regarded as an obstacle to innovation, but a mechanism for change and experiment. As Rosalie Colie


points out,

It seems to me that even though the chief concept of mimesis often has acted as a constraint upon literary innovation in the Renaissance, another version of imitation, simply the imitation of formal models, was in spite of its inbuilt conservatism, a factor for literary change and imaginative experiment.\(^{38}\)

Thus in both Chinese and Western literary traditions, there are times when the imitation and derivation of past models are understood as a necessary condition for innovation in literature.

Since derivation is pervasive in Chinese literature, modern scholars have made a continuous effort to illuminate this phenomenon.\(^{39}\) Modern studies of this particular mode of creation in fiction and drama can be divided into roughly three types. The first type of study focuses on the evolution of a major literary work.\(^{40}\) The second type of study concerns


40. Since works in Chinese are too numerous to be
the phenomenon of "xushu 续书" when one work continues the story of another work.\textsuperscript{41} The third type of study deals with an archetypal figure, tracing the literary treatment of this figure in different genres and different eras.\textsuperscript{42}

The present study is intended as a contribution to the above scholarly endeavor in the third mode. Specifically it will examine the derivation of archetypal models within the theoretical framework of narrative semantics.

**Narrative Semantics**

Literary semantics is the study of the meaning of literary texts. The basic theoretical assumption of literary

\begin{itemize}


\end{itemize}
semantics is "no meaning without structure." With regard to structural thematics, conceived as a subdivision of literary semantics, Lubomir Dolezel points out that "structuralization of content is axiomatic; content in literature is structured and cannot be studied independently of its structuring." Narrative semantics, as a subdivision of literary semantics, focuses on "the study of the narrative structures which underlie stories manifested in narrative texts (as well as other sign 'media,' such as film, TV, comics, etc.)."

The structural layers of a narrative text can be described by such concepts as semantic universe, narrative world, and plot. The semantic universe of a text is the sum of the meanings suggested by the text. It includes such elements as generalizations made by the narrator and inferences made by the reader.

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44. Ibid., 91.


A narrative text constructs a narrative world which consists of the sum of the facts asserted by the text. The narrative world, unlike the semantic domain, does not include the narrator's judgments or the reader's interpretations. The authenticity of the narrative facts is guaranteed by the implied author through the authentication function. A narrative world can be divided into various different narrative domains.

The base of the narrative world is a factual domain which consists of all the physical states and events in the narrative world. Besides this factual domain, each character has his or her own domain. A character's domain consists of his properties, his physical actions and mental activities. The mental events that occur in a character's domain make up his private domain.

The plot of a narrative text is the rationalized structure of the factual domain. The intelligibility of the physical events in the factual domain is made possible when

47. Ibid.


they are linked to each other by causality and to the mental events in the private domains of the characters.\textsuperscript{50}

Physical events are actions mediated by mental events which provide motivations for the actions. Actions are governed by certain rules without which the meaning of a given action cannot be fully grasped. The system of rules that governs actions can be described in terms of narrative modalities. The following modal systems have been proposed by Lubomír Dolezel for the study of narrative texts.\textsuperscript{51}

1. The alethic system which consists of the concepts of possibility, impossibility and necessity.

2. The deontic system which consists of the concepts of permission, prohibition and obligation.

3. The axiological system which consists of the concepts of goodness, badness and indifference.

4. The epistemic system which consists of the concepts of knowledge, ignorance and belief.

Of the above four modal systems, the alethic system can be used to describe the factual domain of a narrative world. It defines the possibility or impossibility of certain actions in the factual domain. For example, a factual domain can be split into two domains: a supernatural domain where

\textsuperscript{1989), 234. Marie-Laure Ryan, 112-114.}

\textsuperscript{50. Marie-Laure Ryan, 264-265.}

\textsuperscript{51. Lubomír Dolezel, “Narrative Modalities,” Journal}
characters perform certain actions that are not possible in the actual world and a natural domain where characters obey the laws of nature.\footnote{52}

The axiological, epistemic and deontic systems can be used to describe the relations between different domains in a narrative world. Since narrative conflicts are generated through the interaction of different domains or different systems within a domain, these modal systems are particularly useful for the understanding of narrative conflicts, themes and plots.

First of all, narrative conflicts can be generated between the factual domain and the characters' domains.

The axiological system defines the desires and fears of characters. From the perspective of a character, the narrative world is registered as "good" if his wishes are fulfilled, "bad" if his desires are not satisfied, and "indifferent" if he regards it as acceptable. When his wish is not fulfilled, for instance, he will initiate actions to remedy this undesirable situation, which gives rise to the theme of quest.\footnote{53}


The epistemic system defines the knowledge and beliefs of characters. A character "knows" certain facts in the narrative world or is "ignorant" of them. He may "believe" in the truth of certain facts. When his beliefs are not in agreement with the facts, he is holding "false beliefs." When a character's knowledge is deficient, for example, the enigma gives rise to the theme of investigation which is typical of the mystery story.\textsuperscript{54}

The deontic system defines the social and private obligations of characters. Actions can be designated as allowed, prohibited, or obligatory according to social rules and moral principles. When a character performs a prohibited action, he may be punished, which will result in the thematic sequence "prohibition-violation-punishment." In the deontic system, actions can also be classified as the acquisition of merit (credits) and demerit (debts). When a character acquires merit, he will be rewarded, which generates the thematic sequence "mission-accomplishment-reward." The acquisition of credits and debts may also be expressed as a contract. When a character makes a promise, he creates an obligation and he will be in debt until he fulfills his promise.\textsuperscript{55}


\textsuperscript{55} Lubomir Dolezel, "Narrative Modalities," 8. Marie-
Narrative conflicts occur not only between the factual domain and the characters' domains, but also within a character's domain. For example, the conflict may occur between a character's axiological system and deontic system: a character's wish can only be fulfilled by performing a morally wrong action.\(^5^6\)

Conflicts may also be generated between the private domains of different characters. When a private domain of one character's domain is satisfied, it may lead to the non-satisfaction of the corresponding domain of another character. Characters are cooperative when their private domains are compatible with each other; they are antagonistic when their private domains are incompatible.\(^5^7\)

Besides the above modal systems which may generate narrative conflicts, there is also the intentional system.\(^5^8\) The intentional system describes a series of mental operations which guide characters' in their effort to solve narrative conflicts. These operations include the evaluation of the situation, the setting of a goal, the elaboration of a plan, and the evaluation of the outcome after the plan is implemented.

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Laure Ryan, 116-117, 121.

56. Marie-Laure Ryan, 121-122.


58. See Marie-Laure Ryan, 124, where she speaks of an
executed. These mental operations are the cognitive factors of motivation.\textsuperscript{59}

The modal systems provide a framework which can be used to relate characters' actions and motivations with social and cultural codes. As pointed out by Lubomir Dolezel, "Persons are endowed with more or less action capabilities, trapped in predetermined roles, faced with societal prescriptions and prohibitions, surrounded by values and dysvalues, manipulated by powerful ideologies."\textsuperscript{60}

As an empirical theory of meaning in literature, narrative semantics provides models which can be used to formulate semantic interpretations of particular narrative texts. However, as Lubomir Dolezel points out,

The purpose of models as tools of empirical study is to provide us with a metalanguage for descriptions. What has to be emphasized, however, is the fact that the encounter between an abstract model and a concrete text is not a mechanical 'application' of the models, its reiteration and reaffirmation; rather, this confrontation is a complex epistemic procedure which results not only in the identification of the text constituents in terms of the model, but also, and primarily, in the discovery of their specific relationships, "intensional [sic] world."


patternings, functions, modifications, etc., within the specific totality of the text.\footnote{61}
Chapter One

Revenge and Retribution: The Earliest Model

Since the protagonist in the archetypal story is an examination winner, his story is closely related to the civil service examination system. The rise of the archetypal story in the Song era has to be understood in the context of the general examination culture.¹

The civil service examination system was improved by the early Song emperors with the aim of creating a meritocratic state. Their effort was a success. It has been generally acknowledged that Northern Song is the golden era of the civil examination system in Chinese history.²

During the Tang dynasty, success in the examinations was not determined merely by a candidate’s performance in the examinations. The candidate’s family origins, social network, literary reputation and even character were all important factors. Sometimes the winners’ list had been determined even

1. The examination culture in the Tang era has been studied by Fu Xuancong 傅璇琮 in his Tangdai keju yu wenxue 唐代科舉與文學 (Taipei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1994). The examination culture of the Song era is discussed by John W. Chaffee in his The Thorny Gate of Learning in Sung China (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 157-181.

before the final examination was given. In order to impress the examiners, candidates usually presented their sample writings to the examiners before the examinations, a practice known as “toujuan 投卷” (presenting scrolls). The examination system, as a branch of the overall political system, was controlled by the aristocratic clans and political factions. Those candidates who had close relationship with the aristocratic families or powerful ministers were more likely to succeed. Fairness in the competition was not institutionally guaranteed.³

During the early Song period, a series of measures was taken to make the examinations impartial. The initiation of the procedures of “huming 糊名” (candidates’ names on the examination papers are covered up after the papers are submitted), “tenglu 膳錄” (the examination papers are copied out by clerks so that the examiners read only the copies and will not be able to recognize the calligraphy) and “suoyuan 鎖院” (the examiners are locked up immediately after they are assigned the job so that they will not be able to pass out the examination questions) insure the utmost possible fairness, which means success in the examinations depends entirely upon a candidate’s literary talent and his knowledge of Confucian classics.⁴

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4. Ibid., 98-104.
The success of the examination system in the Song era is attested by numerous cases in which a scholar from a humble family successfully passed the examination and went on to become a high official. Two familiar figures in Chinese history, Fan Zhongyan 範仲淹 (989-1052) and Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (989-1052), may be cited as examples. Fan Zhongyan became so poor after his father died and his mother remarried that he could only afford to eat porridge when he was a student.⁵ Like Fan Zhongyan, Ouyang Xiu was also in difficult conditions after his father died. His mother could not afford his tuition fee and she herself taught him by writing characters on sand with a reed.⁶ Through their success in the examinations, both Fan Zhongyan and Ouyang Xiu became reputable officials and were promoted to the rank of "chief councilor."

It was a common belief during the Song dynasty that a commoner could distinguish himself as long as he was a man of learning. And the only way to display his learning was through his performance in the examinations. This common belief was most succinctly summarized in a collection of poems entitled Shentong shi 神童詩 (Poems by a Child Prodigy),

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⁵ See his biography in Songshi 宋史 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1977), juan 314, 15:10267.

⁶ See his biography in Songshi, juan 319, 15:10375.
which was frequently used as a primer for pupils. The first poem in the collection reads as follows:

A peasant’s son in the morning,  
He enters the emperor’s court at dusk.  
Generals and high ministers are not inherent,  
A man must strive for achievements.

考為田舍郎，  
暮登天子堂。  
將相本無種，  
男兒當自強。\(^8\)

Examinations became almost the only way for a man to raise his social status and consequently to satisfy his material desires. There were a lot of popular poems in the Song era which encouraged young men to study for the purpose of material gains.\(^9\) One of such poems, “Quanxue wen 勸學文” is attributed to Emperor Zhenzong 真宗.

To get rich, no need to buy fertile fields,  
There are thousands of bushels of grain in books.  
To live in comfort, no need to build a big house,  
There is a gold house in books.  
No need to worry over the lack of attendants,

7. The authorship of these poems are attributed to Wang Zhu 汪洙, who passed the jinshi examinations in 1100.


9. Even such famous scholars and statesmen as Sima Guang 司馬光 and Wang Anshi 王安石 have written this type of poems. See Jin Zheng, ibid., 138.
There are rows of chariots in books.
No need to worry over the lack of match-makers,
There is a jade-like beauty in books.
To fulfill a man's life ambitions,
You have just to study hard the Six Classics.

The emperor cherishes the bright and the talented
And instructs you to study literature.
All walks of life are inferior,
Only scholars are the superior.

As we shall see in our discussions below, these common beliefs will be norms which restrict the actions of the

11. Shentong shi, 1602.
characters in the archetypal story.

Since the examination system insured fair competition between candidates of different social backgrounds, the success of the candidates depended solely on their literary talent. Yet this seemingly open and fair system of enlisting talented scholars to the service of the empire was attacked even during its golden era, the Northern Song. Among the reasons that gave rise to the criticism, "one must first note the conflict between the Confucian stress on human virtue and the state’s practical need to recruit men of ability." The inherent contradiction of the examination system was addressed by the reformers in the Northern Song.

There were three major efforts at reforms in the Northern Song, headed by Fan Zhongyan, Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086) and Cai Jing 蔡京 (1046-1126) respectively. Each of the three reforms includes proposals of change in the examinations. Though different reformers had different agendas, they shared one common goal which is "to recruit on the basis of virtue rather than ability or talent." The reforms led to controversies which involved most of the famous scholars and statesmen of the day.


The problem of talent versus virtue constitutes a cultural subtext of the archetypal story of the unfaithful scholar. In the archetypal story, the examination winner’s virtue and his talent are contrasted. His virtue is questioned while his talent is taken for granted. This is probably a unique feature of the Song examination culture: the fairness of the examination system is universally acknowledged; its only defect is seen in its inability to evaluate the candidate’s virtue.\(^{14}\)

In the archetypal story, the examination winner’s virtue is questioned not in terms of his motivations for taking the examinations. When his motivations are clearly pronounced, as in *First Winner Zhang Xie*, they are no more high minded than those common beliefs expressed in the popular poems. In a word, he takes the examinations in order to gain fame and profit and to change the social status of his family. In the works produced in the Song, these motivations are not regarded as lowly or base.\(^{15}\)

\(^{14}\) In Ming and Qing times, the examination winner’s talent is seriously questioned. The most familiar example is Wu Jingzi’s 倪敬梓 (1701-1754) *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史(*The Scholars)*, in which scholars lacking basic cultural competence become examination winners.

\(^{15}\) In Ming and Qing times, the examination candidate’s motivations for taking the examinations are criticized. In *The Scholars*, for example, Zang Liaozhai is satirized when he says that after he passes the examinations and becomes a magistrate, “I shall wear boots
In the archetypal story, the examination winner’s virtue is questioned in terms of his relationship with his lover or wife. The examination candidate is shown to be an unfaithful man who deserts his woman after he passes the examinations. One feature shared by the works produced in the Song, with the exception of Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang, is that the examination candidate makes a marital contract with a woman while he travels far away from his hometown. The marital contract is made by himself without the acknowledgment of his parents. This makes it easy for him to break the contract after he leaves his woman. As a significant constituent of the examination culture, the examination candidate’s journey becomes a structural device in the stories and plays.

Travels are a unique feature of the examination culture. "Nothing set examination candidates off from the rest of society so much as their mobility. They were constantly on the move visiting each other, requesting instruction from well known scholars, attending schools and academies, and taking examinations." \(^{15}\) Sometimes they are thrown into unexpected situations and their travels become adventures.

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with knotted soles, hold court, pass sentence and have people beaten. 穿 蝴 蝴 結 底 的 靴， 坐 堂， 鎮 實， 打 人。" Rulin waishi (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1958), 314. The English translation is Yang Hsien-yi and Gladys Yang's, in their (trans.) The Scholars (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 406.

"In a world where parents could not be wired for emergency funds, distant travel could be a hazardous undertaking. This was particularly true for chü-jen [juren], since they had to leave their prefectures where they and their families were known and make the trip to the capital, braving bandits, thieves, and government underlings collecting transit taxes." In the archetypal story, the candidate's travels bring him into the female protagonist's domain and his trip on to the capital brings him success in the examinations which in turn motivates him to desert his woman.

In this chapter, we shall discuss two classical tales and a southern-style play produced during the Song dynasty. These are the earliest examples of the archetypal story. Their plots are based on the model of retribution.

"First Winner Wang"

The importance of the story of First Winner Wang can be seen from two aspects. First, it was a product of the Northern Song era, thus the earliest example of the archetypal story. Second, it was written into a southern-style play, First Winner Wang Betrays Guiying 王魁負桂英, in the twelfth century. That play, no longer extant today, is one of the two earliest known works of the southern-style

17. Ibid.
dramatic genre.

The story is a product of the eleventh century. The earliest record of this story is in Kuoyi zhi 拙異志 by Zhang Shizheng 張師正 (1016-?). This earliest version of the story is an anecdote about Wang Junmin, a historical person who died in 1061.18

A fully developed tale, which depicted Wang Junmin as an unfaithful lover, was written within two decades of his death. This is the tale we shall examine in the following discussions.19 In that tale, Wang Junmin's personal name is deliberately omitted and he is referred to as First Winner Wang. The complete title of the tale is "First Winner Wang Betrays Guiying Who Dies to Take Revenge," which will be shortened as "First Winner Wang" in our discussion.

"First Winner Wang" can be divided into five sections.

The first section tells how the male protagonist intrudes into and exits from the female protagonist's domain and how a marital pledge is made between them.


19. The tale can be found in Luo Ye 羅燁, Zuiweng tanlu 醉翁談錄. In Lüchuang xinhua Zuiweng tanlu 綠窗新話醉翁談錄 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1965), 91-95. It is very likely an abridged version.
In this section, First Winner Wang is reluctant to go back to his hometown after he fails the examinations. He wanders to Laizhou in Shandong, where he is left penniless. He gets acquainted with Wang Guiying, a local courtesan, who provides him with food and shelter so that he can concentrate on his studies. Next year when the time comes for the examinations, Guiying gives half of her savings to him for his traveling expenses. Before he leaves her for the capital, they go to a nearby seagod temple and perform a sacrificial rite to make a marital pledge.

The most important thing in this section of the story is the marital pledge First Winner Wang makes to Guiying. First Winner Wang vows no fewer than three times never to desert her. When Guiying offers half of her savings to him as his travelling expenses, he promises her, “If I can distinguish myself, I swear I won’t separate from you. 若貴，誓不負汝。” Later, in the seagod temple, he swears before the seagod, “I love Guiying and vow never to leave her. 某與桂英，情好相得，誓不相負。” And when Guiying sees him off on his journey to the capital, he repeats his oath, “My oath is as clear as the bright sun and my sincerity is as solid as pure gold. 盟誓明

20. Luo Ye, 92
21. Ibid.
The marital pledge made by First Winner Wang to Guiying is reinforced by the sacrificial rite they perform in the seagod temple. After First Winner Wang makes his pledge, Guiying "let loose her hair, plaited colorful silk threads into it and wore it in two coils."

In traditional China, a woman has to change her hair style when she is married and consequently hair style is one of the most obvious emblems of a woman's marital status. Guiying's change of her hair style means she sees the sacrificial rite as a marital ceremony between them, and she regards herself as a married woman after the rite and will behave accordingly thereafter.

The sacrificial rite is regarded by the two protagonists as an informal marital ceremony. This can be seen from another act they perform in the temple. After Guiying changes her hair style, "each of them pricked his or her arm with a small knife and shed blood until it filled a cup. They mixed the blood with the unused wine they brought as sacrifice for the god and each drank from the other's cup."

It is an ancient rite to shed blood into a wine cup and drink it when people make a

22. Ibid.

23. Ibid.
sacred pledge to each other, a rite also adopted by secret societies when brotherhood is sworn. For a couple to drink from each other's cup is the final act of a wedding ceremony. When First Winner Wang and Guiying perform this act, they are finishing a secret wedding ceremony as well as making a sacred pledge to their marital union.

Even though First Winner Wang takes his pledge seriously when he makes it, the fact remains that he is not legally married with Guiying. The lack of a formal wedding means Guiying has no claim to the rights of a wife and does not have the social and legal protection she needs when she is deserted. To some extent this may account for her choice of suicide later in the story.

An important feature of the relations between First Winner Wang and Guiying is the giver-receiver relationship. Because she is a courtesan, Guiying's social status is lower than that of First Winner Wang. But when she meets him, her financial status is higher than his, so she is in the role of giver, financially supporting him in his studies and in his participation in the examinations. His later success in the examinations owes a great deal to her support. He is in debt to her and has implicitly pledged to repay her, with marriage.

In the sexual union between First Winner Wang and

24. Ibid.
Guiying, there seems to be a shared expectation. Guiying sees in him a potential examination winner. When he comes to visit her for the first time, she foretells his success in the following manner, "My name is Guiying. Wine is a fine heavenly reward, and now you drink this heavenly reward while seeing Guiying (Laurels), which is an omen for your success in next spring's examinations. 某名桂英，酒乃天之美祿，使足下待桂英而飲天祿，乃來春登第之兆。" 25 Later when she offers a dinner party to see him off on his journey to the capital, she again foretells his success, "With your talent and learning you will be at the top of the winners' list. 以君才學，當首出群公。" 26 With the firm belief that he will succeed in the examinations, Guiying expects that his debt to her will be repaid, that she will be married to an examination winner (who will be appointed as an official), and that her social status will be raised from that of a courtesan to that of a titled lady (an official's wife who will receive titles from the emperor). As for First Winner Wang, he expects to clear his debt to Guiying by marrying her. As he tells Guiying when she offers him money for his traveling expenses, "I've lived here for more than a year now and I'm grateful to you for providing me with food and clothes. Now again you offer me money for my journey to the capital. There is

25. Ibid., 91.
26. Ibid., 92.
nothing I can do to repay you if I cannot distinguish myself. But if I can distinguish myself, I swear I won’t separate from you. 我客寓此逾歳，感君衣食之用，今又以金帛佐我西行之費，我不貴則已，若貴，誓不相負。”

In this shared expectation, there is a potential reversal of roles. If the expectation is realised, he will be in the role of giver, conferring her with a higher social status, and she will be in the role of receiver, benefiting from her marriage with him. The frustration of the shared expectation and the reaction to it will be a major factor in plot development.

In the second section, a change takes place in the male protagonist’s domain which makes him decide to sever connections with the female protagonist’s domain. In this section, First Winner Wang succeeds in three consecutive examinations. When he becomes the first winner in the final examination, the Palace Examination, he has a change of heart and stops sending letters to Guiying. His father betroths him to a Miss Cui, an arrangement which he dares not refuse. After he is appointed the Assistant Prefect of Xuzhou, he first travels south of the Yangtze River to visit his father, and then goes to his post.

In this section of the story, First Winner Wang’s domain undergoes radical change. In terms of geographical location,

27. Ibid.
he leaves Laizhou and arrives in the capital. Later he travels to the south of the Yangtze River to visit his father and then goes to his post in Xuzhou. In terms of social status, he becomes a first winner in the examinations, the most enviable title in the elite culture, and then is assigned a post and becomes an official. In terms of private life, he is betrothed to another woman and severs communications with Guiying. In contrast to First Winner Wang’s domain, Guiying’s domain remains the same in this section of the story. This contrast between the two domains points to the fact that a man in traditional Chinese society enjoys a kind of social mobility that is denied a woman. The privileged mobility enjoyed by a man has the potential to create an imbalance between his domain and his woman’s domain, and the archetypal story is an investigation into the consequences of such an imbalance and its moral implications.

There are two reasons First Winner Wang gives for deserting Guiying. “Since I am the first winner, I’ll become a high official quickly. But my reputation will be tarnished by a courtesan. Moreover, my father is such a strict parent that he will not allow me to marry a courtesan. 吾科名若此，即登顯要，今被一娼玷辱，況家有嚴君，必不能容。”

The first reason for the desertion is the potential conflict First Winner Wang sees between the two domains of

28. Ibid., 93.
his private life and public life. His public life as an official begins when he succeeds in the examinations. It is a common belief and to some extent a historical fact in traditional China, particularly in the Song dynasty, that the first winner in the palace examination is often promoted to the post of minister or even prime minister several years after he begins his official career. Therefore his status of first winner stimulates First Winner Wang's expectation for a great career. While his expectation for his public life is raised, he foresees a potential threat coming from his private life, specifically from Guiying's domain. He believes Guiying's low social status as a courtesan will be an obstacle to his career. He has relied on this domain of his private life, Guiying's domain, to enter the domain of his public life, but now there seems to be a conflict between the two domains. To resolve this potential conflict, he decides to sacrifice this domain of his private life, his relation with Guiying, in order to secure his success in his public life. His desire for fame and profit overcomes his emotions and obligations.

His second reason for desertion is the potential conflict First Winner Wang sees between two domains in his private life, his father's domain and Guiying's domain. His father is the representative of his family's domain and the symbol of patriarchal power. He believes his father will not

permit him to marry a courtesan and if he brings Guiying into his family, it will alienate his father and create disorder in his family’s domain. He dare not resist patriarchal power and decides to sacrifice personal commitment to Guiying in order not to upset his father. His allegiance to blood relations overcomes his emotional ties to the girl he has made a solemn vow to marry.

Of the two reasons he provides for his desertion of Guiying, the first is the primary and decisive one. The real motivation for him to desert Guiying is to remove a potential obstacle in his ambitious official career, and his winning of the first place in the examinations is a decisive factor in his decision. If he were not the first winner and did not expect an ambitious official career, he might not wish so urgently to desert Guiying. As for the second reason, his father’s objection against his marriage with a courtesan could have been foreseen even before or without his success in the examination. Therefore it is a rationalisation he uses to lessen his own responsibility and to reinforce his decision to desert Guiying.

Winning the first place in the examinations makes him decide to desert Guiying, which is the turning point in the plot. Before the turning point, he keeps close connections with Guiying’s domain. But after the turning point, he tries to sever his connections with her domain. When he succeeds in the first examination, he writes her a letter with a poem.
The last two lines of the poems read, "If I come back as a winner next spring, Mandarin ducks in a pair will swim. 来春我若功成去，好養鴛鴦作一池。" The poem shows he is still expecting to be happily reunited with her, like a pair of love-birds. But after he wins the first place in the palace examination, he decides to desert her and stops sending her letters. Since his love for her is sincere when they are together and his pledge to her is earnest when he makes it, the process of breaking the emotional ties is not described as a light-hearted act. When Guiying learns he has become the first winner, she writes a letter, with two poems attached, to congratulate him. He reads her letter and "with tears rolling down his face, he says, 'My promised marriage with Guiying can no longer be realized.'" He feels guilty but does not write back to her. When Guiying learns the celebration banquet for the new examination winners is over, she writes him another letter with a poem included. Though he "wept when he received the letter得書涕泣," still he does not write back to her.

His father's order for him to marry Miss Cui reaches him

30. Luo Ye, ibid., 92.
31. Ibid., 93.
32. Ibid., 93.
when he is "still irresolute 隱忍未決," and seals his decision to desert Guiying. It seems that his father’s marital arrangement relieves him of his struggle with his conscience. His father’s order serves as a reminder of his responsibilities to his family and of his father’s patriarchal power, which drags him closer to his family’s domain and further away from Guiying’s domain. However it should be noted that it is First Winner Wang himself who first decides to desert Guiying, and that his father’s influence only serves to reinforce his decision.

While First Winner Wang has decided to desert her and severed communications with her, Guiying still believes he abides by his pledge and keeps sending him letters. After she learns that he has become the first winner, she sends him a poem which ends with these two lines, “Husband’s fame and wife’s glory will become an eternal romance, /Your talent and my beauty are a proper match. 夫貴婦榮千古事，與君才貌各相宜。” From the poem we can see Guiying’s belief in and expectation of their marital union.

Guiying’s idea of marital union expresses a commonly held belief in traditional Chinese society that a talented scholar and a beautiful lady are a perfect couple. This belief is summarised in the expression “langcai númao 郎才女
The expression "caizi jiaren 才子佳人" (talented scholar and beautiful lady), expresses the belief in the world of romance which will become a major theme in fiction and drama in late imperial China. However, there is another belief in traditional Chinese society which requires the couple in a marital union have equal social status. This belief is condensed in the expression "mendang hudui 門當戶對" (a couple in a marital union come from families of equal social status). While "langcai nümao" expresses the ideal world where marital union is based on personal qualities, "mendang hudui" reflects the mundane reality which stresses socio-economic factors in a marital union. These two belief systems are in potential conflict.\(^{35}\)

Guiying believes she will be a suitable wife for First Winner Wang because she cherishes the ideal view of a marital union based on personal qualities. First Winner Wang also submits to this view before he becomes the first winner in the examinations and has a change of heart. Guiying’s belief is reinforced by the fact that, able to write poetry, she

\(^{35}\) Generally speaking, "mendang hudui" was the dominant norm before and during Tang dynasty. It is during the Song dynasty that "langcai nümao" became a prevalent idea. See Xiao Yuanjin 蕭源錦, Zhuangyuan shihua 狀元史話 (Chongqing: Chongqing chubanshe, 1992), 335. It is worth noting that "First Winner Wang" is one of the earliest literary works where the idea of "langcai nümao" is explicitly enunciated.
possesses literary talent which makes her an even more appropriate partner for a talented man.

Guiying’s expectation that his fame will bring glory to her is based on the fact that he loves her and he is in debt to her. But most important is the fact that they have a marital contract. When he was in bad times, she supported him, and now that he has succeeded in his public life, he should repay her by bringing glory to her. The assumption of her expectation of this repayment is that he is a man of virtue.

Guiying has correctly foretold his success in the examinations. What she does not foresee is his change in belief. After he becomes the first winner, he shifts his belief from the ideal of “langcai nümao” to “mendang hudui.” A change in his social status brings a change in his belief, which leads to his desertion of her: a talented man is not necessarily a virtuous man. The man’s talent and his virtue are thus contrasted.

When Guiying writes the poem to express her belief and expectation, she knows the changes in the social aspects in First Winner Wang’s domain. But she does not know the changes in his private domain and she believes that he still abides by his pledge. At the time when First Winner Wang is contemplating what damage marrying her may cause his career, she still believes they are a well-matched couple. And while he has decided to desert her, she is looking forward to the
glory his fame will bring to her. The contrast between the simultaneous actions in the two domains brings to the foreground the vast difference in stability between the two domains.

In the third section, the female protagonist attempts but fails to re-establish connections between her domain and the male protagonist’s domain.

In this section, Guiying sends her servant to Xuzhou after she learns that First Winner Wang has gone to his post. First Winner Wang refuses to accept her letter and orders the servant to take it back to Guiying.

Even though First Winner Wang has stopped communicating with Guiying, she does not know that he has changed heart. She still behaves according to her belief and expectation. To show her love and concern for him, she makes him a robe. She writes a letter and has her servant deliver it to him in Xuzhou, believing that he will send some people to bring her to him.

But he no longer needs her financial support. When Guiying’s servant comes to see him, First Winner Wang is a figure of authority surrounded by clerks. He is now in another domain, the domain of his public life. Since he has decided to sever relations with Guiying’s domain, he regards her message as an unwelcome intrusion into his domain. Although it is the support from Guiying’s domain which makes
possible his entrance into the domain of his public life, the two domains now seem incompatible to him. Her letter seems to be a threat to the stability of his present domain and he is infuriated to hear Guiying's message delivered by her servant. He does not hesitate to show his new status as a man of power by threatening to have Guiying's servant whipped. His refusal to accept her letter shows that he is determined to have nothing to do with her domain.

In the fourth section, the female protagonist's domain is destroyed as a result of the male protagonist's separation from her domain.

In this section, Guiying learns that First Winner Wang has deserted her. She goes to the seagod temple to accuse Wang of betrayal before the seagod, and commits suicide after she comes back home.

When she learns that First Winner Wang has broken the sacred marital contract with her, Guiying decides to take revenge on him. She feels so hurt by the betrayal that she wants him to be punished by death. But as a woman she does not have the physical strength to kill him personally. Neither can she seek help from the authorities, because she is not married to him and cannot claim her rights as a wife. She realizes her weakness as a woman when she considers her revenge. Since the seagod is the witness of her marital contract with First Winner Wang, she comes to him for help.
and asks him to be the judge of this case.

She commits suicide in order to acquire the power that is necessary for her revenge. Since she does not have the power for revenge in this world, she seeks the power from the underworld. The underworld is the last place where the weak and the wronged can seek justice. After she dies, she will be able to communicate with the god and seek the judgement of the god. By committing suicide, she will become a ghost who has died a wrongful death, which will empower her as a ghost of revenge.36

In the fifth section, the male protagonist’s domain is eliminated as a punishment for his desertion of the female protagonist. The female protagonist acquires power by entering the underworld and overpowers the male protagonist’s domain.

In this section, the seagod sends his soldiers to help Guiying. She comes to look for First Winner Wang in Xuzhou, but he is not with his family. She finds him in Nanjing where he is serving as the Chief Examiner. After Guiying confronts him in the examination hall, he stabs himself with a knife  

36. According to a common belief, if one dies a wrongful death, one’s ghost may launch a suit in the underworld and come back to this world for revenge. There are a large number of tales in Tang and Song in which the ghost of a murdered person comes back to bring the murderer
and injures himself, but he is stopped from killing himself by the people around him. Then he is escorted back to Xuzhou. Ma Shousu, a Daoist priest, is invited to perform sacrificial rites to save him from being haunted by Guiying's ghost. After Ma Shousu brings a dream to First Winner Wang's mother, the priest tells her there is no hope to save her son.  

Several days later First Winner Wang stabs himself to death.

The death of First Winner Wang has been foreshadowed. When he makes the marital pledge in the seagod temple, he swears "If I ever separate from her, then the god will punish me. If the god does not kill me, then the god is not a mighty god, but a stupid ghost. 若生離異，神當殛之；神若不誅，非靈神也，乃愚鬼耳。" Before he leaves Guiying to set on his journey to the capital, he tells her, "Even if you die, I'll follow you into the underworld. 雖死亦相從于地下。"

Once Guiying dies, First Winner Wang's death is ordained. When her ghost confronts him in the examination hall, he admits his fault and promises "I'll rectify my error to the underworld.

37. The priest acts as an intermediary between this world and the underworld. He receives a message from the underworld through his magic power and conveys the message to people in this world through dreams. The Daoist priest performs this type of functions in numerous tales of the supernatural.

38. Luo Ye, ibid., 92.

39. Ibid., 92.
by inviting monks to read scriptures, say prayers, and burn much money for you. 我今為汝請僧，科經薦拔，多化紙錢可也。” 40 To this Guiying replies, “I only want your life. What’s the use of Buddhist scriptures and paper money? 我只要汝命，何用佛書紙錢。” 41 Since his failure to keep the marital pledge costs Guiying her life, he must pay for it with his own life.

A marital pledge is a sacred pledge and if First Winner Wang fails to keep the pledge, nobody can save him. Because the authority in the supernatural domain symbolizes moral principle, it is more powerful than the political power of First Winner Wang’s domain. When the Daoist priest Ma Shousu performs a sacrificial rite and brings a dream to First Winner Wang’s mother, she sees her son “in an official court, his hair knotted together with a woman’s hair. 魅與一婦人以髮相系，在一官府中。” 42 The official court in her dream is a court in the underworld, presumably the seagod’s court, and her son is there waiting for trial. His hair knotted together with Guiying’s hair signifies that his marital contract with Guiying is recognised and protected by the gods. That he has broken the pledge means he has disobeyed heavenly principles and has to be punished, in the underworld.

40. Ibid., 94.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid., 95.
Guiying's ghost finds First Winner Wang when he is correcting exam papers in the examination hall in Nanjing. This reminds the reader of the point of the story: it is a story about the talent and virtue of an examination candidate. First Winner Wang succeeds in the examinations: his success in the examinations proves his talent, but it also reveals his lack of virtue. The examination hall is the place where his literary talent wins him success. It is also the place where his moral failure is revealed. The scene of confrontation in the examination hall summarises the success and failure of a first examination winner and embodies a moral lesson about talent and virtue.

The story can be expressed by a five-part structure.

1. A marital contract binds the two domains of the protagonists (The male protagonist has a marital contract with the female protagonist).

2. A radical change takes place in the male protagonist's domain (He succeeds in the examinations).

3. The male protagonist severs connections with the female protagonist's domain (He breaks the marital contract).

4. The female protagonist's domain is eliminated (She dies because of his desertion).

5. The male protagonist's domain is eliminated (Her ghost takes revenge on him and he dies).
"Assistant Minister Man"

"Assistant Minister Man" is a tale in Yijian zhi 夷堅志 (The Record of the Listener) by Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202). Consisting of nearly 2,700 tales of the bizarre and the supernatural, The Record of the Listener is the largest collection of stories written by a single person in traditional China. The tales were written between the years 1159 and 1198 and printed in 420 juan 卷, only 207 juan of which survive.

Hong Mai remarked that his story "roughly resembles that of First Winner Wang. 略類王魁" The story took place in the same period as that of the story of First Winner Wang, for Hong Mai says that it "happened over one hundred years ago 至今百余年."

The story follows the same five-part structure as "First Winner Wang."

In the first section, the male protagonist, whose family name is Man and who will become an Assistant Minister, goes out to visit his family relations, but fails to find them. When he is left with no money to buy food, Jiao Dalang, who lives near the hotel in which Assistant Minister Man stays,

offers him help. He visits Jiao Dalang daily and has a secret affair with Jiao's daughter. When Jiao Dalang finds out, he marries his daughter to Assistant Minister Man. Assistant Minister Man lives happily with Miss Jiao for two years.

This first section of the story, like that of "First Winner Wang," is about the marital contract between the two protagonists. The relationship between Assistant Minister Man and Miss Jiao bears resemblance to the relationship between First Winner Wang and Wang Guiying. First of all, Assistant Minister Man's social status is higher than Miss Jiao's, for he comes from a family of high officials while Miss Jiao comes from a family of the marketplace. Second, he is in a difficult situation when he enters the Jiaos' domain. This creates an opportunity for Jiao Dalang to help him and a giver-receiver relationship is established between the Jiao family domain and his domain, similar to the relationship between Guiying and First Winner Wang.

There are, however, differences between the two stories. Miss Jiao, unlike Guiying, is not a courtesan. Unlike Guiying, whose relationship with First Winner Wang is based on a personal pledge, Miss Jiao is formally married to Assistant Man.

In the second section, Assistant Minister Man succeeds in the examinations after his two years of contented life.

44. Ibid.
with Miss Jiao. He comes back to see his wife and father-in-law, and then leaves for the capital to get his assignment.

This section is quite different from "First Winner Wang." Unlike First Winner Wang, Assistant Minister Man does not change heart after he succeeds in the examinations. Rather he comes back to be reunited with his wife. When he returns in a green robe, the symbol of an examination winner, the neighbours "express their admiration, praise and wonder".\(^{45}\) It seems that he has repaid his father-in-law's kindness to him, to some extent at least, by bringing honour to his wife's family. Jiao Dalang gives a lot of money to his son-in-law, presumably for him to use on his journey to his post, which makes Assistant Minister Man further indebted to him.

His son-in-law's success in the examinations creates expectations on the part of Jiao Dalang. Since he believes his son-in-law will become wealthy soon, Jiao Dalang begins to neglect his business, expecting financial support from his son-in-law in the future.

In the third section, Assistant Minister Man comes to the capital and gets an appointment. He runs into one of his clansman, who drags him back to his hometown. His uncle betroths him to a Miss Zhu and he dares not resist. He

\(^{45}\) Ibid., 1649.
marries Miss Zhu and subsequently rises to the rank of Assistant Minister of Rites.

Unlike First Winner Wang, who has a sudden change of heart after he succeeds in the examinations, Assistant Minister Man’s decision to desert Miss Jiao depends on contingent factors. When he runs into one of his clansmen in the capital, he has no intention to go back to his hometown, for his parents both have died and he regards his wife’s home as his own. But when his clansman carries his luggage away, he has no other way but to follow him back. Then his uncle betroths him to Miss Zhu, an official’s daughter. His uncle is the head of the clan and has held high positions in his official career, thus representing the patriarchal power. Since Assistant Minister Man has always been fearful of his uncle who is stern by nature, he dares not say no to the marital arrangement. Since he has no intention to desert Miss Jiao, his uncle’s marital arrangement for him makes him feel “extremely awkward and fearful” \(^{46}\). But several days later, he has a sudden change of heart and decides to desert Miss Jiao.

There are two reasons he provides for his decision to desert Miss Jiao, “She was not married to me in accordance with the appropriate rites. Besides, she is from a humble family. How could she really be my spouse? 彼焦氏非以禮合，況

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 1650.
Assistant Minister Man has a secret affair with Miss Jiao before he is married with her, which shows his passion for her. Now under the pressure from his uncle, he decides to sacrifice his passion for Miss Jiao, his wife, to follow the patriarchal authority. Although his marriage with Miss Jiao is not arranged or acknowledged by his family and does not undergo the normal marital procedures required by rites, it is a socially and legally acknowledged marriage. The lack of appropriate rites that he uses as an excuse to desert Miss Jiao is not a sufficient ground for him to abandon her. It is a pretext he uses to rationalise his change of heart.

After they are married, Assistant Minister Man and Miss Jiao love each other and live happily together for two years. Their relationship and marriage follow the romantic model of "langcai númao" (a talented scholar matched with a beautiful lady). Yet, as in "First Winner Wang," the romantic model is fragile in comparison with the pragmatic model of "mendang hudui" (marriage between families of equal status). When he is back home, he is reminded of his family status and he changes his ideal of marriage from the romantic model to the realistic model. After he decides to desert Miss Jiao, he marries Miss Zhu. Miss Zhu is beautiful and has a large dowry, much to his satisfaction. After his second marriage he burns the perfume pouches and scarves given to him by Miss

47. Ibid.
Jiao. This shows his determination to forget her.

In the case of both First Winner Wang and Assistant Man, the most important factor is the lower social status of the female protagonist. Guiying’s status as a courtesan poses a threat to First Winner Wang’s official career, which he may and does use to rationalise his act of betrayal. Miss Jiao’s lower family background would not prevent Assistant Minister Man from pursuing a successful official career. Thus his rationalization of his desertion of Miss Jiao is more tenuous and flimsy.

In the fourth section, Miss Jiao dies soon after her father’s death. In the text Miss Jiao’s and her father’s deaths are narrated in retrospect and the information of their deaths is conveyed to the reader after Assistant Minister Man dies in the fifth section. In our discussion we rearrange this event in chronological order.

Like Guiying’s, Miss Jiao’s death is caused by her husband’s desertion of her. But unlike Guiying, Miss Jiao is a more passive character. She makes no attempt to be reunited with her husband. Unlike Guiying, who dies in order to take revenge, Miss Jiao merely dies of grief at being deserted.

In the fifth section, Assistant Minister Man becomes the prefect of Qizhou. Miss Jiao (in fact as a ghost) comes to be reunited with him. Miss Zhu welcomes Miss Jiao and lets her
live with them as Man's wife. Ten days later Assistant Minister Man comes to sleep in Miss Jiao's bedroom. The next morning he is found dead and Miss Jiao is gone. That evening Miss Zhu sees Miss Jiao in a dream and learns that Miss Jiao has come from the underworld to take her revenge on Assistant Minister Man.

Because he does not know Miss Jiao is a ghost, Assistant Minister Man goes to sleep with her. This indicates that after twenty years he still likes her. This is further evidence that his desertion of her is motivated by rational calculation. Twenty years later, when he attempts to have a sexual union with her again, he meets his death.

Unlike "First Winner Wang," which focuses on the male protagonist's failure to keep his marital pledge, "Assistant Minister Man" stresses the male protagonist's failure to repay the kindness he has received. Miss Jiao tells Miss Zhu in her dream that the reason why she seeks revenge is that "Mr. Man had been deeply indebted to my family, yet he betrayed my family so! 滿生受我家深恩，而負心若此！” The betrayal leads to the deaths of Miss Jiao and her father, and he must pay for them with his own life. The infraction-punishment principle is explicitly explained.

48. Ibid., 1651.
Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang

Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang is an important work because it is one of the two earliest southern-style plays. According to Xu Wei 徐渭 (1521-1593), “The southern-style drama started during the Song Emperor Guang Zong’s reign. The earliest plays are Zhao Zhenü and First Winner Wang, written by people from Wenzhou. 南戲始于宋光宗朝，永嘉人所作趙貞女王魅二種實首之。” The play was for a time banned by Zhao Hongfu, a royal clansman who passed the jinshi examinations in 1190.

The script of Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang is lost. Its plot summary exists in the following song from Xiao shangfen 小上墳, a Peking opera.

Tears fall down my cheeks as I walk along,
Because I recall that ancient man Cai Bojie.
He went to the capital to take the exams,
He left, and never came back.
His parents died from cold and hunger,
Fifth Maid carried earth to build a grave.
The grave was built three feet high,
A lute fell down from the sky.
Carrying the lute and a portrait of his parents,
She went to the capital to fetch her husband back.
Her husband in the capital denied her,
The devoted wife cried her heart out.
Virtuous Fifth Maid was trodden under hooves,
Five thunderbolts struck the skull of Cai Bojie.

正走之間淚滿腮,

Again, we can divide this play into five sections. In the first section, Cai Bojie leaves Fifth Maid to go to the capital for the examinations. This section of the story is similar to the corresponding section of “First Winner Wang” in that the male protagonist in each story leaves the female protagonist to go to the capital for the examinations. However, the first section of this play is different from “First Winner Wang” in that Cai Bojie and Fifth Maid are a married couple at the beginning of the story. The bond between First Winner Wang and Guiying is a personal contract based on a pledge. The marital contract between Cai Bojie and Fifth Maid is a socially and legally recognised contract, their marriage. When First Winner Wang fails to keep his marital pledge, he breaches the moral code of personal

obligation. However his is no more than a personal commitment defined between himself and Guiying. Since Cai Bojie is married to Fifth Maid, he defies all the social, moral and legal codes when he fails to abide by the marital contract. Therefore Cai Bojie's desertion of his wife is a greater crime than First Winner Wang's.

Another difference between Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang and "First Winner Wang" lies in the social status of the female protagonists. Guiying is a courtesan; Fifth Maid is a virtuous wife. It would require great courage for a man to take a courtesan as his wife because it was not socially accepted. Thus First Winner Wang's desertion of Guiying, though morally wrong, is understandable, and he can use social conventions to rationalise his action. Since Fifth Maid is a virtuous wife, the play provides no rationalisation for Cai Bojie to defend his action of desertion. Therefore Cai Bojie bears more moral burden and deserves more blame than First Winner Wang for his act of desertion.

In the second section, Cai Bojie succeeds in the examinations and severs connections with Fifth Maid's domain. At home his parents die of famine and Fifth Maid buries them.

In this section the motif of filial piety appears. After Cai Bojie succeeds in the examinations, he severs connections not only with Fifth Maid, but also with his parents, who die of famine. This increases his guilt because he is neither a
faithful husband nor a filial son.

Fifth Maid proves her virtue when she carries earth to build a grave for her mother- and father-in-law. The burial also leaves Cai Bojie in debt to her. It is a son's duty to support his parents while they are alive and bury them when they are dead. When Cai Bojie is absent, Fifth Maid fulfils his duty for him, for which he should be all the more faithful to the marriage bond.

Her filial action moves heaven and a lute falls from the sky. The lute is a recognition of her filial act. It is also proof of the existence of heavenly principles, which foreshadows the heavenly punishment of Cai Bojie at the end of the play.

In the third section, Fifth Maid makes a journey to the capital to look for Cai Bojie. When she finds him, he refuses to acknowledge her as his wife.

This section is like the third section of "First Winner Wang" in that the female protagonist in each story attempts but fails to be reunited with the male protagonist. It is different from "First Winner Wang" in that Fifth Maid makes the journey to the capital by herself while Guiying sends her servant instead. The image of a woman travelling alone on her journey to look for her husband is particularly moving, for it makes simultaneously explicit the geographical distance between the capital and the hometown and the psychological
distance between husband and wife.

Fifth Maid’s reaction to her husband’s denial of her is also different from Guiying’s reaction. While Guiying immediately decides to take revenge, which shows her strong character, Fifth Maid merely “cries her heart out.” This again shows Fifth Maid to be a traditional type of virtuous wife, for it is conventionally believed that a virtuous woman should tolerate her husband’s abuse.

In the fourth section, Cai Bojie murders Fifth Maid. This section of the play is similar to “First Winner Wang” in that the female protagonist’s domain is eliminated. But there is a great difference between the deaths of the two female protagonists. Although it is First Winner Wang’s desertion that leads to Guiying’s death, he does not intend to kill her. Cai Bojie is a more vicious character. He not only refuses to acknowledge Fifth Maid as his wife, he goes on to murder her. While First Winner Wang is content with keeping his domain separate from Guiying’s domain, Cai Bojie seeks to eliminate Fifth Maid’s domain and succeeds in doing so. To his crime of deserting his wife he now adds the crime of murder.

In the fifth section, Cai Bojie is struck by thunderbolts and dies. From the context it seems appropriate to make the logical link between her death and his death:
Because he murders her, therefore he suffers retribution. We have to admit that it is a hypothesis. As an examination winner, Cai Bojie represents the privileged and the powerful. As a deserted woman, Fifth Maid represents the underprivileged and the powerless. Through his desertion and murder of his wife, Cai Bojie has revealed himself to be a heartless scholar. Through her suffering, Fifth Maid has proven herself to be a virtuous wife. The powerful may defeat the powerless, as is shown by Cai Bojie’s deserting and murdering his wife, but the clear moral of the play is that the righteous one will triumph over the evil one in the end. If the righteous one is too weak to overcome the evil one in this world, there is still a higher supernatural realm which ensures that justice be done. This is true not only of Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang, but also of “First Winner Wang” and “Assistant Minister Man.” But whereas in those two stories the female protagonists’ ghosts serve as intermediaries between the supernatural realm and this world, in this play Heaven punishes the evildoer directly. This reflects the fact that Cai Bojie’s crime is more vicious than the crimes in those two stories. He murders his wife while the female protagonists in those two stories die of desertion but are not murdered. His vicious crime calls for immediate punishment and, without the medium of his wife’s ghost, Heaven sends down its thunderbolts.
The earliest model of the archetypal story can be established from "First Winner Wang," "Assistant Minister Man" and Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang. This model has a five-part structure.

Part One. The male protagonist’s domain is bound together with the female protagonist’s domain by a marital contract.

Part Two. The male protagonist succeeds in the examinations.

Part Three. The male protagonist severs connections with the female protagonist’s domain.

Part Four. The female protagonist’s domain is eliminated.

Part Five. The male protagonist’s domain is eliminated.

This is the model of revenge and retribution.
Chapter Two

From Retribution to Reunion: The Converted Model

In the first chapter, we have discussed three works produced from the eleventh to the twelfth century. The most striking feature of those three works is the deaths of both the male and the female protagonist at the end of the story. The power that the scholar has acquired through his success in the examinations seems too strong for the female protagonist to overcome. She must die in order to acquire the supernatural power which can be used to overcome the scholar’s secular power. The intervention of gods, Heaven or the underworld proves the validity of the principle of retribution. The model embodied in those three works is that of retribution.

The model of retribution undergoes a transformation in the thirteenth century. This transformation is represented in two plays which we shall discuss in this chapter. The two plays are First Winner Zhang Xie, a southern-style play, and Rain on the Xiaoxiang, a variety play. In these two plays, the male protagonist remains an unfaithful scholar-husband. In fact he becomes more villainous than his predecessor in the earlier model; he not only abandons his wife, he even
attempts to murder her. However the female protagonist does not have to die in order to overcome his power. Rather she is given the good fortune of being taken into a domain that is politically more powerful than her husband's domain. The most interesting feature of these two plays is that the female protagonist, unlike her predecessor, does not use her power to take revenge. Instead she is reunited with her faithless and murderous scholar-husband at the end of the story. These changes in the thirteenth century indicate that the earliest model of retribution is converted into a model of reunion. It is this converted model of the archetypal story that we shall examine in the following discussions.

First Winner Zhang Xie

First Winner Zhang Xie is the only extant play from the Song era and the earliest Chinese play of which a complete text has survived.¹

First Winner Zhang Xie was written by an author or authors from Jiushan Shuhui 九山書會 (Nine Mountains Writing Society).² During the Song and Yuan eras, a "shuhui" (writing

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1. The edition of First Winner Zhang Xie used in the following discussions is Zhang Xie Zhuangyuan 張協狀元, in Yongle dadian xiwen sanzhong jiaozhu 永樂大典戲文三種校注, ed. Qian Nanyang 錢南揚 (Taipei: Huazheng shuju, 1980), 1-217.

2. In the second scene of the play, it is proclaimed that this play is rewritten by "Jiushan Shuhui." See Zhangxie
society) was an organization of authors who made a living by writing scripts for actors or story-tellers to perform in the entertainment quarters. "Jiushan" was the name of a place in Wenzhou and consequently was used to refer to Wenzhou. It can be determined from the above information that First Winner Zhang Xie is the work of a low-brow professional writer or writers living in Wenzhou, Zhejiang Province.

The play was written after 1235, at least three or four decades later than First Winner Wang and Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang. Since all these three plays were written by people from Wenzhou, it is not unreasonable to assume the author or authors of the extant script of First Winner Zhang Xie had some knowledge of the two earlier plays. Although there is no allusion to Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang, direct reference is made to the story of First Winner Wang in the extant edition of First Winner Zhang Xie.

There is a theory developed by some modern scholars that the extant version of First Winner Zhang Xie is not the original version of the play. According to this theory, the

3. Cheng Qianfan 程千帆 and Wu Xinlei 吳新雷, Liang Song wenxue shi 兩宋文學史 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991), 675-676.

4. In Scene 20, Poor Lass sings the following lines: "Don't follow the example of the faithless First Winner Wang,/ By beating the messenger out of the magisterial hall. 你莫學王魁薄幸種，把下書人打離廳。" Zhang Xie zhuangyuan, 106.
original version of this play must have been written in the earliest model of the archetypal story. Rather than the reunion of the male and female protagonist in the extant version of the play, it is believed, the female protagonist must have died and the male protagonist must have been punished at the end of the original version of this play. In other words, the original version of First Winner Zhang Xie was not very much different from First Winner Wang and Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang. To support this theory, modern scholars often cite two lines from First Winner Zhang Xie which read, “The Nine Mountains Writing Society have now rewritten this story and given it a distinctive flavor.” These lines can certainly serve as proof that the extant edition of First Winner Zhang Xie is not the earliest version of the story, but a revised version. However, it is not certain whether the earliest version of this play is written according to the earliest model of the archetypal story.

The story of First Winner Zhang Xie takes place in the middle of the eleventh century. This can be deduced from the presence of Wang Deyong 王德用, the Prime Minister in the play. The historical Wang Deyong (980-1058) was a

5. See Jin Ningfen 金寧芬, Nanxi yanjiu bianqian 南戲研究變遷 (Tianjin: Tianjin jiaoyu chubanshe, 1992), 128-130.

contemporary of the famous lyric poet Liu Yong 柳永 (who became jinshi in 1034).⁷ Liu Yong himself appears briefly as a comic figure in this play.⁸

First Winner Zhang Xie is a long play, consisting of 53 scenes.⁹ The play can be divided into five parts.

In the first part of the play, the action can be divided into four episodes. The first is Zhang Xie’s setting off on his journey to the capital for the examinations. The second action is his meeting with Poor Lass Wang and the third is his marriage with her. The fourth episode is his leaving her.

The first episode takes place in Chengdu, Sichuan. Zhang Xie leaves his family and sets out on the journey to the capital to take the examinations. The second episode takes place on Wuji Mountain. Zhang Xie is robbed and beaten by a bandit. When he seeks shelter in a temple, he meets Poor Lass. The third episode describes how Zhang Xie marries Poor Lass. The fourth episode tells how Poor Lass raises money for Zhang Xie so that he can continue his journey to the capital.

In this part of the play, Zhang Xie intrudes into and

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7. For Wang Deyong’s biography, see Song shi, juan 278, 14:9466-9469.
9. By convention the script of the early southern-style drama is not divided into scenes. The script of First Winner Zhang Xie is divided into 53 scenes by its modern editor Qian Nanyang.
then departs from Poor Lass’s domain. During his stay in her domain, he has made a marital contract with her.

The plot in this part of the play is organized around the marital union between the male and the female protagonists. This is similar to the structural arrangement of previous stories. In “First Winner Wang” and “Assistant Minister Man,” the male protagonist makes a marital contract with the female protagonist in the first part of the story. Similarly Zhang Xie gets married with Poor Lass in the first part of this play.

When Zhang Xie enters Poor Lass’s domain, he comes from a socially higher domain into a lower domain. His is a wealthy family whose income comes from moneylending while Poor Lass is a manual laborer who makes a living by spinning hemp and weaving silk. But at the moment when he enters her domain, he is in a predicament and his domain is financially lower than hers. After he is robbed of his gold and pearls and beaten up by a bandit, he has to rely on Poor Lass to provide him with food and shelter. This contrast between the two domains of the male and female protagonist in terms of social status and financial situation is similar to that in previous stories. In both “First Winner Wang” and “Assistant Minister Man,” the male protagonist has a higher social background than the female protagonist and faces financial difficulties at the moment when he meets the female protagonist.
What distinguishes Zhang Xie from the male protagonist in previous stories is his motivation for marriage. In previous stories, the male protagonist’s decision to make a marital contract with the female protagonist is motivated by romantic love and sexual attraction. In "Assistant Minister Man," for example, the male protagonist has a secret affair with the female protagonist before he marries her. In First Winner Zhang Xie, however, the male protagonist’s decision to marry the female protagonist is motivated by his financial need. If Assistant Minister Man marries Miss Jiao out of his affection for her, Zhang Xie initiates his marriage with Poor Lass merely out of strategic calculation.

It is Zhang Xie’s calculation that most clearly distinguishes him from the male protagonist in the previous stories. Like the male protagonists in previous stories, Zhang Xie meets Poor Lass during a journey. But the male protagonists’ journeys in previous stories are merely aimless wanderings. Neither First Winner Wang nor Assistant Minister Man has a goal to reach when he sets out on his journey. In contrast, Zhang Xie has a specific goal to achieve when he begins his journey: to go to the capital and take the examinations. Because he has this goal in mind, his journey is a purposeful action. To get himself to the capital is the main plan of his action in the first part of the play.

Zhang Xie’s main plan of action is disrupted when he runs into a bandit at the foot of Wuji Mountain. He is robbed
of his traveling expenses and suffers physical injuries. With the snow falling, he fears he will die from cold. The incident throws him into such despair that he considers committing suicide.\textsuperscript{10}

After he enters the temple and meets Poor Lass, he is temporarily relieved of his fear of dying from cold or hunger. But the crisis in his domain is far from over. First, he still worries about how to support himself. Although Poor Lass is kind enough to offer him food and shelter, she is in no way obligated to do so since he is a stranger. Second, he worries about missing the examinations. With his home far away, he can find no one to provide him with the necessary traveling expenses.

If to get himself to the capital is Zhang Xie’s main goal in this part of the play, to get over the crisis in his domain is his subgoal during his stay in Wuji Mountain. In order to reach his subgoal, Zhang Xie makes a strategic move: to marry Poor Lass. It is a move with which he aims to kill two birds with one stone. First, it will make Poor Lass obligated to offer whatever she has to him, which means during his stay in the temple he will have a more secure life. After he makes a marital proposal to Poor Lass, he explains to Li Dagong and Li Dapo, an old couple in the village who often help Poor Lass, his intention to marry: “I

\textsuperscript{10. Zhang Xie zhuangyuan, scene 9, p. 51.}
have nobody to rely on in this place, /It is fortunate that she does not have a husband. 卑人此住無所倚，幸然娘子 没夫婿." As he himself says later, the reason he marries Poor Lass is “to get warm shelter and sufficient food 宿食溫飽.” Second, it will also encourage Poor Lass to seek financial support for him so that he will be able to leave the temple and continue his journey to the capital. When he proposes to Poor Lass, he reveals his intention by saying “An immediate success in the examinations is better than staying in the temple. /Think how nice that will be when I take you to my home! —舉登科，強在廟里。帶汝歸到吾鄉，真個好哩。”

The marriage is not a goal in Zhang Xie’s plan of action. It is but a means towards his goal. Poor Lass is not the object of his love or affection. She is a helper whom Zhang Xie enlists to carry out his plan. Zhang Xie marries her out of purely pragmatic considerations.

Zhang Xie reaches his subgoal successfully. After he marries Poor Lass, their relationship is reversed. Before the marriage, he has to be grateful to her for her kindness and help since she is the hostess of the temple and he is an uninvited guest. After the marriage, he not only takes her support for granted, but also possesses a husband’s authority

11. Scene 14, p. 78.
13. Scene 14, p. 77.
over her and becomes her master.

One incident clearly illustrates the reversal of the relationship between them after the marriage. Two months after this marriage, Zhang Xie wants to leave Wuji Mountain for the capital. Since Poor Lass does not have the money he needs for his traveling expenses, she goes to borrow some money from Li Dagong and Li Dapo. When she comes back, Zhang Xie beats her with a cudgel because she has been absent from home the whole day and neglected him. Since he has become her husband, he can exercise a husband’s authority by beating her for no good reason. Poor Lass realizes the change in his attitude towards her and criticizes him,

“When you first entered my temple, you did not behave with such fury. Now you are secure, and you treat me this lightly.”

初入我廟門，
你不曾發這般嗔。
今日裏既定，
把奴家直恁地輕。”

This incident reveals the dominant characteristic of Zhang Xie as arrogance. It also foreshadows the cruel treatment he will give Poor Lass later in the play.

Zhang Xie succeeds in his plan because Poor Lass wishes to get married. Her motivation for marriage is determined by her loneliness. She came from a rich family, so rich that

they were called The Rich Wangs. But fire and bandits destroyed the family property. Her parents died when she was very young and she was left alone in the world with no siblings or relatives. Having lived in the deserted temple for six or seven years, she feels so lonely that she says, "I am afraid to return to the deserted temple. 古廟荒蕪怕見歸." Because she is not married, she laments "Nobody wants me 委又無人要," and feels frustrated and distressed, "I am weighted down with such distress, such loneliness, and my youth is being wasted. 受千般愁悶，萬種寂寥，虛度虧年少." She looks forward to a happy married life, "It will make me happy to meet a lover, marry him, and live together happily forever. 若要奴家好，遇到一個意中人，共作結髮，白頭偕老." She also looks forward to a better life, "I am satisfied with the coarse clothes and hemp skirt, but I am also thinking of another lifestyle. 每甘分粗衣布裙，尋思另般格調." She believes her life will improve, "Even the Yellow River is sometimes clear; how can a person not have her lucky days? 黃

15. Scene 11, p. 62.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Ibid.
20. Ibid.
Although she wishes to get married and to have a better life, her social status makes it difficult for her to fulfill her wish. When Zhang Xie asks her why she is not married, she gives two reasons, "I do not own a thing in the world, not to mention that I lack good looks. Since I have no relatives, who is going to arrange it for me? 貌丑獨過一壁，奈身無寸縷。況兼親戚俱無，誰來管你？" She lacks financial support, has no dowry. She also lacks social support, which means nobody will arrange proper marriage rites for her.

When Zhang Xie proposes to her, he allures her with the prospect of a better life, saying,

It seems that I am gradually recovering from the injuries. Even so, it is not possible for me to return home. Since you don't have a husband and I don't have a wife, we can be husband and wife. I am a man of learning, and once the opportunity comes, I'll become a high minister. An immediate success in the examinations is better than staying at the temple. Think how nice it will be when I take you to my home!“ 算來張協病，相將漸效可。雖然恁地，歸又未得。娘子無夫協無婦，好共成比翼。飽學在臍裏，異日風雲際，身定到鳳凰池。一舉登第，強在廟裏。帶汝到吾鄉，真個好哩。"

Although her social status is low, Poor Lass has her dignity. To his proposal, Poor Lass replies,

How highly you think of yourself when you are

21. Ibid.
22. Scene 14, p. 77.
23. Scene 14, p. 77.
in such misery! How lightly you treat a marriage! Is it decent to speak like that, to let me marry you so that it will cause people to suspect and gossip about us? I am like a stream clear to the bottom, without a single speck of dirt. Please get out the door at once. I don’t want you to stay here!”

There are two reasons for her refusal of his proposal. The first one is his arrogance. In his proposal he boasts of his bright future as if his future success entitles him to marry her. The second is that he does not follow the proper rite for making a marriage proposal. He makes the proposal himself instead of through a go-between, which is not appropriate according to the rites. This shows that he treats neither marriage nor Poor Lass with respect.

When Li Dagong and Li Dapo hear of the marriage proposal, they volunteer to serve as the match-makers. Poor Lass gives in to their persuasion and agrees to the marriage proposal after she obtains a good omen from the god in her temple. What concerns her most about the marriage is revealed in her prayer before the god, “If it is not a temporary union that won’t last, please give me a good omen to indicate your permission. 賜照杯許妾同連理，若不是匆匆分散無終始。” When the god tells her it is a “predestined marriage 宿契,” he

25. Scene 16, p. 84.
foretells the final reunion between Zhang Xie and Poor Lass.

The function of the first part of the play is to get the male and female protagonist married. In this part of the play, a debt-credit relationship is also established between the two protagonists. Before they are married, Zhang Xie is indebted to Poor Lass for providing him with food and shelter. If the marriage cancels his indebtedness to her, as he believes it does, he is further indebted to her for her effort to obtain the money for his traveling expenses. Unlike Guiying or Miss Jiao, who have the money to give the male protagonist for his traveling expenses, Poor Lass has to sacrifice herself to obtain the money. Li Dapo has for some time asked her for some hair to make a wig, but Poor Lass does not have the heart to cut her hair. Now for the sake of her new husband, she cuts her hair and offers it to Li Dapo so that she can borrow some money from her. This puts Zhang Xie again in debt to her, for it is her self-sacrificing act that makes his future success in the examinations possible.

In the second part of the play, the scene of the action moves from Wuji Mountain to the capital. This part consists of three episodes. The first is Zhang Xie’s success in the examinations. The second episode is his refusal to accept the silk whip offered by Wang Shenghua, daughter of Prime Minister Wang Deyong. The third is Shenghua’s death.

The scene in which Shenghua offers a silk whip to Zhang
Xie is a literary reflection of the custom of looking for a husband from among the new examination winners. The most glamorous moment for the examination winners is the parade after the winners’ list is posted. While the examination winners proceed down the main street of the capital, high officials and their families set up tents on the sidewalks and watch the processions. This provides a good opportunity for the high officials to choose husbands for their unmarried daughters.\textsuperscript{26} In Song times, the practice of high officials choosing sons-in-law on this occasion was called “bangxia zhuxu” (catching a son-in-law from the examination winners’ list).\textsuperscript{27} “Catching” appropriately expresses the high officials’ attitude towards the examination winners. First it expresses the sense of urgency on the part of the high officials. They are as if in a race, competing with each other to catch the most worthy examination winners for their daughters. Second, they regard the examination winners as valuable objects whom they hunt down and capture. The reason why a high official is anxious to catch an examination winner for his daughter is that the examination winner has a bright future in his bureaucratic career. By marrying his daughter to a promising future bureaucrat, a high official not only

\textsuperscript{26} See Zhou Min 周密, \textit{Wulin jiushi} 武林舊事 (Zhibuzu zhai 知不足齋 edition), 9-11.

\textsuperscript{27} See Zhu Yu 朱彧, \textit{Pingzhou ketan} 萍州可談, (Siku zhenben 四庫珍本 edition), \textit{juan} 1, 26. Peng Cheng 彭乘, \textit{Moke
secures a prosperous life for his daughter, but also builds a solid marital relationship which helps to strengthen his political influence.

In time, the historical practice of "catching a son-in-law from the examination winners' list" became so embellished in the folk imagination that it became a legend in popular literature and art, particularly in drama. In the folk imagination, the male protagonist must be a first winner, not a common examination winner. Likewise, the female protagonist must be a prime minister's daughter, not the daughter of any high official. On the day of the parade, the prime minister's daughter stands above or beside a decorated tower on the street which her father has built for her beforehand. The climax of the legend is reached when she throws a silk ball or offers a silk whip to the first winner. After he accepts the silk ball or whip, a symbolic betrothal gift, he is to marry the girl. First Winner Zhang Xie is the first extant text which portrays the legendary custom.  

huixi 墨客揮犀 (Baihai 稗海 edition), juan 1, 5.

28. This legendary custom appears in many other plays and had many variations. One variation is exemplified by Qian Ji's 喬吉 (?-1345) Jingqian ji 金錢記. In this variety play, the new first winner already had a romantic relationship with the prime minister's daughter before he receives her silk whip. Another variation is exemplified by the story of Lü Mengzheng in which the prime minister's daughter throws her silk ball to a poor scholar who later becomes a first winner. The story of Lü Mengzheng has been written into a variety play (Lü Mengzheng fengxue poyao ji
It is worth noting that this earliest example of this legendary custom is anti-climatic. When Shenghua offers the silk whip to Zhang Xie in front of the decorated tower, he does not accept it, a reaction quite contrary to her expectations. The incident seems so scandalous that Shenghua dies because of it.

At the age of fifteen, Shenghua is not betrothed. Her mother, Lady Liu, urgently plans to choose a husband for her after the coming examinations. The reason why Shenghua’s husband must be chosen from among the examination winners is explained in the following dialogue between Shenghua and mother.

Lady Liu: In him we look for talent, learning and fame.
Shenghua: Never mind if he is of lowly origin.
Lady Liu: Many a red mansion has produced a starved beggar.
Together: Ministers are born into white cottages.

（外）止圖才學有佳名。
（後）不嫌貧寒事便成。
（外）無限朱門生餓殍。
（合）幾多白屋出公卿。⑨

In their value system, a man’s personal qualities are more important than his family status. His family status is

呂蒙正風雪破窯記 by Wang Shifu 王實甫), a southern-style play (Cailou ji 彩樓記 whose authorship is unknown) and a dramatic romance (Cailou ji 彩樓記 by Wang Ling 王棣). Lü Mengzheng is a historical figure who became the first winner in the examinations held in 977.

29. Zhang Xie zhuangyuan, scene 17, p. 94.
not important because it cannot determine his future prosperity. What is important is his talent and learning, with which he will have success in the examinations. His success in the examinations will win him fame and pave the way for a bright official career.

Shenghua and her mother believe that Shenghua’s husband must not be just any examination winner, but must be the first winner. There are two reasons for this belief. The first one is based on Shenghua’s personal qualities. She is beautiful and possesses literary talent. A talented man is an appropriate match for a beautiful woman. But it takes an exceptionally talented man to be a proper match for a beauty who also has talent.30 Thus Shenghua’s mother believes that only a first winner in the examinations can be a match for the talent and beauty of Shenghua.

The second reason is based on Shenghua’s family status. As Shenghua’s mother says, “Ours has been a family of high officials for generations. How can we build a marriage alliance with an ordinary person? 我家裏公候累代，小可底蒼生，

30. It seemed to be a common belief at that time that a woman should not be married to a man beneath her. Sometimes it was difficult for a truly exceptional woman to find an appropriate match. The famous New Confucian philosopher Cheng Hao 程頤 (1032-1085), for example, had a talented daughter. He tried but could not find a suitable husband for her before she died at twenty-five. See Patricia Ebrey, The Inner Quarters: Marriage and the Lives of Chinese Women in the Sung Period (Berkeley: University
Shenghua concurs with her mother; she explains to her father why she must have the first winner as her husband:

There are so many red and purple robes,  
But they cannot compare to the first winner’s green.  
Moreover, mine is such a powerful noble family,  
How can we usher him in if he is not the number one winner?”

What Shenghua and her mother look for in the first winner is mainly his fame. Since Shenghua’s father is the prime minister, a position superior to all the other officials’, she must marry the first winner whose fame is above all the other examination winners. Here Shenghua is revealed to be presumptuous, for she believes that her social status gives her the privilege to marry the first winner.

Shenghua’s presumptuous character comes from her position as the daughter of the prime minister. Being the daughter of the prime minister, she enjoys a life of privilege. She has even won the emperor’s favor. From time to time she is invited by the emperor to visit the palace and
she is permitted to adopt the palace style in dress and make-up.\textsuperscript{33} It is this privileged lifestyle that brings about her arrogance.

Shenghua's arrogance casts a negative light on her character. She is described as a woman who does not know anything about needlework.\textsuperscript{34} Since knowledge of needlework is usually associated with female virtues, her ignorance of needlework is probably a hint of her lack of womanly virtue.

Shenghua, the arrogant daughter of the prime minister, does not expect to meet a person who is even more arrogant. When she offers her silk whip to Zhang Xie, he refuses to accept it. When Zhang Xie is told it is the prime minister's daughter who proposes to him, he says, "I am seeking fame, not a wife. A marriage proposal does not please me. 求名我不在求妻，歡譯事心未喜。"\textsuperscript{35}

Zhang Xie turns down the proposal because he believes that, as the first winner, he will be promoted to the position of prime minister in a short time. As he later reflects on his success in the examinations, "My life's ambition is realized, and I am going to be promoted to be the prime minister. 已表平生丈夫志，身名端與居金鑾。"\textsuperscript{36}

Since he believes his fame as the first winner will

\textsuperscript{33} Scene 13, p. 74; scene 15, 81.

\textsuperscript{34} Scene 13, p. 74.

\textsuperscript{35} Scene 27, p. 135.
bring him quickly to a very high position, he becomes even more haughty. "Once my name is put on the golden list, I am like a priceless pearl. 一朝名字掛金榜，此身端若無價珠。"\(^{37}\)

Because of his faith in his own worth, he would rather bask in his success and leave his choice open than to make a hasty marriage. So he laughs and tells Shenghua, "There are many wutong trees for a flying phoenix to rest on. Why should it climb to a high branch? 翔鸞盡有梧桐樹，又何苦滯高枝。"\(^{38}\)

Zhang Xie seems to have been carried away by his success. He believes there are many high officials with whom he can make a marriage alliance; he prefers maintaining his options rather than hastily making a marriage alliance with the prime minister.

The reason why Zhang Xie turns down Shenghua's proposal is certainly not because he already has a wife. He tells Shenghua straight out that he is not married.\(^{39}\) He rejects her marital proposal out of arrogance, and his arrogance reveals his ignorance and naiveté.

After years of study, Zhang Xie possesses the learning that is necessary for him to succeed in the examinations. He knows how to write the examinations successfully, but he does not know how to manage his official career. He believes his

\(^{36}\) Scene 34, p. 159.
\(^{37}\) Scene 31, p. 150.
\(^{38}\) Scene 27, p. 135.
fame as the first winner will enable him to rise quickly to prominent position. This is true, but only to a certain degree. The politics of bureaucratic life requires the support of other high officials for success. This side of the story is told by Wang Deyong, though in a negative manner. After Zhang Xie refuses to accept Shenghua's silk whip, he has an interview with Wang Deyong. During the interview Wang Deyong again proposes the marriage to Zhang Xie, but his proposal is flatly turned down. After Zhang Xie leaves, Wang Deyong sadistically says, "You put on the green robe. The moment you leave the Donghua Gate, it will turn into a torn lotus leave. 才著綠衫，出東華門外，便是破荷葉。"  

Putting on a green robe signifies acquiring the status of an examination winner. But after he goes out of the metropolitan gate, that is, after he is assigned a post out of the capital, his status as the first winner will not seem so valuable. Wang Deyong's words point to the fact that success in the examinations is only one factor among many that determine the success of an official's career.

Zhang Xie's rejection of the marriage proposal appears


40. In Song times, a first winner could become a high minister within a decade. For example, the historical Lü Mengzheng was promoted to be the prime minister twelve years after he became the first winner. See Song shi, juan 265, 13:9145-9149.

41. Scene 27, p. 136.
to Wang Deyong as a gesture of contempt, who decides to take revenge on Zhang Xie. Wang Deyong prepares to obtain a post which is the immediate superior to Zhang Xie’s so that he will be able to control and punish Zhang Xie. Shenghua’s death confirms him in his plan of revenge.

Shenghua’s death is caused by the humiliation she feels after her marital proposal is rejected by Zhang Xie. As the daughter of the prime minister, she did not expect to be rejected by any one, even a first winner. For the first winner, after all, is merely a learned scholar. As she says, “It is only because he can read a few lines from a book that he despises others the moment he succeeds in the examinations. 它門道讀得數行書，始及第把人嫌棄。”

Shenghua falls seriously ill after the incident because she believes her reputation has been ruined. The offering of the silk whip is not merely an action in her private life; it is a social event witnessed by other officials and their families. The rejection is a public humiliation that is not tolerable to someone as arrogant as Shenghua. She is haunted by the idea that she has become a laughingstock. Her obsession is aptly rendered through the device of repetition and the use of chorus in the play.

After she recalls how she has been rejected by that handsome young man on the day of the parade, she sings in a

42. Scene 29. P. 146.
low voice, "I am being laughed at for being unable to marry a first winner. 被人笑嫁不得一狀元。" This is followed by the chorus which repeats the main part of the same line, "Being laughed at for being unable to marry a first winner. 被人笑嫁不得一狀元。"

Shenghua’s low voice suggests this is her subconscious thought. The chorus symbolizes the public opinion Shenghua fears so much. On the one hand, the chorus seems to confirm her fear by echoing her subconscious thought. On the other hand, the chorus reinforces the terror she feels by speaking her subconscious thought aloud.

The same pattern, that is, Shenghua’s speech in low voice followed by the chorus, is repeated three times. Each repetition follows lines in which first Lady Liu, then the family steward, and finally Wang Deyong tries in turn to dissuade Shenghua from worrying about the rejection. The repetition highlights Shenghua’s obsession and the futility of her parents’ persuasion.

The third part of the play is set mainly in the capital, with some scenes set on the journey. After she learns of Zhang Xie’s success in the examinations, Poor Lass goes to the capital to be reunited with him. When she finds him, he

43. Scene 32, p. 152.
refuses to acknowledge her as his wife and orders his doorkeeper to beat her out of his residence. She has to beg her way back to Wuji Mountain.

In this part of the play, Poor Lass attempts but fails to be reunited with Zhang Xie. This part of the plot is quite similar to the corresponding section of Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang. In both plays the female protagonist travels to the capital to look for her husband. In both plays the examination winner refuses to acknowledge his wife when she approaches him in the capital. Of Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang, we know nothing more than the outline of the plot since its script is lost. Therefore First Winner Zhang Xie provides us with the first full description of the female protagonist’s journey to the capital and her meeting with the first winner in the capital.

After Poor Lass sees Zhang Xie off, she does not receive any letter from him. It is from the Register of Examination Winners that she learns Zhang Xie has become the first winner. She decides to go to the capital to find him, “For fear he may accept someone’s silk whip or return to his hometown. 恐怕它自去接了他人之鞭，不然歸鄉里去。”

Although Zhang Xie neither accepts someone’s silk whip nor returns to his hometown, Poor Lass’s fear that he may

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44. Ibid.
45. Scene 30, p. 148.
desert her becomes a reality. Zhang Xie married Poor Lass because he believed he had to do so to get himself out of his predicament. At heart he never considers her to be an appropriate marital partner. His feeling of repugnance towards her is revealed even before he leaves her. When he grows enraged with her absence from the temple and gets ready to beat her, he says to himself, “If not for that accident, how could I bring myself near you. 自家不因災禍，誰肯近傍你毎。”

It is selfish calculation that motivates him to marry someone he regards beneath himself; his ego refuses to acknowledge the real motivation behind the marital union. To appease his ego, he tries to rationalize his action by twisting the truth and playing down his role in the marital union. Once he gets himself on his journey again, he begins to revise the story of his marriage. As he recalls his marriage on the road, he says to himself, “I did not expect Poor Lass would make me stay with her. 豈期貧女又留連。” In this revised story, it is Poor Lass instead of himself who actively seeks the marital union. After he arrives in the capital, he recalls the marriage again and explains to himself, “I was taken care of by Poor Lass and I had no choice but to marry her. 得它貧女顧，不免議姻親。”

46. Scene 20, p. 104.
47. Scene 22, p. 118.
48. Scene 24, p. 123.
revised version of his marriage story, he marries Poor Lass in order to repay her kindness. Therefore it is Poor Lass instead of himself who benefits from the marriage.

Sometimes he admits to himself the true motivation for the marriage, “I just wanted to get warm shelter and sufficient food, so a man of learning temporarily was degraded. 宿食圖溫飽，詩書暫務論。” Even as he does admit the truth, he tends to interpret his marriage as a humiliating experience. That is why he congratulates himself after he arrives in the capital by saying “It is fortunate that I got myself out of that place. 幸然脫此處。”

When Zhang Xie seeks help from Poor Lass, he promises to bring happiness and honor to her after he succeeds in the examinations. When he proposes to her, he says “I am a man of learning and once the opportunity comes, I’ll become a high minister. An immediate success in the examinations is better than staying at the temple. Think how nice it will be when I take you to my home!” He allures her with the prospect of going to his hometown as his wife. When he asks her to get the necessary traveling expenses for him, he tells her, “I wish to go, but when shall I fulfill my wish? I want to glorify my family, to honor myself. I also want to bring luck

49. Ibid.
50. Scene 24, p. 122.
51. Scene 14, p. 77.
to you, to get you an honorary title. "协今去也，何時遂此情？亦欲耀家庭，亦欲要身荣。亦欲顾你，顾你時來，大得一命。" Here he allures her with the prospect of being an official’s wife and an entitled lady.

His promises are merely the means by which he seeks to secure her assistance. He never intends to carry them out. After he leaves Poor Lass, he never tries to contact her again. He not only severs all connections with her domain, he also prepares to prevent her from entering his domain. After he succeeds in the examinations, he orders his porter not to let any villagers or women enter his residence.

When Poor Lass finds out his residence in the capital and confronts him, he tells her,

You are ugly and humble, coming from a family of poverty and low status. You have no knowledge of the proper sacrificial rites, so how can you be an appropriate wife? I am a noble and your name is Poor Lass. How dare you come to smear my reputation by falsely claiming to be my wife? "貌陋身卑，家貧世薄。不曉蘋蘩之禮，豈諧黃帯之婚。吾乃貴豪，女名貧女，敢來冒瀆，稱是我妻！"

In “Assistant Minister Man,” the male protagonist is worried about Miss Jiao’s possible attempts to reunite with him after he decides to desert her and marry Miss Zhu. The way he plans to deal with the problem is to “inform her of

52. Scene 18. pp. 96-97.
53. Scene 34, p. 159.
the principle and send her away 以理遣之." 55 Since Miss Jiao does not come to see him before her death, Assistant Minister Man does not have the opportunity to elaborate what the "principle" is. 56

In the above speech of Zhang Xie, the "principle" is explicitly stated. Zhang Xie denies the fact that Poor Lass is his wife, for he accuses her of "falsely claiming" to be his wife. But the main point of his argument is not about fact but about principle. According to his argument, the gap between himself and Poor Lass is so wide in terms of social status that it is not possible for them to be husband and wife. Here Zhang Xie's arrogance expresses itself as snobbishness. Of Poor Lass's qualities, which he says are unworthy of him, only one is a personal attribute: her lack of beauty. All the others refer to her social status.

One similarity between First Winner Zhang Xie and "First Winner Wang" is worth noting here. In "First Winner Wang," when Guiying sends her servant to see First Winner Wang in an attempt to be reunited with him, he not only refuses to accept the letter but also threatens to have the servant caned. In the play, Zhang Xie orders his doorkeeper to beat

55. Hong Mai, Yijian zhi, 4:1650.
56. Assistant Minister Man's "principle" can be inferred from the excuses he gives for deserting Miss Jiao, all about differences in social status. He believes her marketplace
Poor Lass out of his residence. In the short story, the male protagonist's action is "threatening" and the person who is threatened is the female protagonist's servant. In the play the actual beating takes place and the person who is beaten is the male protagonist's wife herself. Zhang Xie is a more cruel character than First Winner Wang.

When Zhang Xie is beaten up by a bandit, Poor Lass opens her door to him and lets him stay in her temple. It is owing to her kindness and help that he is saved from dying from cold and hunger and succeeds in the examinations. But when she meets him in the capital, he has her beaten up, an action inevitably associating himself with the bandit. He also closes his door to her, which makes a sharp contrast with her generous gesture when he comes to her temple. His ungrateful action is pointed out by Poor Lass after she is beaten out of his residence, "He is my husband, but he does not acknowledge me as his wife. The moment he sees me, he hurriedly closes his door. If I had closed my door to you at that time, You would not have had the opportunity to become an examination winner. "

Poor Lass's reaction to Zhang Xie's desertion shows two aspects of her character: endurance and submissiveness. After Zhang Xie closes his door to her, she is thrown into a family is inappropriate for his family of high officials.
predicament which is similar to Zhang Xie's when he is robbed of his traveling expenses. When she leaves for the capital she borrows money from Li Dagong and Li Dapo. When she finds Zhang Xie she has used up the money, which means she has difficulty getting food and shelter for herself. Unlike Zhang Xie who considers suicide in such a situation, she is not overcome by despair. She decides to go back to her temple, even though that means she has to beg all the way from the capital to Wuji Mountain.

Her submissiveness is determined by her humble social status. While she is begging in the capital to collect money for her journey back home, she sings about her predicament. Two lines in her song read, "I have suffered humiliation but I dare not complain, because I am humble. 忍辱不敢埋怨，薄賤。" As Zhang Xie's legally married wife, she could launch a suit against him for his desertion, or at least denounce him in public. But she does not, for the consciousness of social status not only governs Zhang Xie's behavior, it also governs her action. When she finally reaches home, she thinks about her marriage and says to herself, "I am ugly as well as poor. How can I marry a first winner? 奴家貌既丑，家既貧，如何招得狀元？" Controlled by the consciousness of social

58. Scene 37, p. 166.
status, Zhang Xie believes she is beneath him and she also begins to think she is not worthy of him. Because of this self-abasing thought, she decides not to tell Li Dagong and Li Dapo the humiliation she suffered from Zhang Xie. Instead she tells them she did not find Zhang Xie in the capital. Her fear of telling the truth seems to indicate that in her mind she has brought the humiliation on herself by trying to enter a domain that is high above her. Her decision to swallow the humiliation is also her way to keep her dignity.

In the fourth part of the play, the scene moves from the capital back to Wuji Mountain. There are two strands of action in this part. The first strand is Zhang Xie's journey to his post in Zizhou and his attempt to murder Poor Lass. The second concerns Wang Deyong's journey to his post in Zizhou and his adoption of Poor Lass.

By denying Poor Lass as his wife and beating her out of his residence, Zhang Xie proves to be a faithless husband who breaks his marital contract, and an ungrateful person who rewards kindness with cruelty. Egotistically he twists the truth and finds excuses to rationalize his actions. From his selfish and snobbish perspective, Poor Lass's visit to him in the capital shows that she does not have a sense of shame. For if she had a sense of shame, she would know that she was

60. Scene 39, p. 170.
unworthy of him and would not bring humiliation to herself by attempting to be reunited with him.\textsuperscript{61} Since she does not have a sense of shame, she comes to see him, which poses a threat to his reputation. After he drives her out of his residence, he thinks about the confrontation, saying, “After the examinations were over, she came to look for me. The palace court is full of red and purple robes. Were they to know it, they would say who that person is. 姑名了故來尋覓，都不道朱紫滿朝，還知後與阿誰?”\textsuperscript{62} He is worried that once his marriage with such a humble woman is known to other officials, his reputation will be ruined. Since he is anxious to keep his marriage a secret, he regards her uninvited visit as an offense to him. Thus when he plans to murder Poor Lass before he sets off on his journey to his post, he rationalizes his intended murder as a counterattack, saying “When you receive my blow, remember how you struck me. 吃拳須記打拳時。”\textsuperscript{63} This indicates that he takes the murder as a personal act of revenge. The real motivation for his murder, however, is not simply a counterattack. As long as Poor Lass exists, she remains his wife, which seems to him a potential threat to his domain. To eliminate any potential threat to his domain, he has to take a preemptive action to eliminate her domain.

\begin{enumerate}
\item Scene 35, p. 161.
\item Scene 36, p. 165.
\item Scene 36, p. 165.
\end{enumerate}
Thus when he passes Wuji Mountain on his journey to his post, he looks for her and tells himself, "If I cut the grass this time without pulling up the roots, I’m afraid they will bud and grow up again next spring. 這回鐮草不除根，惟恐萌芽春再發。"

In comparison with the male protagonist in previous stories, Zhang Xie is shown to be capable of considerable cruelty. In both “First Winner Wang” and “Assistant Minister Man,” the male protagonist’s betrayal leads to the death of the female protagonist. However in both cases, the male protagonist’s intention is to sever connections with, but not to eliminate, the female protagonist’s domain. Zhang Xie has successfully severed connections with Poor Lass’s domain and Poor Lass, because of her self-abasing thinking, has no intention to contact him again. Yet he is not satisfied when their two domains separate. Ever since she leaves him in the capital, he is obsessed with the idea of murder. Thus when he has the opportunity to pass Wuji Mountain, he purposefully seeks her out and attempts to kill her. While he fails in his plan to kill her, he wounds her in one arm with his sword.

If Zhang Xie succeeded in his murder, then First Winner Zhang Xie would become another version of Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang, in which the story would end in revenge or

64. Scene 40, p. 174.
retribution. That he fails to kill Poor Lass in the play creates an opportunity for Wang Deyong to take her into his domain, thus turning the plot in another direction.

After Shenghua dies, Wang Deyong gets himself a post in Zizhou so that he will be able to take revenge on Zhang Xie. When he passes Wuji Mountain on his journey to his post, he takes a rest at the temple, where he meets Poor Lass. Wang Deyong and Lady Liu feel lonely after Shenghua's death and Poor Lass happens to look like Shenghua, so they decide to adopt Poor Lass as their daughter.

When Wang Deyong tells her his intention to adopt her, he promises to get medical treatment for her injured arm and in future, marry her to an official. Poor Lass accepts his proposal because it concurs with her long time wish to have a better life. As has been revealed in the first part of the play, Poor Lass is not satisfied with her life in the temple and "thinks of a different life style." That is why she is attracted by Zhang Xie's promises to marry her and take her as his wife to his hometown.

Wang Deyong's adoption of Poor Lass marks a turning point in the plot of the play. Before this turning point,

65. Some scholars believe it is quite probable that the present edition of First Winner Zhang Xie is a revised version of the original play. They assume the original version is similar to Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang. See Jin Ningfen, Nanxi yanjiu bianqian, 128-130.

there are two attempts to merge domains but both fail. Neither Poor Lass’s nor Wang Deyong’s attempt to join their domains with Zhang Xie’s are successful. Now for the first time in this play, two domains are combined into one.

The most significant characteristic in the merging of these two domains is that it is the powerful that incorporates the powerless into his domain. Wang Deyong’s is the domain of the powerful and of high social status; Poor Lass’s is the domain of the powerless and of low social status. Wang Deyong’s motivation for adoption is determined by a lack in his domain: he and his wife lack a daughter to please them and relieve them of their loneliness. They think Poor Lass is a suitable candidate for adoption because they perceive a particular value in her: her resemblance to their daughter enables her to fill the vacancy left by the death of Shenghua. Wang Deyong’s domain, because of its privileged social status, creates expectations for a better life on the part of Poor Lass and prompts her acceptance of their proposal of adoption. The merging of the two domains shows, on the one hand, that it is easy for the socially higher domain to obtain what it lacks from a socially lower domain. On the other hand, it shows that members of a socially lower domain yearn for the membership in a socially higher domain. Through the absorption of the socially lower domain into the higher domain, social hierarchy is confirmed rather than negated in the play.
The adoption is also a turning point in Poor Lass’s fortune. When she married Zhang Xie, she expected to enter a socially higher domain. If Zhang Xie was a faithful husband, she would have been a member of that higher domain already. But he has proven to be a snob who refuses to accept her into his domain. After she is adopted by Wang Deyong, she enters a socially higher domain that has been denied her by Zhang Xie. Her identity also undergoes a radical change. From a poor laborer she becomes a high official’s daughter.

In the fifth part of the play, the scene shifts to Zizhou. When Zhang Xie pays a welcoming visit to his boss, Wang Deyong, he is not granted an interview. Zhang Xie knows Wang Deyong’s resentment of him will create difficulties for his career, so he asks General Tan to mediate between him and Wang Deyong. General Tan tells him that Wang Deyong has another daughter to whom he should make a marriage proposal. Zhang Xie accepts General Tan’s suggestion and Wang Deyong agrees to the proposal. In this way Zhang Xie is reunited with Poor Lass.

Wang Deyong gets a post in Zizhou with the aim of taking revenge on Zhang Xie. His idea of revenge is to show Zhang Xie that he, as the prefect, has the power to manipulate Zhang Xie. He believes that Zhang Xie has humiliated him because Zhang Xie does not understand the importance of being related to powerful figures. After he turns down Zhang Xie’s
request for an interview, he tells his family that the aim of his action is to “Force him to contemplate it for thousands of times, (chorus) until he realizes how important to win the favor of a man of power. 直待勞心千百度，（合）那時方識貴人面。” 67 When Zhang Xie, through General Tan, expresses remorse for his past deed and intends to make up for his error by marrying Wang Deyong’s adopted daughter, Wang Deyong agrees to the marital proposal. His change of attitude towards Zhang Xie is determined by his belief that he has succeeded in making Zhang Xie submit to his power. His sense of triumph displays itself when he questions Zhang Xie on the wedding, “I remember last year you refused to accept the silk whip. Why today do you become my relation by marriage? 記年時，不接那鞭，怎知今日，又還為姻眷。” 68 Zhang Xie has brought a disgrace to Wang Deyong when he rejects the silk whip offered by Shenghua. Now by marrying Wang’s adopted daughter, Zhang Xie clears Wang Deyong of that disgrace. The marriage is Zhang Xie’s gesture to redress a wrong he has done to Wang Deyong and to bow to Wang Deyong’s power. The marriage shows that the power of a high official in the end overcomes the ego of a first winner.

When Wang Deyong refuses to grant an interview with Zhang Xie, a crisis occurs in the domain of Zhang Xie’s

67. Scene 49, p. 204.
68. Scene 53, p. 214.
public life. His promising official career is threatened and the threat comes from an event in his private life in the past. As he learns during his visit to Wang Deyong, his refusal to accept Shenghua’s silk whip has lead to her death, which in turn leads to Wang Deyong’s hostility towards him. There is no hope for him to have a successful official career since Wang Deyong is his boss and is determined to take revenge on him. He feels distressed and regrets his rejection of the silk whip.

In order to solve the crisis in his official career, Zhang Xie first seeks help from his public domain. He asks General Tan, a colleague, to mediate between him and Wang Deyong. Ironically the way to solve the crisis lies in his private life. As General Tan suggests, since Wang Deyong has another daughter, Zhang Xie can propose to her and marry her. Eager to appease Wang Deyong’s anger, Zhang Xie accepts the suggestion.

Zhang Xie’s regret for his rejection of Shenghua’s silk whip and acceptance of General Tan’s suggestion signal a change in his thought. When he rejected Shenghua’s marital proposal, he had just become a first winner. His rejection of a marital relationship with the prime minister is based on his arrogance as a first winner and his ignorance of the politics of bureaucratic life. After he assumes office and meets Wang Deyong again, the cold treatment he receives from Wang Deyong teaches him a lesson. That Wang Deyong can get
himself posted as Zhang Xie’s superior in office shows Zhang Xie what a man of power can do in the bureaucratic circle. Wang Deyong’s cold treatment shows him that the success of his official career depends on his relationship with the powerful. These new perceptions transform Zhang Xie from a first winner to a career official. His arrogance as a first winner is now replaced by the pragmatic considerations of a bureaucrat. From this perspective Zhang Xie’s story can be read as a growth story about how an examination winner matures into an official. From an examination winner who is ignorant of bureaucratic life he grows into an official who recognizes the importance of power.

Because of the change in his thought, his attitude towards Wang Deyong changes. During the wedding, he apologizes to Wang Deyong, saying, “I insulted you, and I ask you for forgiveness.” But his attitude towards Poor Lass does not change. When on the wedding day Poor Lass reveals her identity as his deserted wife and tells all the present how he abused her, he does not offer his apology. His reply to her charges reads both like a confession and like a self-defense.

It was never my intention to marry you.
But in my predicament, I had no choice.
It was freezing winter and I had no relatives nearby,
I married you as circumstances dictated.

69. Scene 53, p. 214.
張協本意無心娶你，
在窮途身不由己。
況天寒舉目又無親，
亂與伊家相娶。 70

Zhang Xie is reunited with Poor Lass not because his idea of marriage has changed. It is because her social status has changed. In this sense, Zhang Xie is not reunited with his wife, he is marrying Wang Deyong’s adopted daughter. His first marriage was not worth maintaining because Poor Lass does not have the appropriate social status. He must marry her under a new identity.

Since Zhang Xie proves to be a faithless and cruel person, Poor Lass does not seem to feel obligated to be loyal to him. When Wang Deyong proposes to adopt Poor Lass, he allures her with the prospect of being married to an official. She accepts his proposal without telling him that she already has a husband, an indication that she is not against such a marital arrangement in future. After they arrive in Zizhou, Wang Deyong repeats his promise, saying, “Don’t worry, my child. Now I am the prefect of Zizhou, but I’ll go back to the capital in two years. I’ll select an appropriate person for you to marry and treat you as my own child. 孩兒放心！亞爹今判粵州一郡，兩年還依舊入朝。有好姻緣與你選一個，自當我孩兒面。” 71 To which Poor Lass replies, “I’m

70. Scene 53, p. 215.

71. Scene 47, p. 196.
afraid I won't have such good luck. 只怕奴家福分微。" 72 Her answer is acquiescence expressed in modest terms. It indicates that she has no intention to be reunited with Zhang Xie.

When Wang Deyong and Lady Liu accept Zhang Xie's marital proposal, they ask Poor Lass her opinion about the marital arrangement. She is not against it, and her thought is revealed in the following lines,

Thank you for the arrangement.  
The first winner is destined to be reunited with me.  
I bow deeply to you for your love and care.  
In former life I already married him.

感激提攜謝英賢，
狀元注定與奴囘圓。
深拜蒙愛憐，
前世已曾成姻眷。 73

Poor Lass's attitude towards her reunion with Zhang Xie is surprising to a modern audience. Her belief is determined by the notion of "predestination." This belief is also shared by other characters in the play. When on the wedding day Poor Lass tells how Zhang Xie abused her, the other characters tell her in a chorus,

Since you were husband and wife at that time,  
Today it is Heaven who orders you be reunited.  
Do not speak as if  
Today's marriage is inappropriate.

72. Ibid.  
The reunion between Poor Lass and Zhang Xie is the most significant event in *First Winner Zhang Xie*. Its significance can be perceived on both the textual and the intertextual level. On the textual level, it is the denouement of the plot and all the previous actions can be interpreted retrospectively as preparations for this event. Thus Poor Lass’s survival of the murder and her adoption can both be described as preconditions for the reunion. On the intertextual level, the reunion is what distinguishes *First Winner Zhang Xie* from previous works. It marks the transformation of the archetypal story from the model of retribution to a new model, the model of reunion.

The plot of *First Winner Zhang Xie* can be roughly divided into two blocks, with Zhang Xie’s attempted murder of Poor Lass as the dividing line. The first block concerns Zhang Xie’s marriage with Poor Lass, his success in the examinations, and his desertion of Poor Lass. Within the first block, the dynamics of the plot comes mainly from changes in Zhang Xie’s domain. The second block concerns Poor Lass’s survival of the attempted murder, her adoption by Wang

Deyong and her reunion with Zhang Xie. Within the second block, the plot is mainly propelled by changes in Poor Lass's domain. Our foregoing discussion has revealed many similarities between *First Winner Zhang Xie* and previous works. These similarities indicate that the first block of the plot in *First Winner Zhang Xie* is derived from the earliest model of the archetypal story. What is new in *First Winner Zhang Xie* lies its second block. However, as we shall see in our following discussion, the second block of the plot seems also to be derived from a previous model. This previous model is embodied in a Tang tale, "Dinghun dian 定婚店" (*The Inn of Betrothal*).

"The Inn of Betrothal" is recorded in *Xu Xuanguai lu 玄怪録* (*A Continuation of the Accounts of Mysteries and Anomalies*), a collection of classical-language tales by Li Fuyan 李復言 (fl. 830-840). This tale is included in *Taiping guangji 太平廣記* (*The Grand Compendium of the Taiping Reign*), a common source book for the professional story-tellers and playwrights of the Song era. Thus it is possible that the author of *First Winner Zhang Xie* had some knowledge of this tale.

75. The identity of Li Fuyan is still a disputed issue. See Cheng Yizhong 程毅中, *Tangdai xiaoshuo shihua 唐代小說史話* (Beijing: Wenhua tishu chubanshe, 1990), 174-176. The collection is so named because it is written as a sequel to *Xuanguai lu 玄怪録* (*Accounts of Mysteries and
"The Inn of Betrothal" is offered as a tale of enlightenment. We can divide the story into three parts.

In the first part of the story, the male protagonist steps into a supernatural domain and acquires supernatural knowledge, the notion of "predestination."

The story begins when Wei Gu stops at an inn south of Songcheng on his way to Qinghe in 807. Because he has been orphaned early, he is anxious to find a mate so that he will be able to continue the family line with many offspring. He has tried to find one for the last ten years but has never been successful. One of the guests at the inn mentions the daughter of Pan Fang, the former magistrate of Qinghe, as a possible match. An arrangement is made for Wei Gu to meet the matchmaker early the next morning in front of a nearby temple. Wei Gu is so eager for a wife that he starts out very early the next morning. The moon is still bright when he arrives, and he sees an old man sitting on the steps, looking at a book by the light of the moon. Wei Gu takes a look at the book, but to his surprise he cannot read the writing. He tells the old man that he can read virtually all sorts of script, including Sanskrit, but cannot decipher his book. The old man tells him that the book is written in the script of the underworld, so it is natural that he cannot read it. Wei Gu is delighted to learn that the old man is an official of Anomalies) by Niu Sengru 朱僧儒 (779-848).
the underworld who is in charge of marriage registers. He takes the opportunity to ask the old man to tell him whether his current negotiations will be successful. The old man tells him not yet, explaining, “If the destinies do not match, you wouldn’t be successful even if you were to take off your cap and gown and ask for the hand of a gambler’s or a butcher’s daughter. How much more so in the case of a Provincial Adjutant [i.e., the magistrate of Songcheng]? Your wife is just three years old. When she is seventeen she will join you. 命苟未合，雖簡衣纖而求屠博，尚不可得，況郡佐乎？君之婦，適三歲矣。年十七，當入君門。” When Wei Gu asks the old man what is inside his bag, the old man says it is red string “to bind the feet of husband and wife.” At birth I use it to tie them together. Though their families be enemies, though they be separated by the gulf between wealth and poverty, or even stationed at opposite corners of the empire -- even in states as different as Wu and Chu; once bound with this string, they cannot avoid each other. Your foot has already been tied to

76. “Yuexia laoren” (the old man in the moonlight) will become an allusion referring to a matchmaker.


78. “Chi sheng 赤繩” (red string) will become an allusion to predestined marriage.
hers. What good will courting others do? 以系夫妻之足。及至生，
则潜用相系，独仇敌之家，貴賤懸隔，天涯從宦，吳楚異鄉。此繩一系，終
不可逭。君之腳，已系于彼矣。他求何益？” 79 When Wei Gu asks
whether he can see his future wife, the old man leads him to
the market place north of the inn. There they see an old one-
eyed woman selling vegetables. Pointing to the three year old
girl carried by the old woman, the old man tells Wei Gu,
“That is your wife. 此君之妻也。” 80 Wei Gu is enraged and asks
whether he can kill her. The old man says, “She is destined
to live on an endowment from heaven. Because of her son she
will enjoy the position of a titled lady. How can you kill
her? 此人命當食天祿，因子而食邑，庸可煞乎?” 81 Then he
disappears.

In the second part of the story, the male protagonist
does not believe in the supernatural knowledge and tries to
act against it. Wei Gu curses the old man after he disappears
and says to himself, “I’m the scion of a great house and will
certainly take a proper wife. If I can’t have a proper
marriage, then at least I’ll take a pretty and accomplished

79. Wang Pijiang, Tangren xiaoshuo, 268-269. The
English translation is Douglas Wilkerson’s, in Classical
Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic, ibid.

80. Wang Pijiang, Tangren xiaoshuo, 269. The English
translation is Douglas Wilkerson’s, in Classical Chinese
Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic, ibid.
singing girl, or an outstanding beauty. How can I marry the lowly daughter of this old one-eyed woman? 舍士大夫之家，娶婦必敵，苟不能娶，即聲伎之美者，或援立之，奈何婚眇嫗之陋女？”

Unwilling to accept his fate, he sends his servant to kill the little girl. The servant stabs the baby between her eyebrows. Assuming the baby has been killed, Wei Gu and his servant flee the place.

In the third part of the story, the male protagonist’s own experience proves the supernatural knowledge to be truth and he is enlightened.

After the incident in Songcheng, Wei Gu fails in his many attempts to find a wife. Fourteen years later he becomes the Administrative Adjutant of Xiangzhou. The governor, Wang Tai, is impressed with his competence and marries his daughter to him. She is about sixteen or seventeen and very beautiful, to the great satisfaction of Wei Gu. But she fixes a beauty mark between her eyebrows and never takes it off. Wei Gu is puzzled and presses her for an explanation. It turns out that she is the girl he tried to murder. Her father used to be the magistrate of Songcheng and died in office when she was a baby. After her mother and brother died, she

81. Ibid.

was taken care of by her wet nurse, who sold vegetables for a living. About seven or eight years before Wei Gu meets her, her uncle took up office in Lulong and she moved in with him. Then her uncle marries her to Wei Gu as his daughter.

After Wei Gu learns his wife’s background, he tells her the full story, remarking “It is strange. It is fate. 奇也，命也。” What is interesting is the reaction of his wife. After she learns of his intended murder, she does not develop any animosity towards him, but instead “they treat each other with greater respect than before. 相敬逾極。” This implies that she also accepts the idea of “fate” and “predestined marriage.”

At the end of the tale, what the old man said all comes true. She bears a son who later becomes a Grand Warden owing to whom she was enfoeffed as Dowager Lady of Taiyuan. The narrator summarizes the theme of the story as follows, “Thus we know that our secret fate is fixed and cannot be changed. 乃知陰騫之定，不可變也。”

The whole point of the story is to advocate the notion of “predestination.” Specifically it shows how marriage is

83. Wang Pijiang, 270. The English translation is Douglas Wilkerson’s, in Classical Chinese Tales of the Supernatural and the Fantastic, ibid.

84. Wang Pijiang, Tangren xiaoshuo, 270.

85. Ibid.
predestined. The message of the story is so clear that later writers often refer to it when they want to express the notion of "predestined marriage." Thus, for example, "chisheng" (red string) would become an allusion to the predetermined nature of marriage. The story would become so familiar to the public that "hongxian" (紅線,) the vernacular phrase for "chisheng," becomes a cliché in everyday speech.

Although the story is offered as a tale of enlightenment, it can be interpreted from another perspective. Underneath the apparent didactic message of "predestined marriage," there is a cultural subtext in operation. The decoding of this cultural subtext can be accomplished by an intertextual reading between this story and First Winner Zhang Xie.

There are similarities between this story and the second block of the plot in First Winner Zhang Xie. In each of the two works, the male protagonist attempts to murder the female protagonist because her social status is so low in comparison with his. Each of the two female protagonists survives the attempted murder. Each of the two male protagonists ends up marrying the daughter of an official who is his immediate superior in office. Moreover, each of them marries a woman who is under a false identity and who turns out to be the one he intended to murder.

The similarities between the two works indicate that, just as in First Winner Zhang Xie, the cultural subtext in
"The Inn of Betrothal" speaks about social status in marriage. Because the female protagonist lives in a socially lower domain than the male protagonist, she is not worthy of being his mate. She has to enter another domain and raise her social status before she is considered a suitable match for the male protagonist. Thus underneath the supernatural notion of predestined marriage lies the truth of marriage between social equals (mengdang huidui). "Predestined marriage" and "marriage between social equals" are synonyms in these two works: the former being a religious version of the latter. In both works, the notion of "predestined marriage" is presented as a message issued from a supernatural domain. In First Winner Zhang Xie, it is the god in Poor Lass’s temple who tells her that her marriage with Zhang Xie is "predestined marriage." In "The Inn of Betrothal," it is the old man in the moonlight who foretells Wei Gu’s future marriage. The supernatural domain exists in order to guarantee the truth of the message.

The above discussion indicates that the second block of the plot in First Winner Zhang Xie is probably derived from the model embodied in "The Inn of Betrothal." It is tempting to suggest that First Winner Zhang Xie is composed through the combination of two models: the model embodied in "First Winner Wang" and the model embodied in "The Inn of Betrothal."
The model embodied in "First Winner Wang" is expressed in the following five-part structure.

1. A marital contract binds the two domains of the protagonists (The male protagonist has a marital contract with the female protagonist).

2. A radical change takes place in the male protagonist's domain (He succeeds in the examinations).

3. The male protagonist severs connections with the female protagonist's domain (He breaks the marital contract).

4. The female protagonist's domain is eliminated (She dies because of his desertion).

5. The male protagonist's domain is eliminated (Her ghost takes revenge on him and he dies).

The model embodied in "The Inn of Betrothal" is expressed in the following four-part structure.

1. The male protagonist learns that a marital contract will bind his domain and the female protagonist's domain (The male protagonist is destined to have a marital contract with the female protagonist).

2. The male protagonist tries but fails to eliminate the female protagonist's domain (He tries to void the marital contract by murder).

3. A radical change takes place in the female protagonist's domain (She is taken into a socially higher
4. The male protagonist’s domain is bound to the female protagonist’s domain by a marital contract (The marital contract is realized).

The model embodied in *First Winner Zhang Xie* is expressed in the following six-part structure.

1. A marital contract binds the two domains of the protagonists (The male protagonist has a marital contract with the female protagonist).

2. A radical change takes place in the male protagonist’s domain (He succeeds in the examinations).

3. The male protagonist severs connections with the female protagonist’s domain (He breaks the marital contract).

4. The male protagonist tries but fails to eliminate the female protagonist’s domain (He tries to void the marital contract by murder).

5. A radical change takes place in the female protagonist’s domain (She is taken into a socially higher domain).

6. For the second time a marital contract binds the two domains of the protagonists (The marital contract is renewed).

A comparison of the structures of the above three works reveals that the first three parts of *First Winner Zhang Xie*
resemble the first three parts of "First Winner Wang" whereas its last three parts resemble the last three parts of "The Inn of Betrothal." If we call the first three parts of First Winner Zhang Xie "the first block" and its last three parts "the second block," we may say that each of the two blocks is derived from a previous model.

Through the derivation of its first block from "First Winner Wang," First Winner Zhang Xie tells a story of the unfaithful scholar. It is this derivation that makes the play a variation of the archetypal story. By eliminating the last two parts of "First Winner Wang," First Winner Zhang Xie deviates from the earliest model of revenge and retribution and avoids being a repetition of the previous model.

The second block of First Winner Zhang Xie resembles the model embodied in "The Inn of Betrothal" so much that we may reasonably propose that it is derived from that model. The major difference between the two works lies in their first parts. In the first part of First Winner Zhang Xie, the marital contract is expressed as an actual marriage, whereas in "The Inn of Betrothal" it is merely a potential contract, although a predestined one. Since the marital contract, whether actual or potential, leads to an attempted murder, the difference in the first parts of the two works is not as great as it appears.86

86. Some details in the two works are also similar.
Rain on the Xiaoxiang

Rain on the Xiaoxiang is a variety play written by Yang Xianzhi 楊顯之. He was a contemporary of the most famous Yuan playwright, Guan Hanqing 關漢卿, with whom he is said to have discussed dramatic art. He was nicknamed "Yang Buding 楊補釘" (Script Doctor Yang) which indicates he was a good craftsman of dramaturgy. Of the eight plays he wrote, only Rain on the Xiaoxiang and Kuhan ting 酷寒亭 (Bitter Cold

For example, each of the two female protagonists is said to be born into a domain that is socially higher than the one she is in when the male protagonist first meets her. Poor Lass is born into a rich family and Wei Gu's wife into an official's family.


The complete title of the play is Linjiang yi xiaoxiang yeyu 臨江驛 潇湘 夜雨 (Chilly Night Rain at the Riverside Posthouse) in the Guquzhai edition, or Linjiang yi xiaoxiang qiuyeyu 臨江驛 潇湘 秋夜雨 (Chilly Autumn Night Rain on the Riverside Posthouse) in the Yuanquxuan edition. It is usually shortened as Xiaoxiang ye yu 潇湘 夜雨 (Chilly Night Rain) or Xiaoxiang yu 潇湘 雨 (Chilly Rain). Rain on the Xiaoxiang is a literal translation of the shortest form of the title Xiaoxiang yu 潇湘 雨 (Chilly Rain).
Pavilion) have survived. Little is known for certain about his life. Like Guan Hanqing, he spent his early life in Dadu (today’s Beijing), the capital of the Yuan dynasty and center of the theatrical life at that time. Like many of the famous Dadu playwrights, he probably moved to the south after the southern Song dynasty was eliminated by the Mongols in 1279. His two extant plays were very likely both written after he moved to the south. 88

Rain on Xiaoxiang was most likely influenced by the southern-style plays dealing with the story of the unfaithful scholar. In the play an allusion is made to Zhao Zhennü, which indicates that the author had some knowledge of the story, if not the play, of Zhao Zhennü and Cai Erlang. 89 Moreover, the story of Rain on Xiaoxiang is unique in the Yuan variety plays in that it is the only example which deals with the story of the faithless scholar. Since this type of story dominates the southern-style play, it is likely Yang Xianzhi, if he indeed moved to the south after 1279, was influenced by this dominant theme.

It is also possible that Rain on the Xiaoxiang was influenced by First Winner Zhang Xie. Its date of composition makes this assumption plausible. Internal evidence suggests

88. See Li Guoping 李國平, Yuan zaju fazhan shi 元雜劇發展史 (Taipei: Wenjin chubanshe, 1993) 250, 272, 353.
it was written after 1292.\textsuperscript{90} Thus it was written later than First Winner Zhang Xie, whose date of composition was between 1235 and 1279. Thus, Yang Xianzhi would have had the opportunity to familiarize himself with the southern-style play.

The action of \textit{Rain on the Xiaoxiang} is set in the Northern Song dynasty. This can be inferred from Zhang Tianjue, the female protagonist’s father in the play, who is a historical figure living in the Northern Song era.\textsuperscript{91}

\textit{Rain on the Xiaoxiang} consists of four acts and a "wedge."\textsuperscript{92} It can be divided into four parts.

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90. In Act Three of the play, Zhang Tianjue is said to be a “suzheng lianfangshi 蘇政廉訪使” (Legal Inspector) in the Guquzhai edition or a “tixing lianfangshi 提刑廉訪使” in the Yuanquxuan edition. The same position had been known as “tixing anchashi 提刑按察使” before 1292. In 1292 the Yuan court changed its title to “suzheng lianfangshi,” which suggests the play could not be written earlier than 1292. See \textit{Yuanshi 元史} (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1976), juan 86, 5:2180–2181.

91. See his biography in \textit{Songshi, juan} 351, 16:11095–11098.

92. The standard format of a variety play is four acts plus a "wedge." A "wedge" (xiezi 楔子) is a short act that can be inserted (thus the name "wedge") between the other main acts as a "transitional act," or placed at the beginning of the play as a "prologue." In \textit{Rain on the Xiaoxiang}, the "wedge" is used as a prologue which deals with Cuiluan’s separation from her father and her adoption
In the first part of the play, there are three strands of action: Cuiluan’s separation from her father, her adoption by Cui Wenyuan, and her marriage with Cui Tong.

The first strand of action takes place at a port by the Huai River. Zhang Tianjue, the Grand Councilor at the Song court, is demoted and sent to live in Jiangzhou. His wife has died years ago and he has only one daughter, Cuiluan, who travels with him. When they cross the Huai River, their boat is overturned in the wind. He is saved but cannot find his daughter. Since there is a deadline for him to arrive in Jiangzhou, he has to continue on and leave the port.

The second strand of action takes place near the port. When Zhang Cuiluan is saved from the river, she cannot find her father. She meets a local fisherman, Cui Wenyuan, who would like to adopt her as his daughter. Cuiluan agrees and Cui Wenyuan takes her to his home.

In the above two strands of action, the most important thing is Cuiluan’s crossing of domains: she leaves Zhang Tianjue’s domain and enters Cui Wenyuan’s domain. Consequently her identity undergoes a significant change: from a high official’s daughter she has become a fisherman’s daughter. Her change of identity has significant implications for her fortune and for the development of the plot.

by Cui Wenyuan.
The third strand of action takes place in Cui Wenyuan’s home. Cui Tong is Cui Wenyuan’s nephew. On his way to the capital to take the examinations, he pays a visit to his uncle. Cui Wenyuan wants to marry Cuiluan to his nephew, so he introduces Cuiluan as his adopted daughter. Cuiluan and Cui Tong like each other and immediately get married. Cui Tong leaves Cuiluan and continues his journey to the capital.

If we compare this part of the play with the corresponding sections in previous texts, we shall find there are two major differences. One major difference is the lack of the credit-debt relationship between the male and female protagonist in *Rain on the Xiaoxiang*. In each of the previous texts, whether “First Winner Wang,” “Assistant Minster Man” or *First Winner Zhang Xie*, the male protagonist is in debt to the female protagonist and the motif of “unrequited favor” is quite obvious in the male protagonist’s desertion of the female protagonist. In this play Cui Tong merely enters into a marital contract with Cuiluan, but he is in no way in debt to her. Therefore the motif of “unrequited favor” does not enter into this play as one of the moral blots on the male protagonist.

Another major difference between *Rain on the Xiaoxiang* and previous texts is the identity change the female protagonist undergoes. The function of the identity change in this part of the play is to create an opportunity for the female protagonist to meet and marry the male protagonist.
Besides this local function, the motif of identity change had multiple global functions which will be discussed later. The most important aspect of this motif is the fact that Cuiluan marries under a false identity, as a fisherman’s adopted daughter.

In the second part of the play, the action takes place in the examination hall in the capital. After Cui Tong becomes the first winner in the examinations, Zhao Qian, the chief examiner, proposes to marry his daughter to him. Cui Tong lies about his marital status and marries Zhao Qian’s daughter. He is assigned as the magistrate of Qinchuan County and takes his new wife with him to his post.

Cui Tong betrays his marital oath to Cuiluan on the pretext of her ambiguous identity, “That girl at my uncle’s home is not his own daughter. Who knows where he got her from? What do I want to keep her for? 我伯父家那個女子又不是親養的，知他那里討來的。我要做什麼?" The real reason for Cui Tong’s betrayal is Cuiluan’s apparently low social status as a fisherman’s daughter. As Cui Tong will confess later when he realizes Cuiluan is the daughter of a high official, “If I had known she was the Grand Inspector’s daughter, I would have taken her as my wife. 我早知道是廉訪使大人的小姐，認他作

His betrayal of Cuiluan shows his true color as a social climber, and his confession further exposes him as an opportunist.

Cui Tong decides to marry Chief Examiner Zhao’s daughter because he is attracted by the high social status of her family. He sees in the marriage a good opportunity to build a social network which will pave the road for his career. Thus he determines, “I’d rather cheat the gods [that is, betray the marital oath] than miss this opportunity.”

Cui Tong’s decision to desert Cuiluan is based on his ignorance of her real identity, the revelation of which will cause him regret. His decision also breaches the marital code, for which he must be punished.

Like the male protagonist in previous texts, Cui Tong decides to desert his wife because of her low social status. The most comparable case is that of Assistant Minister Man. Both Assistant Minister Man and Cui Tong decide to desert their wives when they are offered marital proposals from families of high social status.

But there is also a big difference between Assistant Minister Man and Cui Tong. Assistant Minister Man is very
reluctant at first to accept the new marital proposal. It is only under family pressure and with a sudden change of heart that he decides to desert his wife. Cui Tong, unlike Assistant Minister Man, embraces the marital proposal and jumps at the opportunity. When the marital proposal comes to him, it is in the form of a question and an option. Chief Examiner Zhao asks Cui Tong whether he is married and through his attendant tells him, “If he is married, I’ll send him to Qinchuan to be the County Magistrate; If he is not married, I have a one hundred and eight year old daughter who may marry him. 若有婚，著他秦川做知縣去。若無婚，我家中有一百八歲小姐與他為妻。”96 Cui Tong decides to desert his wife under no pressure and with no hesitation.

The difference between Assistant Minister Man and Cui Tong can be explained in both emotional and moral terms. In terms of emotion, Assistant Minister Man has a romantic relationship with Miss Jiao before they get married and they live happily together for two years as a couple. He is emotionally attached to her when he decides to betray her. Morally, he is grateful to his wife’s family because his success in his official career owes much to their financial

可瞞昧神祗，不可坐失機會。”Yuanquxuan edition, 787.

96. Guquzhai edition, 7A; Yuanquxuan edition, 787. The line “one hundred and eight year old daughter” sounds funny particularly when it is spoken by a high official. But notice that Chief Examiner Zhao is cast in the comic role of “jing 淨.”
support, and he feels a moral burden when he decides to desert her. Cui Tong, unlike Assistant Minister Man, does not have any emotional attachment to Cuiluan since he leaves her for the capital immediately after they get married. Neither does his success in his official career owe anything to the support of Cuiluan. What bonds him and Cuiluan is only a marital contract and thus it is with greater ease that he decides to cancel that contract.

In the third part of the play, the action takes place in Cui Tong’s mansion in Qinchuan County. Three years after Cui Tong has left Cuiluan to go to the capital, Cuiluan learns that he has been posted in Qinchuan County as the magistrate. Cui Wenyuan instructs Cuiluan to go to Qinchuan County to be reunited with Cui Tong. Cui Wenyuan himself will also come soon to join them. When Cuiluan arrives at Cui Tong’s mansion, she finds that he has another wife, Miss Zhao. Cui Tong refuses to acknowledge Cuiluan as his wife and falsely accuses her as his family’s slave who has stolen silverware and run away. First he orders his attendants to tear her clothes off and cane her. Then he sentences her to be exiled to Shamen Island with her forehead tattooed “runaway slave.” Before Cuiluan is sent under guard to her exile on Shamen Island, Cui Tong tells the guard that he wants her “dead
rather than alive on the way. 一路上則要死的，不要活的。”

This part of Rain on the Xiaoxiang is very similar to the corresponding part of First Winner Zhang Xie. In each play, the female protagonist attempts to join her husband, who not only refuses to acknowledge her but also tries to murder her. But there are differences between these two plays. One difference between Rain on the Xiaoxiang and First Winner Zhang Xie is in the plot. In First Winner Zhang Xie, the male protagonist’s denial of his wife and his attempted murder of her are two separate actions. Poor Lass first goes to the capital to meet Zhang Xie, who refuses to acknowledge her as his wife. Then Poor Lass goes back to her old temple in Wuji Mountain. It is when Zhang Xie passes Wuji Mountain on his journey to his post that he attempts to murder her. In Rain on the Xiaoxiang, Cui Tong’s denial of Cuiluan as his wife and his attempt to murder her are combined into one action. This difference in plot can be explained by the difference in length between southern-style drama and variety drama. Since variety drama is much shorter than southern-style drama it tends to contract the plot while southern-style drama tends to stretch it out. This accounts for the narrative economy of Rain on the Xiaoxiang.

Another major difference between Rain on the Xiaoxiang and First Winner Zhang Xie lies in characterization. The
actions of Cuiluan and Poor Lass are quite similar, but their reactions to their husbands' betrayal reveal different character traits. When Zhang Xie refuses to see Poor Lass and later has her clubbed out of his house, what Poor Lass can say is merely to criticize him as "without kindness or righteousness 无恩无义." And when she comes back to her old temple, she even thinks she is not worthy of him, "I'm ugly as well as poor. How could I marry a first winner?" In contrast to Poor Lass, Cuiluan is confident and bold. She learns from Cui Tong's doorman that he has married another wife, so when she meets Cui Tong the first thing she does is to condemn him and question him, "Cui Dianshi, how faithless you are! Why didn't you send for me after you assumed office? 崔旬士，你好负心也！怎生你得了官，不著人来取我？" As Cuiluan sees it, it is Cui Tong's responsibility as a husband to send for her after he assumes office and his negligence of responsibility calls for an explanation. She also regards Cui Tong's second marriage as an offense against her, for which he deserves condemnation. She not only confronts Cui Tong boldly, she also pours out her anger on Miss Zhao when she says, "I never expected you to desert your wife and marry a

98. Zhang Xie zhuangyuan, scene 34, p. 161
100. Guquzhai, 10A; Yuanquxuan edition, 789.
bitch. 誰知你再娶停婚先有個潑賤兒。"\textsuperscript{101} Even when she is being caned and endures pain, she still calls Cui Tong to account, “I just want to question you, heartless Dianshi -- how can you frame this nameless crime against me? 我只問你個虧心侶士，怎揣與我這無名的罪兒?”\textsuperscript{102} And when Cui Tong indeed gives her crime a "name," she directly curses him as a "goddamned scoundrel 短命賊."\textsuperscript{103} Cuiluan’s indomitable character is in sharp contrast with Poor Lass’s submissiveness. Their difference in character reflects their different backgrounds. Poor Lass is a simple laborer who lives at the bottom of society. When she tries to enter Zhang Xie’s domain, she looks up to him. When she is humiliated by him, she keeps her dignity by swallowing the insult and not asking others for pity. When Cuiluan tries to join Cui Tong, she also comes from a socially lower domain, that of a fisherman’s family. But she has grown up as a high official’s daughter, so socially she does not look up to Cui Tong. When she feels her rights are violated, she has the courage to pour out her anger. She maintains her dignity by protesting and denouncing Cui Tong’s heartlessness.

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{101} Yuanquxuan edition, 790. Guquzhai edition does not have this line.
\item \textsuperscript{102} Yuanquxuan edition, 790. Guquzhai edition does not have this line.
\item \textsuperscript{103} Yuanquxuan edition, 790. Guquzhai edition does not have this line.
\end{enumerate}
There are also differences between the two male protagonists in *First Winner Zhang Xie* and *Rain on the Xiaoxiang*. First, Zhang Xie is characterized by recklessness whereas Cui Tong is characterized by shrewdness. After Zhang Xie drives Poor Lass away from his residence in the capital, he intentionally seeks her out and attempts to murder her, which shows his reckless single-mindedness. He plays the murderer himself, which shows he takes his relationship with Poor Lass very personally and is almost obsessed with the idea of murder. In contrast to Zhang Xie, Cui Tong knows how to use his power and how to hide his murderous intention. As a magistrate, he gets rid of Cuilaun easily, by framing a false case against her and immediately sentencing her to exile, thus eliminating any further threat she may pose to his relationship with his second wife. He also carefully hides his intention to murder Cuiluan by merely giving a hint to the guard who will keep watch on her on her journey to the exile. Whereas Zhang Xie is anxious when he plans to murder Poor Lass, Cui Tong feels carefree after he plans his murder. As he says to Miss Zhao after he sends Cuiluan away, “Once she sets off on her journey, her wounds will be inflamed in the autumn rain. There is no possibility for her to remain alive. Let us go to the back room and have a cup of wine.”
If Zhang Xie's cruelty is characterized by his zeal to murder Poor Lass, Cui Tong's cruelty is characterized by his indifference to Cuiluan's ordeal.

There is another difference in character between the two male protagonists. Whereas Zhang Xie is characterized by vanity, Cui Tong is characterized by pragmatism. When Zhang Xie is offered a marital proposal from the Prime Minister, he haughtily turns it down. And his attempted murder of Poor Lass is motivated by his belief that his marriage with her will harm his dignity in the eyes of the upper class. Cui Tong's attempted murder of Cuiluan is motivated by his desire to build a marital relationship with a high official. He reveals his motivation after he sends Cuiluan away,

Honest and upright, I did not take her as my family, Torturing and sentencing, I drove her away. Today we meet merrily in our bed, True or false, only by the high rank of the family I tell.

清廉正直不認親，
苦打加刑趕婦人。
今朝歡聚銷金帳，
只認高門辯假真。

In Rain on the Xiaoxiang, the figure of the "other woman" is more developed than in previous texts. In "Assistant Minister Man," Miss Zhu meets Miss Jiao only after

105. Guquzhai edition, 11B. Yuanquxuan edition does not have these four lines.
the latter dies, and her actions has no impact on the relations between Assistant Minister Man and Miss Jiao. In *First Winner Zhang Xie*, Wang Shenghua dies merely to provide an excuse for her father to seek revenge on Zhang Xie, and her actions only indirectly influences the relations between Zhang Xie and Poor Lass. On the other hand, Miss Zhao in *Rain on Xiaoxiang* is directly involved in the interactions between Cui Tong and Cuiluan. She is present when Cuiluan comes to see Cui Tong, and her presence adds to the tension of the scene. When the doorman reports that the master's wife has come, Cui Tong tells Miss Zhao, "Mistress, don’t go out, just wait for me here. Let me go and have a look at her. 夫人，你休出去，只在這裡侍候。待我看他去來。" \(^{106}\) He is worried Miss Zhao will learn the truth, which will threaten the second marriage he is anxious to maintain. When Cuiluan meets him and condemns him, Miss Zhao also begins to curse him for having deceived her, "Wonderful! You said you didn’t have a wife. How come one shows up? I would call you donkey, beast, oh, you anger me to death. 好也羅！你道你無媳婦，可怎生又有這一個來？我則罵你 精 驢 禽 獸，兇 的 不 氣 殺 我 也！" \(^{107}\) Cui Tong's persecution of Cuiluan is to a certain degree a self-conscious performance by which he tries to show his innocence to Miss Zhao and to resolve the crisis in his second

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marriage. It is just because Miss Zhao is present as a witness that Cui Tong has to perform extremely hard, which means he has to punish Cuiluan severely to convince his second wife. After Cui Tong sends Cuiluan away, Miss Zhao is still suspicious and tells Cui Tong, "Sir, she is your previous wife, isn't she? It's better to keep her as a handmaid in our house. That will also prevent others from gossiping about it. 相公, 莫是你的前妻, 敢不中麼? 不如留他在家, 做個使用丫 頭, 也省的人議論。" Cui Tong replies, "Mistress, don't be so suspicious. How could I have a previous wife? 夫人, 不要多心, 我那里有前妻來?" In order to convince Madame Zhao of his innocence as well as to prevent any further threat to his second marriage, Cui Tong cannot afford to show mercy even when his second wife suggests it.

In the fourth part of Rain on the Xiaoxiang, there are three strands of action. The first concerns Cuiluan's reunion with Zhang Tianjue, the second involves the arrest of Cui Tong, and the third concerns Cuiluan's reunion with Cui Tong.

The first strand of action takes place mainly in the Riverside Posthouse. Zhang Tianjue is recalled by the emperor

108. Guquzhai edition, 11A. This edition does not have the following sentences and Cui Tong's reply.


110. Ibid.
and promoted to the position of Grand Inspector. On his way to tour the empire, he stops for the night at the Riverside Posthouse. Cui Wenyuan, who is on his way to Qinchuan County to join Cuiluan, also stops at the posthouse. Walking under guard to her exile, Cuiluan experiences great hardship in the autumn rain. When she arrives at the posthouse for shelter, she is reunited with Zhang Tianjue. After her father hears her story, he orders his attendants to have Cui Tong arrested, and Cuiluan volunteers to be the team leader.

The second strand of action takes place in Qinchuan County. Cuiluan has Cui Tong and Miss Zhao arrested and takes them to the Riverside Posthouse.\footnote{111}

The third strand of action takes place in the Riverside posthouse. After Cui Tong and Miss Zhao arrive at the posthouse, Zhang Tianjue orders their immediate execution. At this moment Cui Wenyuan comes out and begs mercy for Cui Tong. When Cuiluan asks her father to pardon Cui Tong, Zhang Tianjue concedes to do so but sentences Miss Zhao as a handmaid upon Cuiluan’s request. Cuiluan is reunited with Cui Tong.

In the first part of the play, the first strand of the action involves Cuiluan’s separation from Zhang Tianjue. Because of her separation from her father she enters Cui

\footnote{111. In Guquzhai edition Miss Zhao does not appear in this and the following action: She disappears from the play after she and Cui Tong see Cuiluan off on her journey to}
Wenyuan's domain and lives as a fisherman's daughter. When she is reunited with Zhang Tianjue, she comes back into her father's domain and regains her identity as a high official's daughter. As a high official with the title of Grand Inspector, Zhang Tianjue symbolizes power and Cuiluan's reunion with him means her reunion with power. With regained power she seeks revenge on Cui Tong.

Yet she does not carry out her revenge plan and finally agrees to be reunited with Cui Tong. What changes her mind is the notion of chastity: she does not want to be remarried to another man. The function of the notion of chastity in *Rain on the Xiaoxiang* is similar to that of predestined marriage in *First Winner Zhang Xie*. Both are beliefs the female protagonists use to rationalize their decision to reunite with the male protagonists.\(^{112}\)

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Shamen Island.

\(^{112}\) In comparison with predestined marriage, a conventional belief with religious overtones, chastity involves active moral choice. The reason why chastity is invoked in *Rain on the Xiaoxiang* may be due to the fact that the play was written under the Mongol rule when womanly virtue became an important issue. As has been pointed out, "Throughout Chinese history, as a general rule morality has been vigorously propagated whenever immorality was actually prevailing. Whenever the interests of the ruling class were threatened by foreign invasion, or the ideal pattern of Han cultural life was deteriorating as a result of alien contamination, the cults of fidelity and loyalty were elaborately prescribed and held up to glorify the steadfast purity of the fairer sex and at the same time
The beliefs of predestined marriage and chastity are invoked to explain away the lack of poetic justice in the converted model of the archetypal story. In the earliest model, the female protagonist’s death leads to the death of the male protagonist. Thus the principle of retribution is realized and poetic justice is satisfied. In the converted model, the male protagonists are not punished for their evil doings. Rather, they are allowed to be reunited with their wives. This inevitably leaves the impression on the audience that justice is not done. In order to justify the reunion, the female protagonists are shown to be willing to accept their unfaithful scholar-husbands. Their willingness is motivated by the powerful beliefs in their private domains.

The model embodied in Rain on the Xiaoxiang can be represented by the following seven-part structure.

1. A radical change takes place in the female protagonist’s domain (From a socially higher domain she enters a socially lower domain).

2. A marital contract binds the two domains of the protagonists (The male protagonist has a marital contract with the female protagonist).

\[\text{to ridicule men for their pitiful lack of courage.}\] T’ien Ju-K’ang, Male Anxiety and Female Chastity: A Comparative Study of Chinese Ethical Values in Ming-Ch’ing Times (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 17.
3. A radical change takes place in the male protagonist’s domain (He succeeds in the examinations).

4. The male protagonist severs connections with the female protagonist’s domain (He breaks the marital contract).

5. The male protagonist tries but fails to eliminate the female protagonist’s domain (He tries to void the marital contract by murder).

6. A radical change takes place in the female protagonist’s domain (She is taken back into a socially higher domain).

7. For the second time a marital contract binds the two domains of the protagonists (The marital contract is renewed).

If we compare this seven-part structure with the six part-structure of First Winner Zhang Xie, we may find that they are essentially the same. The only difference lies in part one: part one of Rain on the Xiaoxiang is an additional part that is absent in First Winner Zhang Xie. This difference in structure entails the different ironies suffered by the two male protagonists. Whereas Cui Tong deserts a Cuiluan who is known to him as a fisherman’s daughter, Zhang Xie marries a Poor Lass who is known to him as a high official’s daughter. The irony for Cui Tong is that he deserts a woman he would genuinely want to marry; the irony for Zhang Xie is that he marries for the second time the woman he absolutely intends to kill.
Chapter Three:
From an Unfaithful Scholar-Husband to a Faithful One:
The Inverted Model

From the eleventh century to the thirteenth century, the male protagonist in the archetypal story of the examination winner is always a faithless scholar. His intention is always to desert his wife regardless whether at the end of the story he is punished by death (as in “First Winner Wang” and “Assistant Minister Man”) or is reunited with his wife (as in First Winner Zhang Xie and Rain on the Xiaoxiang). This negative image of the examination winner is transformed into a positive one during the fourteenth century. From a faithless scholar the male protagonist becomes a faithful husband. In the early period, the theme is how power overcomes power, whether it is the supernatural power of a ghost (“First Winner Wang” and “Assistant Minister Man”) or the political power of a high official (First Winner Zhang Xie and Rain on the Xiaoxiang). During the fourteenth century, a new theme appears: morality overcomes power. These changes mark the transformation of the archetypal story from the early models to the inverted model.

The inverted model is best illustrated by the southern-
style play The Thorn Hairpin. Its revision of the early models was such a success that its method of rewriting was copied by later writers. In this chapter, we will first examine the inverted model in The Thorn Hairpin, and then discuss how this model is used in two dramatic romances, The Purple Hairpin and Burning Incense.

**The Thorn Hairpin**

The Thorn Hairpin is one of the four masterpieces of the southern-style play known as “sida nanxi 四大南戲” or “sida chuanqi 四大傳奇.” It was written during the Yuan dynasty, but none of its Yuan editions have survived. Its extant editions were more or less revised by Ming playwrights.¹

The authorship of The Thorn Hairpin remains a disputable issue. Although modern scholars generally cite Ke Danqiu 柯丹邱 as the most likely author of the play, we know nothing about him except that he was a member of the Jingxian Writing Society 敬先書會 in Suzhou, Jiangsu.

The story of The Thorn Hairpin is set in the Song dynasty. Wang Shipeng, the male protagonist in the play, is a

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¹. The edition of The Thorn Hairpin used in the following discussion is *Jinhchai ji* 荊釵記 (Liushizhong qu 六十種曲 edition, also known as the Jiguge 沱古閣 edition), in *Song Yuan sida xiwen* 宋元四大戲文, ed. Yu Weimin 俞爲民 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1988), 9-173.
historical figure. He did pass the examinations as a first winner in 1157. What the play tells about him is not supported by available historical records: the play is a work of fiction involving a historical figure.

The play consists of 48 scenes, which can be divided into four parts.

In the first part of the play (Scene 2-15), the plot deals with the marriage of Qian Yulian. The three major characters are introduced: the male protagonist Wang Shipeng, the female protagonist Qian Yulian, and the antagonist Sun Ruquan.

The actions in this part of the play take place among three domains. In Qian Liuxing's domain, there are his wife, his sister, and his daughter Qian Yulian. There are only two members in Wang Shipeng's domain, himself and his mother. Sun Ruquan and his servants make up another domain.

The interaction between Qian Liuxing's domain and Shipeng's domain begins when Qian Liuxing sends a go-between to Shipeng's domain. In terms of financial conditions, Qian Liuxing's domain is higher than Wang Shipeng's domain. The reason why Qian Liuxing wants to marry his daughter into a financially lower domain is that Wang Shipeng possesses a value that compensates for his poverty: he is a man of

2. See his biography in Songshi, juan 387, 17:11882-11887.
learning. On Qian Liuxing's value scale, learning is a higher value than wealth. His value system is determined by the fact that he himself is a scholar. When he was young he had been the first winner in the entrance examinations for the prefecture academy, although he failed to pass the higher examinations. He is a member of the scholars domain not only because of his past experience, but also because he chooses to associate himself with scholars. Even the man he chooses as the go-between is a retired scholar-official.

When the marriage proposal is first made to Shipeng's mother, she turns it down because she is so poor that she cannot even afford betrothal gifts. But one event has taken place that increases Wang Shipeng's value in the eyes of Qian Liuxing. Wang Shipeng wins the first place in a school examination. Shipeng's success testifies to his talent and implies his future success in higher examinations. This encourages Qian Liuxing to send the go-between a second time to Shipeng's domain. Since Qian Liuxing is so insistent on the marriage alliance, Shipeng's mother agrees and offers a thorn hairpin as a betrothal gift.

4. Scene 5, p. 28.
5. Scene 6, p. 31.
6. Scene 4, p. 25.
7. Scene 6, p. 32.
8. Scene 6, p. 32.
After a preliminary marriage agreement is made between Qian Liuxing’s domain and Wang Shipeng’s domain, the normal procedure of marriage arrangement is interrupted by the intrusion of Sun Ruquan’s domain. Sun Ruquan, Wang Shipeng’s schoolmate, seeks a marriage alliance with Qian Liuxing’s domain because he has taken a fancy to Yulian’s beauty. When he makes his marriage proposal through Madame Zhang, Qian Liuxing’s sister, he offers a pair of gold hairpins as a betrothal gift.\(^9\)

Sun Ruquan’s marriage proposal creates a conflict between Qian Liuxing and his wife. Qian Liuxing has chosen the poor but talented Shipeng whereas Yulian’s step-mother prefers the talentless but wealthy Sun Ruquan.\(^1^0\) Since they cannot resolve their dispute, they let Yulian herself make the final decision. The choice will be a test on Yulian’s moral principles.

As a prospective mate, Shipeng is in sharp contrast to Sun Ruquan. Shipeng is a talented scholar whereas Sun Ruquan is talentless. Shipeng is poor whereas Sun Ruquan is the wealthiest man in town. Shipeng’s thorn hairpin and Sun Ruquan’s gold hairpins symbolise their contrasting financial situations. Yulian’s choice will determine whether she will lead an impoverished or an affluent life after marriage.

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9. Scene 7, p. 36.
10. Scene 7, p. 38.
Yulian chooses the thorn hairpin, which proves that she, like her father, regards learning as a higher value than wealth.\textsuperscript{12}

Yulian's choice of Shipeng annoys her step-mother, who sees Yulian's choice as an insult to her authority. In order to pressure Yulian to accept Sun Ruquan's proposal, Yulian's step-mother gives Yulian two options.\textsuperscript{13} If Yulian agrees to marry Sun Ruquan, her step-mother promises to give her a large dowry. If she insists on marrying Shipeng, her step-mother vows to give her no dowry.\textsuperscript{14} Since wealth is not registered as a high value on her value scale, Yulian does not give in to her step-mother's pressure and is married off without any dowry.\textsuperscript{15}

When Shipeng is to leave home for the metropolitan examinations, he has no money for his travelling expenses. This problem is solved by Qian Liuxing who offers Shipeng travelling expenses.\textsuperscript{16} Qian Liuxing does Shipeng another favour by taking Shipeng's mother and Yulian to live in his house so that he can take good care of them after Shipeng leaves home.\textsuperscript{17} Qian Liuxing's kindness places Shipeng in debt

\begin{itemize}
  \item 11. Scene 8, pp. 40-41.
  \item 12. Scene 9, p. 46.
  \item 13. Scene 10, p. 50.
  \item 14. Scene 10, p. 50.
  \item 15. Scene 11, p. 52.
  \item 16. Scene 15, p. 67.
  \item 17. Scene 15, p. 66.
\end{itemize}
Among the similarities between this part of the play and the corresponding part of previous works, the most obvious are the contrasting financial situations and the debt-credit relationship between the male and female protagonist’s domain. As in previous works, Yulian’s domain is financially higher than Wang Shipeng’s domain, which renders Wang Shipeng indebted to Yulian and her father.

However, there are obvious differences between this part of the play and the corresponding part of previous works. In previous works the marital union takes place between the male and female protagonist without the interference of a third domain. In this play, another male character, Sun Ruquan, is introduced. As the wealthy suitor of the female protagonist, his main function is to imperil the marriage between the male and female protagonist. Two other characters, Yulian’s step-mother and her aunt, are created as the agents of this antagonist.

Another obvious difference lies in the female protagonist’s virtues. In previous works, the female protagonist’s virtues are taken for granted; only the male protagonist’s virtues need to be tested. In this play, the female protagonist’s virtues are no longer taken for granted; she must also be tested in order to prove herself to be a virtuous woman. The choice between a thorn hairpin and a pair of gold hairpins is a test on Yulian’s moral principles. By
passing the test she proves herself to be a virtuous woman.

In the second part of the play (Scene 16-24), Shipeng becomes the first winner in the final examinations. Prime Minister Moqi wants to marry his daughter to Shipeng, but Shipeng turns down the marriage proposal. In *First Winner Zhang Xie*, Zhang Xie similarly turns down the marriage proposal offered to him by Prime Minister Wang Deyong’s daughter. But Wang Shipeng’s motivation for turning down the marriage proposal is quite different from Zhang Xie’s. Zhang Xie refuses the marriage proposal because of his arrogance, whereas Shipeng declines the proposal because he adheres to moral principles. Zhang Xie lies about his marital status and tells Shenghua that he is not married. Shipeng tells Prime Minister Moqi that he is married and he cannot desert his wife. Shipeng’s difference from Zhang Xie symbolises the transformation of the male protagonist’s image from a faithless scholar to a faithful husband.

Just as Sun Ruquan’s proposal to Yulian is a test on her virtues, Prime Minister Moqi’s marriage proposal is a test on Shipeng’s virtues. By passing this test, Shipeng proves himself to be a virtuous man. These two consecutive tests on the female and male protagonist indicates that the plot of this play will be constructed on the test-reward pattern.

18. Scene 19, pp. 87-88.
The Prime Minister’s marriage proposal represents an invasion of a political power into Shipeng’s private life, which shows how a scholar’s private life may be thwarted when he first enters the official world. By successfully resisting the invasion, Shipeng protects his private life from being subverted by a political force. Though his private life is kept intact, he suffers retaliation in his public life. Enraged by his failure to establish a marriage alliance with the first winner, Prime Minister Moqi takes actions to punish Shipeng for his resistance. Shipeng has been assigned to a post in Raozhou, Jiangxi, which is a rich area; Wang Shihong, the second winner, has been assigned to a post in Chaoyang, Guangdong, which is infamous for its tropical disease. Prime Minister Moqi switches Shipeng’s post with Wang Shihong’s in the hope that Shipeng will be infected with tropical diseases and die in Guangdong. Another action Prime Minister Moqi takes to punish Shipeng is to order him to stay in the capital, which prevents Shipeng from visiting his family and creates an opportunity for Sun Ruquan to play a trick on Shipeng.

If Prime Minister Moqi is Shipeng’s enemy in public life, Sun Ruquan is his enemy in private life. As Shipeng’s fellow student, Sun Ruquan also comes to the capital for the final examinations. Since he is not a good scholar, he fails the examinations. While Shipeng stays in the capital, he writes a letter and asks an official messenger to take it to
his family. When Sun Ruquan learns this, he finds the official messenger and takes advantage of the opportunity to alter Shipeng’s letter. He rewrites Shipeng’s letter to the effect that Shipeng has married Prime Minister Moqi’s daughter and decided to divorce Yulian.

When the altered letter reaches home, it disturbs the quiet life in Qian Liuxing’s domain. While Yulian’s step-mother believes Shipeng has abandoned Yulian, Shipeng’s mother and Yulian believe the information conveyed by the letter cannot be true. To Yulian and Shipeng’s mother, a man of learning knows moral principles and acts according to them. In order to find out the truth, Qian Liuxing visits Sun Ruquan who just returns from the capital. Sun Ruquan not only confirms the false news, but also repeats his marriage proposal to Yulian. When Yulian’s step-mother tries to force Yulian to marry Sun Ruquan, Yulian attempts to commit suicide by throwing herself into the river.

Her step-mother’s attempt to coerce her into marrying Sun Ruquan is another test on Yulian. Yulian is not only a woman of virtue, but also a woman of faith. Even after Sun Ruquan confirms the false information, Yulian still does not

19. Scene 20, p. 91.
20. Scene 21, p. 94.
23. Scene 26, p. 110.
believe Shipeng could possibly have deserted her. When her step-mother tries to force her to marry Sun Ruquan, she replies that even if Shipeng has married another woman, she will not marry another man because she must keep her marital chastity. She throws herself into the river because she is afraid that her step-mother may devise a scheme to trap her into a second marriage. Her attempted suicide proves her to be a chaste woman.

In the third part of the play (Scene 25-44), Yulian enters another domain while Qian Liuxing's domain is reunited with Shipeng's domain.

In this part of the play, false information continues to prevent the male and female protagonist from being reunited with each other. Although Yulian is saved from the river, her death is registered as a real event in the other characters' private domains. When Shipeng's mother is reunited with Shipeng in the capital, she tells him that Yulian is dead.24 After the official Qian Zaihe saves Yulian from the river, he adopts her as his daughter and takes her to his post in Fujian.25 The effect of Prime Minister Moqi's punishment of Shipeng can still be felt in this part of the play. Since Yulian learns from the altered letter that Shipeng has been assigned to a post in Raozhou, Jiangxi, Qian Zaihe sends one

of his clerks to deliver a letter to Shipeng in Raozhou. The clerk comes back with the news that Shipeng is dead. The dead official is actually Wang Shihong, whose post has been switched with Shipeng's by Prime Minister Moqi. Just as Shipeng believes that Yulian is dead, Yulian also believes Shipeng is dead. Their ignorance prevents their reunion.

In contrast to the second part of the play where the virtuous and the chaste are temporarily defeated by the evil forces, morality begins to overwhelm the vicious in the third part of the play. After five years service in Chaoyang, Guangdong, Wang Shipeng is promoted to be the prefect of Ji'an. His promotion proclaims the futility of Prime Minister Moqi's political persecution. It also proves that a talented scholar can also be a capable official.

In this part of the play, Shipeng's actions are in complete accordance with the maxims that kindness is to be repaid and evil is to be punished. When Sun Ruquan is suing Qian Liuxing for failing to return his betrothal gifts, Zhou Bi, the legal commissioner in charge of the case, receives a letter from Shipeng which informs him of Sun Ruquan's wrongdoings. Zhou Bi, the third winner in the same examinations that Shipeng has taken, has Sun Ruquan flogged

25. Scene 26, pp. 111-112.
27. Scene 34, p. 132.
28. Scene 37, p. 139.
and sent to the capital for further investigation. Thus Sun Ruquan's evildoing is punished and his domain is neutralised. Shipeng also brings Qian Liuxing and his wife to his post so that he can take good care of them, despite the fact that his wife is presumed dead. In this way Qian Liuxing's kindness is repaid and his domain is amalgamated with Shipeng's domain.

The manner in which Yulian enters Qian Zaihe's domain is similar to the way Poor Lass enters Wang Deyong's domain in *First Winner Zhang Xie*. Just like Wang Deyong, Qian Zaihe is a high official who adopts Yulian as his daughter and takes her to his post. Each of the female protagonists is taken into another domain at a critical moment in her life: Poor Lass after her survival of Zhang Xie's attempt to murder her and Yulian after her survival of an attempted suicide. But the crossing of domains functions differently for the two female protagonists. In *First Winner Zhang Xie*, the emphasis is on Poor Lass' acquisition of a new identity which makes it possible for her to be reunited with her husband. In *The Thorn Hairpin*, Yulian's entrance into another domain provides her with a way to escape from the threat of a second marriage. In other words, the adoption bestows upon Poor Lass a power which she will use to overcome Zhang Xie's power, whereas it bestows on Yulian a power with which she can

29. Scene 40, pp. 148-149.
preserve her chastity.

The third part of the play illustrates the means by which the playwright transforms the plot from the betrayal-punishment pattern into the test-reward pattern. The basic method is to change events that are real in previous works into false information. In previous works, the male protagonist decides to abandon his wife after he enters the official world. Usually the marriage proposal from a domain of higher social status is an important factor in his decision to desert his wife. In the present play Shipeng does not desert his wife; he turns down the marriage proposal from Prime Minister Moqi. However through Sun Ruquan's distortion, the event becomes a report in which Shipeng indeed decided to abandon his wife. In this way the male protagonist's betrayal, an authentic motif in previous works, becomes an inauthentic motif. Even though it is an inauthentic motif, it has the same function as the authentic motif in previous works. Just as the news of First Winner Wang's betrayal leads to Guiying's suicide, the false information of Shipeng's betrayal leads to Yulian's suicide, even though the cause-effect relationship between the news and the suicide is not as direct in this play as in "First Winner Wang."

With the transformation of the male protagonist from a faithless scholar to a faithful husband and of the plot from

30. Scene 44, pp. 154-155.
the betrayal-punishment pattern to the test-reward pattern, the author’s attitude towards the examination winner also changes. In all the previous works, the male protagonist has a change of heart after he passes the examinations, thus proving a talented scholar may not be a virtuous man. Success in the examinations serves as a moral test of the male protagonist, whose failure of the test places talent and virtue in conflict. In The Thorn Hairpin, the antithetical terms of talent and virtue are unified in the male protagonist. Shipeng’s adherence to moral principles is proof that the examination winner is a talented as well as virtuous man. The author’s favorable opinion of the examination winner is expressed not only in Shipeng’s actions, but also in other characters’ beliefs. Shipeng’s mother and Yulian firmly believe that a scholar who knows moral principles cannot possibly deviate from those principles. The author’s critical attitude towards the examination winner’s immorality in previous works is replaced by a firm faith in his integrity.

The transformation of the examination winner from a faithless scholar to a faithful scholar-husband entails a transformation of the evil force that destroys the female protagonist’s happiness. In previous works, the evil force is expressed as an internal force within the private domain of the male protagonist. It is his immoral motivations, actualized in his act of betrayal, that destroy the female protagonist’s wish for a happy marriage. In The Thorn Hairpin
the internal evil motivation within the male protagonist's private domain is shifted to another character's domain. Sun Ruquan, the villainous suitor of the female protagonist, represents an external evil force that threatens to destroy the female protagonist's happy marriage. In previous works, the location of the moral conflict is within the male protagonist's private domain. With the creation of the antagonist in The Thorn Hairpin, the moral conflict is shifted to the factual domain. If each of the previous works can to a certain extent be described as a psychological drama, The Thorn Hairpin can be seen as a melodrama. Its focus of interest is shifted from the psychological development of the male protagonist to a moral clash between characters' domains. Its moral world is a black-and-white world in which the protagonist couple's domains coincide with morality and the antagonist's domain coincides with immorality. While the personification of the evil force in this play increases its dramatic tension, it also reduces the characters to one-dimensional symbols of moral principles.

In the fourth and last part of the play (scenes 43-48), Shipeng's domain is reunited with Yulian's domain. 31

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31. Discussions of the last part of The Thorn Hairpin is based on the Yuanben Wang zhuangyuan Jingchai ji 原本王狀元荆釵記 (Beijing: Guben xiqu congkan chuji 古本戲曲叢刊初集, 1954), which is believed to be closer to the Yuan edition than the Liushizhong qu edition. The two editions are
After Qian Zaihe is promoted to be the Inspector of Liangguang, his tour brings him to Ji’an where he meets Shipeng. He tests Shipeng’s chastity by advising him to get married again. When Shipeng expresses his reluctance to remarry, Qian Zaihe blames him for his unfiliality since he does not have a child. Between the two moral principles, being filial to one’s ancestors and being faithful to one’s wife, Shipeng chooses to remain faithful to his wife even if it means defying the principle of filial piety. The test is repeated when Minister Deng, at the request of Qian Zaihe, makes a marriage proposal on behalf of Qian Zaihe’s widowed daughter. Shipeng gives the same answer, thus proving himself to be a faithful husband who remains loyal to his wife even after she is dead. After Shipeng passes the two tests on his chastity, Qian Zaihe reveals the identity of his daughter and Yulian is reunited with Shipeng.

In this play, the virtue of chastity does not only apply to the female protagonist, but also to the male protagonist.

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32. According to Mencius, of the three unfilial sins the primary one is having no offspring. See *Mengzi* 孟子 (Shisanjing zhushu edition; reprinted in *Xiaojing Mengzi zhushu ji buzhen* 孝經孟子注疏及補正. Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1963), 24. If one does not have an offspring, it means no one will offer sacrifices to one’s ancestors whose souls will then become hungry ghosts.


After the false news of Shipeng’s death reaches Yulian, she expresses her determination not to remarry. The motivation for her decision is the belief that a chaste woman does not marry twice. Yulian’s behaviour is similar to Cuiluan’s in *Rain on the Xiaoxiang*. Cuiluan decides to be reunited with her husband because she does not want to be married a second time. But in *Rain on the Xiaoxiang*, the principle of chastity does not apply to the male protagonist since Cui Tong does marry twice. In *The Thorn Hairpin*, the principle of marital fidelity is applied equally to the male and the female protagonist. Shipeng’s virtue is shown not only in his rejection of Prime Minister Moqi’s marriage proposal, but also in his loyalty to his wife even after she is dead.

The last two tests on Shipeng’s virtue not only helps to maintain the dramatic tension to the end of the play, but also brings the structural principle of this play to the foreground. The plot of the play is constructed on a series of tests of the male and female protagonist. It begins with the tests on Yulian in the first part and ends with the tests on Shipeng in the last part. Through these tests, the protagonists prove themselves to be virtuous husband and wife. Their virtue is rewarded when they receive the emperor’s commendation in the last scene, thus culminating in the test-reward pattern.

The earliest model of the story of the faithless examination winner is inverted in The Thorn Hairpin. The inverted model can be expressed by the following five-part structure.

Part One: The male protagonist’s domain is bound together with the female protagonist’s domain by a marital contract.

Part Two: The male protagonist passes the examinations.

Part Three: External forces separate the male protagonist from the female protagonist.

Part Four: False information keeps the male and female protagonist away from each other.

Part Five: The male protagonist is reunited with the female protagonist.

The Purple Hairpin

The Purple Hairpin is a dramatic romance written by Tang Xianzu 湯顯祖 (1550-1616), one of the greatest playwrights in Chinese dramatic literature. He spent almost twenty years on the script of this play before he finished it in 1596.36

The Purple Hairpin is an adaptation of the famous Tang story “Huo Xiaoyu zhuan 虢小玉傳” (The Tale of Huo Xiaoyu) by

36. The edition of The Purple Hairpin used in the following discussion is Zichai ji 紫釵記, ed. Hu Shiyiing (Beijing: Remin wenxue chubanshe, 1982).
Jiang Fang. In the following discussion, we will divide the two texts into four parts and compare each part of the play with the corresponding part of the tale.

In the first part of the tale, the most important event is Li Yi’s entrance into Xiaoyu’s domain. Li Yi comes to Chang’an for the “bacui 拔萃” (Picking Out the Finest) examinations after he has already passed the jinshi examinations. He wishes to have a beauty as his companion, so he asks a professional matchmaker Bao Shisiniang (Bao Fourteenth Maid) to help him locate one. After he is introduced to Xiaoyu, they fall in love with each other and live together happily for two years.

In the first part of the play (Scene 2-14), Li Yi is married with Xiaoyu. Of the four parts of the play, this part is the closest to the Tang tale. The basic plot in the first part of the tale is kept in the corresponding part of the play. However some significant facts are altered by Tang Xianzu.

One important alteration is Xiaoyu’s social status: from a courtesan in the tale she becomes a princess in the play. In the tale Xiaoyu’s identity is unambiguously a courtesan, even though she has been born as the daughter of Prince Huo and his maidservant. In the play, her identity as a courtesan is dropped and her social status as a princess is emphasised
by the consistent use of "junzhu." The elevation of Xiaoyu’s social status is one of the devices employed by the playwright to transform Xiaoyu from a charming courtesan to a virtuous wife.

The elevation of Xiaoyu’s social status is followed by another important alteration: that of the relationship between Li Yi and Xiaoyu. From a patron-courtesan relationship in the tale they become husband and wife in the play. The love pledge made by Li Yi to Xiaoyu in the tale is replaced by a marriage alliance between them in the play. The alteration of their relationship indicates a thematic shift. From the unfulfillment of a lover’s promise in the tale the thematic focus is shifted to the fulfilment of marital obligation. It is this thematic shift that makes *The Purple Hairpin* similar to *The Thorn Hairpin*.

In the second part of the tale, Li Yi decides to sever connections with Xiaoyu’s domain after he exits from it. Li Yi obtains the post of the Recorder of Zheng County after he passes the Picking Out the Finest examinations. When he says goodbye to Xiaoyu, he promises to have her brought to his post in a short time. After he takes his post, he asks for

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37. “Junzhu 郡主,” here translated as “princess,” was a title for the daughter of the prince apparent in the Tang times. In the Ming times, it was used for the daughter of any prince. In designating Xiaoyu as a “junzhu,” Tang Xianzu was
leave to visit his parents in Luoyang. His mother has settled an arrangement for him to marry a Miss Lu, an arrangement he does not dare refuse. He decides to sever any communications with Xiaoyu.

In the second part of the play (Scene 15-25), Li Yi goes to Luoyang for the examinations and becomes the first winner. Councilor Lu intends to select a prospective husband for his daughter from among the examinations winners, so he orders all the winners to visit him before they are assigned posts. Li Yi does not pay him a visit and consequently is assigned to a post in the war zone.

The second part of the play is radically different from the corresponding part of the tale. The only common feature between the two parts is the departure of the male protagonist from the female protagonist’s domain.

This part of The Purple Hairpin is similar to the corresponding part of The Thorn Hairpin. In each of the two plays, the male protagonist becomes the first winner in the examinations. In each play, there is also a high official who looks for a mate for his daughter. The male protagonist in each play receives an unfavourable post after he offends the high official. There is a slight difference between the offenses the male protagonist commits: in The Thorn Hairpin Wang Shipeng offends Prime Minister Moqi for refusing his following the Ming customs.
marriage proposal; in The Purple Hairpin Li Yi offends Councilor Lu for not paying him a visit.

In the third part of the play (Scene 26-47), the male protagonist is separated from the female protagonist. Yet the reasons for the separation are radically different from the tale. In the tale, Li Yi intentionally avoids meeting with Xiaoyu because of his plan to marry another woman and his shame for breaking his promise to Xiaoyu. In the play, Li Yi is separated from Xiaoyu by a devastating political power.

In the third part of the tale, all of Li Yi’s actions are motivated by two goals. One goal is to fulfil his obligation to his family and prepare for the marriage alliance with a domain of higher social status. Miss Lu comes from a family of the highest rank, who require a large sum of money as wedding gifts. Since his family has always been poor, Li Yi has to travel around in the Yangzi and Huai river region to borrow money from relations.

Another of Li Yi’s goals is to sever any connections with the domain of his past lover. At first this goal is motivated by a strategic consideration. By stopping letters to Xiaoyu, Li Yi believes, he will make Xiaoyu understand his intention and put an end to her hopes. Later on a sense of shame also becomes part of the motivation for his intentional avoidance of Xiaoyu. After he gathers enough money for the wedding gifts, he comes back to Chang’an where Miss Lu also
resides. He feels ashamed for his betrayal of Xiaoyu and the shame is increased after he hears that Xiaoyu falls seriously ill because of his betrayal. He feels too ashamed to face her, so he absolutely refuses to visit her.

In the third part of the play, Li Yi is separated from Xiaoyu just as he is in the third part of the tale. He first moves outside of the capital and then comes back to the capital, which is also similar to his movement in the corresponding part of the tale. What distinguishes Li Yi’s actions in the play from those of his namesake in the tale is the cause of his separation from Xiaoyu. In the tale, it is Li Yi’s intent to marry another woman that causes the separation; in the play it is Councilor Lu’s continuous persecution that separates Li Yi from Xiaoyu.

Because he has offended Councilor Lu for not paying him a visit, Li Yi is assigned to a post at Yumen Pass, where a war with Tibet is going on. Because he is in a war zone, he does not have the opportunity to send a letter to Xiaoyu for three years. It is only when Wang Shao’er, one of Councilor Lu’s servants, comes to the pass that Li Yi is able to ask him to bring a poem to Xiaoyu.38 This is the only letter he can send to Xiaoyu during the four years of their separation.

According to the bureaucratic rules, Li Yi ought to be transferred to a post in the inner region after his three-

38. Scene 34.
year service in the frontier area. However Councilor Lu tampers with the normal bureaucratic procedures and consequently Li Yi’s normal life. When he becomes the general at Mengmen Pass, Councilor Lu assigns Li Yi to be his subordinate. He also orders Li Yi to report directly to him at Mengmen Pass without going back to the capital, which means Li Yi will not have the opportunity to meet Xiaoyu.\(^{39}\)

Up to this point in the play, Councilor Lu’s persecution of Li Yi is motivated by a desire for political revenge. Li Yi’s unfavourable appointments reveal the grave consequences of offending a man of political power. But Councilor Lu is not determined to marrying his daughter to Li Yi, which means his persecution is not directly connected with his wish to marry off his daughter. The emphasis on political revenge in this play distinguishes it from The Thorn Hairpin, where Wang Shipeng’s official career suffers as a direct result of his refusal of the marriage proposal from the prime minister.\(^{40}\)

After Li Yi is transferred to Mengmen and has the first face-to-face meeting with Councilor Lu, however, the conflict

\(^{39}\) Scene 32.

\(^{40}\) The focus on the consequences of offending a powerful man may be related with Tang Xianzu’s personal suffering in the hands of Zhang Juzheng 張居正, one of the most powerful prime ministers in the Ming dynasty. Tang Xianzu repeatedly failed the examinations because he refused to be enlisted to the service of Zhang Juzheng. See Xu Shuofang 徐朔方, *Tang Xianzu pingzhuang* 湯顯祖評傳 (Nanjing: Nanjing daxue chubanshe, 1993), 20-22, 34-37.
between them is closely related to Councilor Lu’s wish to marry off his daughter. During the interview, Councilor Lu suggests to Li Yi that in order to have a successful official career, he should abandon Xiaoyu and establish a marriage alliance with a high official at the court. Li Yi’s reply, that he cannot betray his marriage oath, proves him to be a faithful husband.\(^1\)

After Li Yi comes to Mengmen, Councilor Lu has immediate control over him. Besides, he also has new grounds against Li Yi. During his stay at Yumen Pass, Li Yi has written a poem showing his gratitude to General Liu. The last two lines of the poem read “I know a place where I can find benevolence, /I don’t want to climb up the tower that looks over the capital. 感恩知有地，不上望京樓。”\(^2\) These two lines can be interpreted as showing a disrespectful attitude towards the throne.\(^3\) Councilor Lu threatens to submit Li Yi’s poem to the court.\(^4\)

When Councilor Lu comes back to the capital, he brings Li Yi back with him. Now he hastens his steps to subdue Li

\(^{1}\) Scene 37.

\(^{2}\) Scene 31, p.119.

\(^{3}\) The historical Li Yi did write this poem, for which he was demoted. See Wang Meng’ou, “Huo Xiaoyu zhi zuozhe ji gushi beiijing 霍小玉之作者及故事背景,” in his Tangren xiaoshuo yanjiu erji 唐人小說研究二集 (Taipei: Yiwen chubanshe, 1973), 57-70.

\(^{4}\) Scene 37.
Yi. He places Li Yi under a house arrest, which effectively prevents Li Yi from paying a visit to Xiaoyu. He also brings in Wei Xiaqing, one of Li Yi’s friends, to talk Li Yi into marrying his daughter. After he obtains the purple jade hairpin, the love token between Li Yi and Xiaoyu, he orders his steward’s wife to lie to Li Yi that Xiaoyu has remarried. While Li Yi remains faithful to Xiaoyu, he cannot give a categorical rejection to the marriage proposal and makes no effort to contact Xiaoyu. On the one hand, he is concerned about his own official life, for Councilor Lu has threatened to turn his poem in to the court. On the other hand, he is trying to protect Xiaoyu, for Councilor Lu has threatened to harm Xiaoyu if he pays a visit to her.

In the third part of the play, the events in Li Yi’s domain are mainly created by Tang Xianzu and bear little resemblance to the events in the tale. In comparison to Li Yi’s domain, events in Xiaoyu’s domain bear a closer resemblance to the events in the tale. In the play Li Yi and Xiaoyu are introduced to each other through Bao Siniang (Bao Fourth Maid), a figure modeled on Bao Shisiniang (Bao Fourteenth Maid) from the tale. Councilor Lu has played a trick on Li Yi by ordering his steward’s wife to pretend to be Bao Sanniang (Bao Third Maid), elder sister of Bao Siniang. This is to enhance the credibility of the news of Xiaoyu’s remarriage because Bao Sanniang claims she obtains the information from Bao Siniang.

45. Scene 41.
46. Scene 42.
47. In the play Li Yi and Xiaoyu are introduced to each other through Bao Siniang (Bao Fourth Maid), a figure modeled on Bao Shisiniang (Bao Fourteenth Maid) from the tale. Councilor Lu has played a trick on Li Yi by ordering his steward’s wife to pretend to be Bao Sanniang (Bao Third Maid), elder sister of Bao Siniang. This is to enhance the credibility of the news of Xiaoyu’s remarriage because Bao Sanniang claims she obtains the information from Bao Siniang.
48. Scene 52.
resemblance to those in the corresponding part of the tale.

In the third part of the tale, Xiaoyu anxiously seeks news about Li Yi after he fails to send for her, and falls seriously ill one year later. In order to get information about Li Yi, she sends gifts to friends and acquaintances and in this way has used up her savings. Once she sends a hairpin of purple jade to a pawnshop, and it is identified by the jade carver who made it. When he brings the hairpin to Princess Yanxian and tells her the story of Xiaoyu, the princess is deeply moved and gives a large sum of money to Xiaoyu. After Li Yi secretly comes back to Chang’an, his cousin Cui Yunming tells Xiaoyu the truth of Li Yi’s betrayal.

Most of these events are kept in the play, but the causes of the events are altered. In the tale Xiaoyu’s anguish is caused by Li Yi’s actions of betrayal; in the play Xiaoyu’s agony is brought about by a succession of false information. The first piece of false information is brought by Wang Shao’er who, in accordance with Councilor Lu’s instruction, tells Xiaoyu that Li Yi, still living in Mengmen, has agreed to the marriage proposal from Councilor Lu.49 After Li Yi comes back to the capital, Wei Xiaqing meets him and gets the impression that he is quite ambivalent

49. Scene 39.
towards Councilor Lu’s marriage proposal. Through Cuiyunming this information is passed to Xiaoyu and increases her anxiety. After she has used up her savings, Xiaoyu sends her purple hairpin to a pawnshop where it is identified by the jade carver who made it. The jade carver sells it to Councilor Lu’s steward, who is looking for a hairpin for Councilor Lu’s daughter’s wedding. From Councilor Lu’s steward, the jade carver hears that Li Yi is going to marry Councilor Lu’s daughter and he passes this information to Xiaoyu. Xiaoyu is so hurt by the false news of Li Yi’s betrayal that she falls seriously ill.

Although many events in the third part of the tale are kept in the play, the structure of the third part of the play resembles The Thorn Hairpin more than it does the tale. In The Thorn Hairpin, Prime Minister Moqi persecutes Wang Shipeng and Sun Ruquan spreads false information about him. Councilor Lu in The Purple Hairpin accomplishes what it takes two characters to do in The Thorn Hairpin. In his persecution of Li Yi, Councilor Lu resembles Prime Minister Moqi; in his spreading false information about Li Yi, he resembles Sun Ruquan. The difference between the two plays lies in the different number of moves and events. In The Thorn Hairpin, Prime Minister Moqi persecutes Wang Shipeng by assigning him

50. Scene 42.
51. Scene 44.
an unfavorable post, but he does not continue the persecution once Shipeng leaves the capital. In *The Purple Hairpin*, Councilor Lu makes three moves in his persecution of Li Yi: to assign him to Yumen Pass, to transfer him to Mengmen Pass, and to place him under house arrest in the capital. In *The Thorn Hairpin*, Sun Ruquan alters Shipeng’s letter and later confirms the false information contained in the letter; he remains the only source of the false information. In *The Purple Hairpin*, although the false information originates from Councilor Lu’s domain, it comes into Xiaoyu’s three times and from three different channels: Wang Shao’er, Wei Xiaqing, and the jade carver. The multiplication of the moves and events in *The Purple Hairpin* contributes to the magnification of the suffering of Li Yi and Xiaoyu.

In the fourth part of the tale, Li Yi and his friends are enjoying the peonies at the Chongjing Temple. While Wei Xiaqing is criticising Li Yi for his betrayal of Xiaoyu, a man in a yellow shirt overhears their conversation and orders his servants to take Li Yi to Xiaoyu’s house by force. Xiaoyu dies in Li Yi’s arms and vows to become a vengeful ghost, allowing him no peace with his wives and concubines. After he marries Miss Lu, Li Yi finds out she is not faithful to him and divorces her. He is never happy in his relations with

52. Scene 42.
women.

In the fourth part of the play (Scene 48-53), Wei Xiaqing and Cui Yunming plan to invite Li Yi to Chongjing Temple in order to persuade him to come back to Xiaoyu. Their conversation is overheard by the man in the yellow shirt. When Li Yi comes to the temple, he is surrounded by a team of Councilor Lu’s soldiers. Li Yi is reluctant to go to Xiaoyu’s house because he is afraid the soldiers will hurt his friends. But the man in the yellow shirt takes him to her house by force. After the misunderstanding between them is cleared up, Li Yi is reunited with Xiaoyu. The man in the yellow shirt also reports the story of Li Yi and Xiaoyu and the evildoing of Councilor Lu to the emperor, who sends General Liu to announce his commendations. Li Yi is promoted, Xiaoyu gets a title, and Councilor Lu is discharged from his post.

The fourth part of the play closely follows the corresponding part of the tale up until the meeting of Li Yi with Xiaoyu. After this point the two works are entirely different form each other. Judged by its ending, the tale is a story of revenge. Although Xiaoyu sees Li Yi once again, she immediately departs from him and enters another world. Since her wrongful death is caused by Li Yi’s faithlessness, she comes back into his domain from another world and haunts him. Since the motivation for his betrayal of Xiaoyu is his desire to have a marriage alliance with another woman, his
failure to establish any satisfactory relations with women will be the punishment he receives from Xiaoyu.

The play’s happy ending is in sharp contrast with that of the tale, which ends in death and retribution. In the play, since Li Yi’s hardship is brought about by Councilor Lu and Xiaoyu’s suffering is caused by misunderstanding, they will be reunited and live happily after Councilor Lu’s power is destroyed and the misunderstanding is cleared. The emperor’s commendation makes the ending of the play similar to that of The Thorn Hairpin.

To sum up, even though many of the events in “The Tale of Huo Xiaoyu” have been retained in the play, on the whole The Purple Hairpin resembles The Thorn Hairpin more than it does the tale.

On the level of specific events and actions, the play looks very much like the tale. On the level of structure and theme, however, the play is modeled on The Thorn Hairpin rather than on the tale.

The method employed by Tang Xianzu in his rewriting of the tale is to move the events in the factual domain to the private domains of the characters. The key event in the tale -- Li Yi’s betrayal of Xiaoyu -- takes place in the factual domain, which means it is a fact in the world of the tale. In the play, Li Yi’s betrayal is no longer a fact, but the product of false information and the content of false
beliefs. As Li Yi’s betrayal is transformed from a real event into a piece of false news, so is his image transformed from a faithless scholar into a faithful husband. In the tale his betrayal demands punishment; in the play his fidelity deserves reward. In this way a tale of betrayal and punishment is transformed into a play of fidelity and reward. This process of transformation is similar to the process through which the earliest model is inverted in The Thorn Hairpin. This is why The Purple Hairpin so much resembles The Thorn Hairpin.

**Burning Incense**

*Burning Incense* is a dramatic romance which radically rewrites the story of First Winner Wang.53 Nothing is known about the life of its author, Wang Yufeng 王玉峰, except that he is a contemporary of Tang Xianzu.

In the Song tale, the male protagonist’s given name is deliberately omitted. In the play he is known as Wang Kui, Kui being his given name (“Kui” literally means “first winner’). He is also given a courtesy name, Junmin, which obviously associates him with the historical Wang Junmin. The female protagonist’s name is changed from Wang Guiying to Jiao Guiying.

53. The edition of *Fenxiang ji* used in the following discussion is *Fenxiang ji*, in *Fenxiang ji Toujia ji*, ed. Wu Zuying (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 1-103.
In the following discussion, we will divided the play into four parts, and compare each part of it with the corresponding part of the tale.

In the first part of the tale, First Winner Wang is a scholar who fails the examinations. He wanders to Laiyang and gets acquainted with Wang Guying, a courtesan. She provides him with financial support so that he can concentrate on his studies. The most significant event in this part of the tale is First Winner Wang’s entrance into Wang Guying’s domain and the establishment of the debt-credit relationship between them.

In the first part of the play (Scene 2-12), the essential properties of the male protagonist are preserved: he is a scholar who wanders to Laiyang after he fails the examinations. But unlike the male protagonist in the tale, who is left penniless in a strange place, the male protagonist in the play has plenty of money with him. This means he does not have to be indebted to the female protagonist for her financial support as he does in the tale.

The essential properties of the female protagonist have been altered in the play. The female protagonist in the tale is a courtesan, even though she claims she has come from a decent family. In the play, the female protagonist becomes a

54. Scene 2.
filial daughter and a chaste woman. She sells herself in order to have her parents buried, which proves her to be a filial daughter. After she is sold to a bawdy house, she refuses to receive patrons, which shows her to be a chaste woman.\textsuperscript{56} The transformation of the female protagonist’s personal qualities reinforces her image as a virtuous woman.

Only one of the important events in the first part of the tale is retained in the play: the exchange of oaths in the seagod temple between the male and the female protagonist before he leaves her to go to the capital.\textsuperscript{57} Two major events are added in the first part of the play, which makes it quite different from the corresponding part of the tale.

The first important event added in this part of the play is the marriage between the male and female protagonist.\textsuperscript{58} In the tale they live together as lovers, but are not married as husband and wife. The marriage in the play has significant implications. First, it signals a thematic change in the play. If the thematic focus of the tale falls on the fragile love relation between a courtesan and her patron, the thematic focus in the play shifts to the marital fidelity between wife and husband. The thematic shift marks the play’s departure from the tale and its shift towards \textit{The Thorn}.

\begin{itemize}
\item 55. Scene 5.
\item 56. Scene 3.
\item 57. Scene 10.
\item 58. Scene 5.
\end{itemize}
Hairpin. Second, the marriage reverses the debt-credit relationship between them. In the tale it is the male protagonist who is indebted to the female protagonist for her financial support. In the play Wang Kui enters Guiying’s domain at the moment when her life is in a crisis. She contemplates suicide when Mrs. Xie tries to force her into prostitution. Wang Kui’s marriage proposal solves the crisis in her life, for which she is indebted to him. The reversal of the debt-credit relationship in the play reinforces Wang Kui’s image as a virtuous man.

The second important event added in this part of the play is Jin Lei’s marriage proposal. Besides Guiying, three other characters are involved in this event. Jin Lei, the most wealthy man in Laiyang, wants to marry Guiying even though he knows she is already married to Wang Kui. Mrs. Xie, Guiying’s adopted mother, pressures Guiying to abandon Wang Kui, who has used up his money during the three-year marriage with Guiying, and to marry Jin Lei. Xie Huide, Guiying’s adopted father, supports Guiying in her opposition to Mrs. Xie’s coercion. Through her resistance against Jin Lei’s wealth and Mrs. Xie’s power, Guiying proves herself to be a chaste woman.

59. Scene 3.
60. Scene 6.
61. Scene 8.
The second additional event in the first part of this play is similar to the first part of *The Thorn Hairpin*. Moreover, the characters in the additional event are similar to the characters in the corresponding part of *The Thorn Hairpin*. When a wealthy man makes a marriage proposal to their daughter, the reactions of Guiying’s adopted parents are similar to those of Qian Yulian’s parents. Xie Huide is similar to Qian Liuxing in that neither of them hold wealth as a supreme value. Mrs. Xie is similar to Yulian’s stepmother in that they both idolize the rich and despise the poor. Like Sun Ruquan, Jin Lei’s desire to marry a beautiful woman is backed up by his position as the most wealthy man in town. Between a poor scholar and a wealthy man, Guiying chooses the poor scholar, exactly as Yulian does in *The Thorn Hairpin*.

There are also differences between the characters’ domains in the two plays. The domain of Guiying’s adopted parents is socially lower than that of Yulian’s parents. Whereas Xie Huide is the head of a bawdy house, Qian Liuxing is a wealthy gentleman. This explains the lower moral standards in Xie Huide’s domain. While Yulian’s step-mother pressures her to marry a wealthy man before she is married, Mrs. Xie compels Guiying to abandon her husband and marry another man. In correspondence with the degradation of Xie Huide’s domain, Jin Lei’s domain is also lowered in terms of social status. Sun Ruquan is a scholar, even though an
unintelligent one, whereas Jin Lei is a wealthy man who does not even belong to the gentry-scholar class.

In the second part of the tale, the male protagonist has a change of heart and severs relations with Guiying after he becomes the first winner. He assumes office in Xuzhou and when Guiying’s servant delivers her letter to him, he refuse to accept it.

In the second part of the play (Scene 13-21), Wang Kui becomes the first winner and obtains a post in Xuzhou. This is the only event taken from the corresponding part of the tale. All the other events are created by the playwright, some of which bear close resemblance to those in The Thorn Hairpin.

Prime Minister Han Qi in this play, not unlike Prime Minister Moqi in The Thorn Hairpin, intends to marry his daughter to the first winner. Like Wang Shipeng, Wang Kui declines the marriage proposal. But unlike Prime Minister Moqi, Han Qi does not feel offended. Instead he admires the young man’s integrity. In contrast to Prime Minister Moqi, who persecutes Wang Shipeng for his refusal of the marriage

62. Scene 15.
63. Scene 17.
64. Scene 18.
65. Scene 19.
proposal, Han Qi arranges a banquet to see Wang Kui off. He even provides Wang Kui with manpower and travelling facilities for his journey to Xuzhou.

The marriage proposal from Prime Minister Han Qi serves as a test on Wang Kui’s fidelity to Guiying. By passing the test Wang Kui proves himself to be a faithful husband. The event not only offers an opportunity for Wang Kui to display his integrity, it also provides a story that Jin Lei will use to his own advantage. In The Thorn Hairpin, Wang Shipeng writes a letter to Yulian which is altered by Sun Ruquan. In a similar manner, Wang Kui writes a letter to Guiying while he stays in the capital. The letter is altered by Jin Lei to the effect that Wang Kui has married the Prime Minister’s daughter and decided to abandon Guiying.

In The Thorn Hairpin, when Shipeng’s altered letter reaches home, it provides a pretext for Yulian’s step-mother to pressure her to marry Sun Ruquan, which leads to Yulian’s suicide attempt. Similar events, the female protagonist’s suicide attempt and her adoptive mother’s coercion, are also present in Burning Incense. But unlike The Thorn Hairpin, in which the altered letter causes the coercion and the coercion in turn causes the attempted suicide, the coercion and the

66. Scene 21.
67. Scene 23.
68. Scene 20.
69. Scene 22.
suicide attempt have different causes in *Burning Incense*. Mrs. Xie’s coercion of Guiying to marry Jin Lei is prompted by the marriage proposal made once again by Jin Lei.\(^70\) Only Guiying’s suicide attempt is caused by Wang Kui’s altered letter. This slight change may be due to the influence of the tale, in which the news of the male protagonist’s betrayal is the only cause of the female protagonist’s suicide.

In the third part of the tale, Guiying learns of First Winner Wang’s betrayal. She charges him in the seagod temple before she commits suicide.

In the third part of the play (scenes 22-37), the essential events in the third part of the tale are preserved. As she does in the tale, Guiying commits suicide after she learns of Wang Kui’s betrayal.\(^71\) The motivation for her suicide brings her closer to her counterpart in the tale and distinguishes her from the female protagonist of *The Thorn Hairpin*. Yulian’s suicide attempt is motivated by her desire to preserve her chastity, whereas Guiying’s suicide in the play is motivated by her desire for revenge, just as it is in the tale. In a play that so closely follows the inverted model, Guiying’s craving for revenge is likely the most striking motif that distances the play from the inverted model and associates it with the original model.

\(^{70}\) Scene 24.
In the fourth part of the tale, Guiying's ghost confronts First Winner Wang in the examination hall in Nanjing. He is mentally deranged after the confrontation and stabs himself to death at the end. This part of the tale is completely dropped in the play.

In the play, after she commits suicide, Guiying's soul, with the help of the ghost soldiers sent by the seagod, finds Wang Kui in Xuzhou and fetches his soul to the seagod temple. Before the seagod Wang Kui defends his innocence and the seagod finds out it is Jin Lei who has altered the letter. The seagod sends their souls back to the human world and Guiying is revived.

Wang Kui's underworld trial distinguishes the play from the tale. Since First Winner Wang indeed betrays Guiying in the tale, he is punished by death at the end. In the play Wang Kui is innocent although Guiying, misled by the false information created by Jin Lei, believes he has betrayed her. The function of the underworld trial of Wang Kui is to dissolve Guiying's false belief, thus preparing for her final reunion with him in the human world.

71. Scene 26.
72. Scene 28.
73. Scene 29.
74. Scene 30.
If Guiying’s suicide has rendered the play similar to the earliest model, her revival brings the play back to the inverted model. After Guiying is revived, the emotional gap created by the false information between her and Wang Kui is bridged, but the geographical distance still exists. While Wang Kui plans to send his servant Wang Xing to bring Guiying and her family to his post, a war breaks out outside of Xuzhou that interrupts his plan. General Zhong E, the military commander of Xuzhou, carries out Wang Kui’s strategic scheme and defeats the invading Xixia troops headed by Zhang Yuan. The war has three functions in the play. First, it delays Wang Kui’s reunion with Guiying. Second, it proves Wang Kui to be an outstanding official, similar to the successful Wang Shipeng in The Thorn Hairpin. Third, it provides materials from which Jin Lei will spin another tale in order to marry Guiying.

While Guiying is anxiously waiting to hear from Wang Kui, a soldier comes from Xuzhou with the news that Wang Kui has been killed in the war with the Xixia troops. This is another effort made by Jin Lei to marry Guiying: he has paid the soldier to deliver the false news. The false information of the male protagonist’s death makes the play similar to The Thorn Hairpin, in which Yulian also receives the wrong

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75. Scene 32.
76. Scene 33.
information about Shipeng's death. There are also differences between the two plays. In Burning Incense, the news of Wang Kui's death is intentionally forged by Jin Lei, whereas in The Thorn Hairpin the false news of Shipeng's death is the result of misidentity: Qian Zaihe's servant has mistaken Wang Shihong for Wang Shipeng. The consequences of the false information are also different in the two play: the news of Shipeng's death delays Yulian's reunion with him while the news of Wang Kui's death only creates emotional woes in Guiying.

A even closer similarity exists between Burning Incense and Xiangnang ji 香囊記 (The Perfume Pouch) which suggests that the use of the false information about the male protagonist's death in the former is imitative of the latter. In both plays it is a soldier, begging for food at the female protagonist's door, who passes the wrong information to her. In both plays the false information brings grief to the female protagonist, but in no way delays her reunion with her husband. The difference between the two plays lies in the lack of intention on the part of the messenger in The Perfume Pouch: the soldier merely reports a hearsay without any intention of deceit.

77. Scene 34.

78. The Perfume Pouch is a dramatic romance written by Shao Can 鄧璨 (fl. 1465-1488).
The false information of Wang Kui’s death creates a crisis in Guiying’s domain: she is so distressed by the news that she considers committing suicide again. While this crisis has not been dissolved yet, another crisis occurs: Zhang Yuan leads his troops to Laiyang with the aim of killing Wang Kui’s family as a revenge. This crisis turns out to be a false alarm, for General Zhong quickly destroys Zhang Yuan’s army in front of the Laiyang town.

The war is an event that the playwright employs to delay the closure of the plot. After the trial of Wang Kui in the underworld, there seems to be no dramatic tension left for the play to continue. Since Guiying’s false belief of Wang Kui’s betrayal is dissolved during the trial, there is no obstacle left for them to overcome except for the physical distance between them. The war makes it more difficult for them to cross that geographical distance, thus prolonging the play. Dramatic tension is also added to the plot by the false information of Wang Kui’s death and by Zhang Yuan’s planned raid of Laiyang. The function of the war in Burning Incense is similar to that of false information in The Thorn Hairpin. Yulian and Shipeng’s reunion is delayed because each believes the other is dead after they both receive false information. Once the falsehood of the information is revealed, they are reunited. In a similar manner, Guiying and Wang Kui are

79. Scene 35.
reunited once the war is over.

The crisis in Guiying’s domain is over when she learns that Wang Kui is still alive. Jin Lei is punished when he is caught by General Zhong. Escorted by General Zhong’s troops, Guiying arrives in Xuzhou and is reunited with Wang Kui.

The punishment of Jin Lei is similar to that of Sun Ruquan in The Thorn Hairpin. In each of the two plays, the protagonist asks one of his fellow officials to investigate the case of the altered letter: an example of how one’s power in public life can be used to deal with problems in one’s private life. While the villains in both plays are caned after they are caught, the results are quite different: Sun Ruquan is sent to the capital for further trial but Jin Lei dies of the torture. The harsher punishment in Burning Incense implies a harsher moral judgement on the act of the antagonist.

In conclusion, Burning Incense is written according to the inverted model embodied by The Thorn Hairpin, even though some of its events and facts are taken from the tale “First Winner Wang.” Beside the names of characters and places, which associate the play with the tale, the most striking

80. Scene 37.
81. Scene 38.
82. Scene 39.
83. Scene 40.
motif in the tale that has been preserved in the play is Guying's suicide. Most of the events added in the play, such as the prime minister's marriage proposal, the altered letter, and the false information about the male protagonist's death, bear close resemblance to The Thorn Hairpin. The playwright's method of rewriting the tale is to move the events that take place in the factual domain to the private domains of the characters. The key events in the tale -- First Winner Wang's betrayal, Guiying's death and First Winner Wang's death -- really happen in the world of the tale. In the play, they either become false beliefs -- Wang Kui's betrayal and death become the contents of false information --, or mock events -- Guiying's death becomes an unactualized suicide. Since the male protagonist's betrayal become an inauthentic motif, his image as a faithless scholar in the tale is transformed into that of a faithful husband in the play. In the tale the male protagonist is punished for his betrayal; in the play he is rewarded for passing the tests of his moral integrity. A tale of betrayal and punishment is thus rewritten into a play of test and reward. The transformation of the tale into the play follows a similar process through which the earliest model is transformed into the inverted model. In other words, "First Winner" is rewritten into Burning Incense in a similar manner that the model embodied by the tale is inverted in The Thorn Hairpin.
After we examine how the Li Yi story and the story of First Winner Wang are transformed from early tales into dramatic romances, it is clear that Tang Xianzu and Wang Yufeng share a single method of rewriting. Their most significant device of rewriting may be summarized as "de-authentication," a process through which authentic motifs are transformed into inauthentic motifs.\(^4\) Take the male protagonist's betrayal for example. In the tale his betrayal of the female protagonist is presented as an authentic motif, that is, he actually betrays her. In the play, his betrayal is presented as an inauthentic motif, which means it does not actually occur. The motif still exists in the play, but only as false beliefs in the private domains of the characters. With the de-authentication of the motif of betrayal, the male protagonist is transformed from a faithless scholar to a faithful husband, and a tale of betrayal and punishment is rewritten into a play of test and reward.

\(^4\) For the definition of "authentication," see Lubomir Dolezel, "Truth and Authenticity in Narrative."
Conclusion:

Derivation and Change in Literary History

The process of transformation of the archetypal story exemplifies one particular mode of creativity in traditional Chinese literature: creativity with past literary models. This particular mode of creativity is "a continuous activity in which the new text transmits a living tradition and maintains its vitality by transformation and renovation." In this activity, adherence to past models insure the continuity of tradition while variation of those models produces change in literary form and content. Thus, the poetics of derivation embodies a dialectical relationship of tradition and change.

In this mode of creativity, "a new text finds its own identity only by assimilating and identifying with the model before transmitting it." Assimilation and identification, however, do not mean duplication and repetition. "Writers seldom duplicate their influential precursors; rather, they often work within a certain framework established by other writers or generic conventions, but vary aspects of it in


2. Ibid.

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significant ways. The interesting question for the critics has been how the successor(s) adapted, assimilated, transformed, altered, reshaped, or revised the precursor(s).”

In the preceding chapters, we have examined how changes are brought about by this process of adaptation, assimilation, alteration and revision of the archetypal story. There still remains the question about the causes of the changes.

In the following discussions, we shall attempt to account for the changes we have pointed out in terms of the generic constraints of the southern-style play. Our approach is determined by the fact that the transformation of the archetypal story runs parallel to the historical development of the southern-style play. For each model of the archetypal story, we may select one work we have discussed as a paradigm. Thus “First Winner Wang,” First Winner Zhang Xie and The Thorn Hairpin will be the paradigms for the three models of the archetypal story. The tale “First Winner Wang” has been written into a southern-style play, First Winner Wang Betrays Guiying, which represents the earliest model in the southern-style play. These three southern-style plays,

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First Winner Wang Betrays Guiying, First Winner Zhang Xie and The Thorn Hairpin, represent the three stages in the development of the southern-style play.

Our discussion of the generic constraints of the southern-style play will focus on the notion of “bao 報” (repayment and retribution), a concept which is closely related to the deontic modality in narrative semantics. Specifically we will attempt to show how this notion functions in conjunction with the expectation of the audience to determine a generic requirement in the composition of drama.

The notion of “bao” may be understood as a concept that describes the reciprocity of social actions. As such, it has served as a basis for human actions and interactions in Chinese society. “Bao” may also be understood as a belief that defines a principle for reward and punishment. As a belief, this notion is best expressed in the popular expression, “shan you shanbao e you ebao 善有善報，惡有惡報” (virtue is to be rewarded and vice is to be punished).


As a belief, “bao” is an age old notion that can be traced back to the *Shangshu* (Book of Documents). In the *Book of Documents*, it is expressed as a heavenly principle, “The way of Heaven is to bless the good, and make the bad miserable. 天道福善禍淫。” A similar statement reads, “(The ways) of God are not invariable: -- on the good-doer he sends down all blessings, and on the evil-doer he sends down all miseries. 上帝不常，作善，降之百祥，作不善，降之百殃。”

Significantly for our present discussion, “bao” is an underlying idea of the “shanshu 善書” (morality books) that

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The two documents which contain the above two quotations belong to a group of documents collectively known as the “forged documents in the ancient script.” Although these documents cannot be regarded as genuine complete texts passed down from the Pre-Qin eras, the statements contained in these documents are either fragments of genuine Pre-Qin documents or adaptations of similar statements from genuine Pre-Qin texts. For example, the first statement quoted above is derived from a similar saying in *Guoyu* 國語. The second statement is a rephrasing of an ancient saying quoted in *Mozi* 墨 子. However, the significance of the above quotations does not lie in their authenticity but in the fact that the documents which contain them were recognized by the state authorities as part of the Confucian classics and consequently influenced Chinese thought.
first appeared in the Song era. Through these morality books, which were widely circulated during the Song, Yuan and Ming times, the notion of repayment and retribution was disseminated and became a popular belief among the common people. This belief, we may assume, generated one of the expectations people brought with them when they went to watch a play.

In Chinese theory of literature, a parallel notion developed which prescribes a didactic function for literature. This notion is expressed as “cheng’e quanshan 懲惡 勸善” (castigating vice and encouraging virtue). In the popular belief of “bao,” Heaven rewards the good doer and punishes the evil doer. In the didactic theory of literature, the writer is required to convey this heavenly principle in his writings.

In traditional Chinese didactic theory of literature, the basic view concerning the function of literature is expressed in the concept of “jiaohua 敎化” (teaching and transforming). According to this view, literature is a tool that can be used to teach and transform the people.

The notion of literature as a tool for moral education can be traced back to the “Great Preface” of the Shijing 詩經

(Book of Songs). Written down in the Han dynasty, the "Great Preface" is the most influential statement in Chinese poetics on the nature and function of poetry. In its remarks on "feng 風" (airs), the first section of the Book of Songs, we read the following statements: "‘Airs’ are ‘influence’; it is ‘to teach.’ By influence it stirs them; by teaching it transforms them. 風，風也，教也。風以動之，教以化之。” More specifically poetry is described as having the function to regulate human relations. "Thus to correct [the presentation of] achievements and failures, to move Heaven and Earth, to stir gods and spirits, there is nothing more apposite than poetry. By it the former kings managed the relations between husbands and wives, perfected the respect due to parents and superiors, gave depth to human relations, beautifully taught and transformed the people, and changed local customs. 故正得失，動天地，感鬼神，莫近乎詩。先王以是經夫婦，成孝敬，厚人倫，美教化，移風俗。”

"Jiaohua" is a general notion which requires literature to have the function of moral education, whereas "cheng’e


9. Maoshi zhushu, 2B-3A. The English translation is Stephen Owen’s, in his Readings in Chinese Literary Thought, 45.
quanshan" is a more specific notion which describes how literature should accomplish its mission of moral education. The notion of "cheng'e quanshan" can be traced to Zuozhuan 左傳 (Zuo's Commentary), the earliest Chinese narrative history. The Spring and Autumn 春秋, of which Zuo's Commentary is supposed to be an elaborate commentary, is praised as "condemning what is evil and encouraging what is good. "憫惡而勸善。" This didactic function of history is applied by Wang Chong 王充 (27-ca. 97) to all sorts of writing. According to Wang Chong, writing means "to record people's deeds and pass down their names. Good people wish to be recorded, so they make an effort to do good. Evil people dislike to be recorded, so they struggle to stop doing evil. Therefore, a writer's pen is to encourage what is good and censure what is evil. 載人之行，傳人之名也。善人願載，思勉爲善，邪人惡載，力自禁載。然則文人之筆，勸善憫惡也。" These two notions, "jiaohua" and "cheng'e quanshan," are combined in Zhu Xi's discussions of the function of poetry.


11. Lunheng zhushi 論衡注释, ed. Beijing daxue lishi xi Lunheng zhushi xiaozu 北京大學歷史系 論衡注釋小組
His discussions are related to the interpretations of the *Book of Poetry*. The *Book of Poetry* has been described by Confucius as "having no warped thoughts 思無邪." However, this earliest Chinese anthology of poetry indeed includes poems dealing with socially prohibited sexual love. By the moral standard of later Confucian scholars, these poems cannot be accepted as "having no warped thoughts." In order to give an appropriate interpretation to these poems while avoiding contradicting Confucius, Zhu Xi attempts to shift the focus from the poet’s intention to the poem’s effect on the reader. He says, "‘No warped thoughts’ means to enable the reader to have no warped thoughts. While a person reads the three hundred poems in the *Book of Poetry*, what is good serves as a model for him to follow while what is evil as an example to warn him: in this way they will enable him to have no warped thoughts. If you believe that the poet has no warped thoughts, can you say ‘Sangzhong’ and ‘Qinyou’ indeed have no warped thoughts? 思無邪，乃是要使讀詩人思無邪耳。讀三百篇詩，善可為法，惡可為誠，故使人思無邪也。若以為作詩者思無邪，則桑中溱溱果無邪耶？” In his annotation of Confucius’

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idea of “no warped thoughts,” Zhu Xi generalizes his interpretation of the function of poetry in the following manner, “Of what the poems speak about, what is good may stir the good mind of a person, what is evil may admonish him against his wayward intent, the function of both being to enable him to make his temperament correct. 凡詩之言，善者可以感發人之善心，惡者可以懲創人之逸志，其用歸於使人得其性之正而已。” According to Zhu Xi’s view of the function of poetry, moral education can be achieved by showing what is good as a model for the reader to follow and showing what is evil as an example to warn him. Zhu Xi’s view of the function of poetry will be echoed in the writings about drama that developed later.

When Chinese theatrical art matured during the Song dynasty, it did not attract the attention of literary scholars. Consequently we can hardly find any theoretical formulations concerning drama from that era. However, theatrical activities were recorded by some Song writers. In 1235, Naideweng 耐得翁 recorded his observation of shadow plays in Hangzhou, the provisional capital of the Southern Song court. He offers the following remarks about shadow plays, “Their stories are rather similar to those told by the

chubanshe, 1995), 33. “Sangzhong” and “Qinyou” are poems about licentious assignations.

14. Zhu Xi, Sishu jizhu 四書集注 (Taipei: Xuehai
story-tellers of historical narrative. In most cases they are half fiction and half fact. The altruistic and loyal characters are sculpted into respectable images, the crafty and evil into hideous figures. Praise and censure are signified visually even in these plays for a marketplace audience. 其話本與講史書者頗同，大抵真假相半，公忠者雕以正貌，奸邪者與之丑形，蓋亦寓褒貶于世俗之眼戲也。“¹⁵ Naideweng’s record tells us that even in its early stage, Chinese theater fulfilled a didactic function by praising the virtuous and condemning the evil.

One of the early scholars who applied the notion of “cheng’e quanshan” to drama is Qiu Jun 邱浚 (1421-1495), a Ming playwright who became a chief councilor in his bureaucratic career. In the first scene of his Wulun quanbei zhongxiao ji 伍倫全備忠孝記 (The Perfect Five Relationships), he describes his play in the following manner,

It emerges from the affections, grows out of moral principles, and intends to stir the people with stories that are easy for them to understand. After they see it in performance, a son will become filial, an official will become loyal, a younger brother will respect his elder brother, an elder brother will befriend his younger brother, husband and wife will become harmonious, friends will

chubanshe, 1984), 61.

respect and trust each other, a stepmother will care for her stepson, a disciple will become considerate towards his master, wives and concubines will no longer be jealous, servants will no longer envy and scheme against each other. What is good can stir the good mind of the people while what is bad may admonish people against their unruly intent. The aim is to prompt and transform the people so that they will amend their demerit and strengthen their merit."

Just as Zhu Xi does in his theory of poetry, Qiu Jun combines the two notions of "teaching and transforming" and "encouraging the virtuous and censuring the evil" in his theory of drama.

The most succinct exposition of the didactic function of drama can be found in Li Yu 李漁 (1610-1680), who developed the most sophisticated theory of drama and theater in traditional China. In his Xianqing ouji 閒情偶寄 (Casual Record of Leisurely Thoughts), Li Yu explains the social function of drama in the following manner.

Since very few ignorant men and women read books, it is hard to find a way to inspire them to do good and warn them against doing evil. Therefore

16. Wulun quanbei zhongxiao ji 伍倫全備忠孝記 (Guben xiqu congkan chuji 古本戲曲叢刊初集, 1954), 1:2A-2B.
this type of literature has been created. Through the performance of actors, it tells the public that good people will end up one way and bad people will end up another way. It informs them of what they should avoid doing. It is a prescription for curing people and making society healthy, a tool to save people from misery and to prevent calamity.

The effectiveness of drama in conveying moral education to an illiterate public is related to its generic characteristic: it does not rely on reading but is communicated through performance. The means of conveying its didactic message is also specified: by showing how the virtuous characters are rewarded and how the evil characters are punished. Li Yu seems especially concerned about the censuring effect of drama: thus drama is compared to a medical prescription which cures people of their diseases.

In Li Yu's theory, moral education is not only a social function of drama, it is one of the major factors that secures the value and life of a dramatic work.

There are three factors by which to predict whether a play will be passed down or not. They are the story, the literary expressions, and the benefit to moral teaching. It will not be passed down if its story is not marvelous or if its

expressions are not elegant. Even when its story and expression are both appropriate, it will not be passed down if it is not based on correct moral principles, has no benefit for encouraging good deeds and warning against bad deeds, and has no further effect than making the audience laugh.

"Moral education" is the basic function assigned to drama by traditional Chinese critics. "Encouraging what is good and condemning what is evil" is the means by which the function of drama is effected. Specifically this means that in drama virtue must be rewarded and evil must be punished so that the audience will be encouraged to do good and avoid evil. Thus to reward the virtuous characters and punish the evil characters becomes a generic requirement for drama. This generic requirement is summarized by a Qing drama critic in the following formula, "Virtue is to be rewarded, vice is to be punished: the heavenly principle is apparent; it will be confirmed in a second. 善則福，惡則禍，天道昭彰，驗諸俄頃。" 19

Now we can see how the didactic purpose of traditional Chinese critics brings them close to the popular belief of "bao" held by the common people, among them the illiterate


audiences of drama. Although scholars and illiterate people belong to radically different social groups, they both expect to see on stage a story in which virtue is rewarded and vice is punished. This common expectation can be described as a generic constraint on drama. It is in the light of this generic constraint that we shall explain the changes of the archetypal models.

In the original model of the archetypal story ("First Winner Wang" being its paradigm), the male protagonist is in a financially lower domain when he enters the female protagonist’s domain. By providing him with financial support, the female protagonist acquires credits and he accumulates debts. Through a marital contract with her, the male protagonist also creates an obligation. His success in the examinations leads to a change of his desires: she is no longer registered as a positive value in his axiological system. However, the intention to desert her creates a conflict in his private domain: the conflict is between his desire and his moral obligation. Once this conflict is resolved and he carries out his intention, this conflict between the axiological system and deontic system becomes a conflict in the deontic system only. It is no longer located within his private domain, but between his domain and the factual domain. His action represents a double betrayal: he breaks his marital contract with her and he does not clear his debts to her. Besides the conflicts between the factual
domain and his domain, the solution of which calls for his punishment, his betrayal also creates conflicts between the factual domain and the female protagonist’s private domain. This is reflected in both her axiological system and her deontic system: her wish to merge her domain with his through marriage can no longer be fulfilled and the credits she acquired by providing him with financial support will not be rewarded. These conflicts give rise to her motivation for revenge. Since her domain is weak in terms of social status and political power, her intention to take revenge cannot be realized without external help. In order to carry out her intention for revenge, she commits suicide to enter a more powerful domain: the domain of the supernatural which is created through the alethic system. Her membership in the supernatural domain bestows her with power with which she eliminates his domain. Although his punishment resolves the conflicts between the factual domain and his domain, her wish will remain forever unfulfilled and her credits unrewarded. The lack of satisfaction of her private domain explains why this model is sometimes designated as “tragedy.”

The ending of “First Winner Wang” fails to meet the generic expectation of drama as described above. At the end of the story, vice is punished but virtue is not rewarded. As a classical language tale, this would be acceptable to its

readers. Since both the writers and readers of the classical language tale are scholars, the didactic function is not emphasized as a generic requirement for a literati genre such as the tale. When “First Winner Wang” was written into a play, however, this would become a serious problem to its audience, who normally expect to see virtue being rewarded. It is probably not unreasonable to assume that the failure to meet the audience’s expectation in this respect is one of the reasons why First Winner Wang Betrays Guiying has not survived.

In the converted model of the archetypal story (First Winner Zhang Xie being its paradigm), the male protagonist’s relationship to the female protagonist is quite similar to that of the original model up to the point of his desertion of her. In the converted model, the conflict between the axiological system and deontic system, between his desire and obligation, never occurs in his private domain, which reveals his lack of feelings of love and sense of morality. The conflict occurs directly in the deontic system between the factual domain and his domain. This conflict is intensified by his attempted murder of the female protagonist, a motif that does not appear in the original model. Thus to the male protagonist’s double betrayal of moral obligations in the original model, the converted model adds another legally prohibited action. As in the original model, the male protagonist’s desertion in the converted model also creates
conflicts between the factual domain and the female protagonist's private domain. Yet these conflicts do not give rise to the female protagonist's intention for revenge in the converted model as they do in the original model. This signals the weakness of her domain not only in terms of social status and political power, but also in terms of her capacities for action. Unlike her counterpart in the earliest model who actively seeks power in order to get revenge, she is by chance passively taken into a more powerful domain. While her counterpart in the earliest model enters a supernatural domain, she is taken into a domain of higher social status and greater political power. Her entrance into this domain bestows her with the power to reestablish the marital alliance with the male protagonist. It is this power that enables her to be reunited with him. Although the merging of her domain with his domain resolves the conflicts in her private domain, his violation of legal codes is not punished and the conflict in the deontic system between the factual domain and his domain remains unresolved. The sense that justice remains undone leads some critics to describe the ending of the converted model as "forced reunion."  

Generally speaking the ending of First Winner Zhang Xie satisfies the audience's expectation more than that of the
earliest model does. The earliest model presents a fictional world in which characters’ domains are destroyed, whereas *First Winner Zhang Xie* presents a fictional world in which characters’ domains are amalgamated. The amalgamation of domains in the converted model is more in keeping with the ideal of harmony in Chinese cosmological thought than the destruction of domains in the earliest model. In this sense the converted model is an improvement on the earliest model. It is a successful transformation under the generic constraint.

However *First Winner Zhang Xie* does not satisfy the generic requirement completely. Although virtue is rewarded at the end of this play, vice goes unpunished. *First Winner Zhang Xie* fails to meet the audience expectation because the world it presents is a world with serious flaws. It is tempting to suggest that this is one of the reasons why *First Winner Zhang Xie* failed to become a popular play and went into oblivion throughout the Ming and Qing eras.

In the inverted model of the archetypal story (*The Thorn Hairpin* being its paradigm), the plot is similar to the previous two models up to the point of the male protagonist’s success in the examinations. In the inverted model, the epistemic modality has a more prominent function than it does in the previous models. The conflict never actually occurs in either the axiological system or the deontic system in the male protagonist’s domain, for he does not desire to desert
the female protagonist after he passes the examinations. Yet the male protagonist’s desertion of the female protagonist is as important a motif as it is in the two earlier models. It is an inauthentic motif fabricated by the antagonist who desires the female protagonist. Although an inauthentic motif, it has real consequences in the factual domain. It creates conflicts in the female protagonist’s domain. One conflict occurs in the axiological system between herself and her parents. Her wish to remain chaste is thrown into conflict with her parents’ wish to have her remarried. This conflict in turn creates another conflict, between the axiological system and deontic system in her private domain. It is a conflict between her obligation to her husband and her obligation to her parents. In order to resolve the conflict in her private domain, she attempts suicide. When she is saved, she is taken into a domain of higher social status and greater political power, just like her counterpart in the converted model. Unlike her counterpart in the converted model, whose entrance into another domain enables her reunion with the male protagonist, here the female protagonist’s entrance into another domain helps her resolve the conflict in her private domain. Then the epistemic modality is used again to create more conflicts. Unintentional spread of inauthentic motifs, first the female protagonist’s death and then the male protagonist’s death, creates a conflict between their epistemic system and the
factual domain, which keeps the two domains of the protagonists separate from each other. The inauthentic motifs of deaths in turn create conflicts between the axiological system and deontic system in their private domains. Their wish to remain chaste is thrown into conflict with their filial duty to produce offspring. Between loyalty to spouse and filialty to ancestors, they both choose the former, thus proving them to be virtuous husband and wife. Once the conflict in their epistemic system is resolved, their two domains are reunited. The antagonist, who has created the inauthentic motif of the male protagonist’s betrayal which gives rise to all the conflicts, is punished.

The Thorn Hairpin satisfies the generic requirement almost completely. At the end of the play, virtue is rewarded and vice is punished. Its fictional world is an ideal world in which the heavenly principle of rewarding the good and punishing the evil prevails. The audience’s belief in that heavenly principle is confirmed and so their expectations that virtue be rewarded and vice be punished are perfectly satisfied.

Through its revision of previous models, The Thorn Hairpin finally develops a model that ideally matches the generic requirement. That is probably one of the reasons why this play continued to be very popular throughout the Ming and Qing eras and became a model for later playwrights to emulate.
In the above discussions, we have attempted to account for the changes of the archetypal models in terms of the generic constraints of traditional Chinese drama. It goes without saying that many other factors may have contributed to the causes of these changes. A different perspective will bring different factors to the foreground.
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