

Cry to Heaven: A Play to Celebrate One Hundred Years of Chinese Spoken Drama by Nick Rongjun Yu

Introduction and translation by Shiao-ling Yu

Yutian (Cry to Heaven) is the third Chinese stage adaptation of Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel Uncle Tom's Cabin between 1907 and 2007. The first, Heinu yutian lu (Black Slave's Cry to Heaven) by Zeng Xiaogu, was staged by Chinese students in Tokyo in 1907; the second, Heinu hen (Regret of the Black Slaves) by Ouyang Yuqian, was mounted as part of the fiftieth anniversary of the first production; and the third, Yutian (Cry to Heaven), commemorated the hundredth anniversary of Chinese spoken drama (huaju) in 2007. Each adaptation has a different focus that reflects the social, political, and cultural conditions of its time, and together the works provide a historical view of the development of Chinese spoken drama. The most recent production, by Nick Rongjun Yu, juxtaposes one hundred years of dramatic history with scenes from Uncle Tom's Cabin, making the American slaves' struggle to gain freedom a metaphor for Chinese dramatists' efforts to achieve their own.

Yu Rongjun, also known as Nick Rongjun Yu, is the author of more than twenty plays, including Renmo gouyang (Dog's Face), WWW.COM, and Tiantang gebi shi fengrenyuan (The Asylum Next to Heaven). His plays have won many prizes in China and have been performed in Hong Kong, Taipei, the United States, and other countries. Besides being a playwright, he is director of programming and marketing for the Shanghai Dramatic Arts Center.

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Three different Chinese plays have been based on the story about slavery that Harriet Beecher Stowe devised in 1852. The three works—by Zeng Xiaogu (1907), by Ouyang Quyan (1957), and by Nick Rongju Yu (2007, translated here)—are each representative of important issues in Chinese culture at the time the scripts were created. By considering these works we can understand the struggles of the dramatists of each period and their cries for freedom.

Black Slave's Cry to Heaven and the Birth of Spoken Drama

The first version of the story was used to reflect the abjection of China in her anticolonial struggle at the beginning of the twentieth century. In 1907 in Tokyo, members of the Chinese student organization the Spring Willow Society (Chunliu She) staged a play called *Heinu yutian lu* (Black Slave's Cry to Heaven) by Zeng Xiaogu based on a 1901 Chinese translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* by Lin Shu and Wei Yi.

This production is generally regarded as the beginning of the Chinese spoken drama (*huaju*). It was not the first Western-style play performed in China: as early as the 1860s, amateur dramatic clubs organized by the expatriate communities in Shanghai were staging Western plays, but these performances had little impact on the local community or development of modern Chinese drama. By the 1890s Chinese students at Shanghai's missionary schools began to put on modern-style plays without the songs and dances of traditional *xiqu*, including ones that they wrote themselves (see Ge 1997: 2–10). Chinese reformers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also advocated the introduction of Western fiction and drama along with Western science and technology to China as a part of their reform program. Liang Qichao (1873–1929), scholar, journalist, philosopher, and visionary, in his famous essay “On the Relationship between Fiction and the Government of the People” (1902), calls for the reform of fiction: “If we want to improve our governance, we must start with the reform of fiction. If we want to rejuvenate our people, we must begin with a new fiction.”¹ Liang attributed so much power to fiction because it is widely read and can motivate its readers. Other reformers considered drama even more effective than fiction in bringing about social changes, because even illiterate people could be moved by a performance. Chen Duxiu (1879–1942), who later played important roles in the May Fourth movement of 1919 for science and democracy and founding the Chinese Communist Party in 1921, pointed out the educational function of drama in his essay “On Theater” (1905): “Theater is a big school for the world, and actors are teachers of the people” (Ge 1997: 3). From these statements we can see that Chinese intellectuals emphasized the social function

of drama rather than its artistic merit. This lopsided view of drama was prompted by a desire to use Western-style drama as a vehicle for modernizing China. For this reason the Chinese students in Tokyo chose to stage *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Their choice was influenced by novelist Lin Shu, who gave the title *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* to his translation with Wei Yi. In Lin's preface and afterward, he likens the treatment of black slaves in the novel to the plight of Chinese immigrants in America and the situation of the Chinese dominated by foreign powers. Lin's purpose in translating this book was "to cry out for the sake of our people because the prospect of enslavement is threatening our race" (Arkush and Lee 1989: 79). So this play was a protest against oppression and a patriotic act to awaken the Chinese people.²

Besides its American source, the Japanese *shinpa* (new school drama) influenced *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* and Western-style Chinese play development. This new school appeared during the Meiji government's theater reform to modernize and Westernize Japan's drama. Chinese students in Tokyo not only watched *shinpa* plays, but some members of the Spring Willow Society, who would become pioneers in the development of *huaju*, also received training in this new theater. Zeng Xiaogu (1873–1937, author of the script), Li Shutong (1880–1942, an actor-designer in the production of play), and Ouyang Yuqian (1889–1962, a performer in the play) either took acting lessons or had close association with *shinpa* actors. Fujisawa Asajiro (1866–1917), a well-known *shinpa* actor, also coached the Chinese students on the production of this play as well as an earlier production of one act of *La Dame aux camelias* by Alexander Dumas fils (see Yuan 1993: 57–88; Liu 2006: 344). Chinese students, through their acting and study of *shinpa*, learned the styles and theatrical conventions of the Western realistic drama as interpreted by Japanese artists and, on return to China, would use this learning to develop their art first in Shanghai and then throughout the country. Early Chinese *huaju* developed from Western models by way of Japan. The original script of *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* by Zeng Xiaogu is no longer extant; only a copy of the playbill has been preserved at Waseda University's Tsubouchi Memorial Theatre Museum as a visual record. This playbill along with photographs give us clues to the visual style of the piece. Artwork on the playbill shows melodramatic poses and dramatic action (see Fig. 1).

Performer Ouyang Yuqian provided a synopsis of the play based on his recollection in his essay "Huiyi Chunliu" (Reminiscences of the Spring Willow Society; 1984: 144–146). The most striking differences between Stowe's novel and the adaptation are the absence of Christian religion in the Chinese play and the ending. Whereas the novel ends with the emancipation of the slaves by the character George Shelby, in

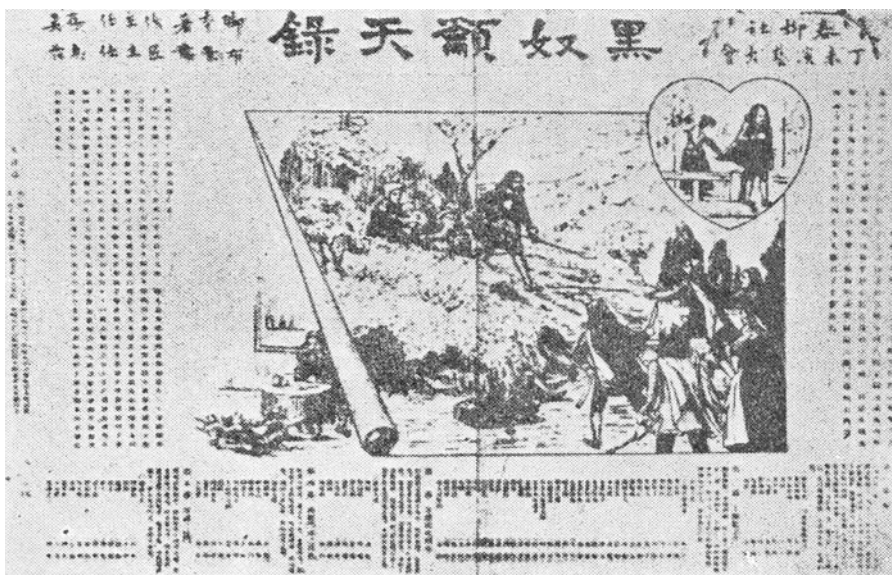


FIGURE 1. *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* (1907) playbill. (Photo: Reprinted from Tian 1985.)

Zheng's play the slaves liberate themselves. In act 5, titled "Confrontation on the Snowy Cliff," the slave George Harris escapes to a mountain but is pursued by the slave owner and his henchmen. Harris kills several of them, gets free, and reunites with his wife, Eliza, and their son. The message of the play is clear: the Chinese people must resist imperialist aggression if they hope to be free.

This play was unlike previous Chinese *xiqu* in excluding dance and song and disallowing recitation, soliloquies, or asides. Ouyang informs us that the play employed only spoken dialogue. It was pure *huaju* in form and all dialogue was based on a written text (Ouyang 1984: 146). This separated this work from the more amateurish *mubiao xi* (outline plays), in which the actors improvised their lines.³ The student actors did a creditable job in scenery and costume design. Photos depict period costumes showing the clear class differentiation between the slave owners and the slaves (see Fig. 2).

With the help of Fugisawa, they were able to stage their play at Hongo-za, *shinpa's* best-known theater (Ouyang 1984: 149–150). *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* had two public showings (1–2 June 1907) and was well publicized and well received. Japanese drama critics praised the quality of the Chinese students' performance (Chen 2007: 283–284, 288–289). Soon the success in Tokyo inspired similar experiments and



FIGURE 2. Act 2 of *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* (1907) depicts the party at Wilson's factory. The lady in the evening gown is Amelia Shelby (played by Li Shutong); to her right is her husband (played by Huang Nannan). The person who is bowing is George Harris (played by Xie Kangbai). Ouyang Yuqian played one of the slave girls. (Photo: Reprinted from Chen 2007.)

developments in China, where the *huaju* movement became an important part of the Chinese new culture movement.⁴

***Heinu hen* (Regret of the Black Slaves): Remembering *Huaju's* Beginnings**

In its second incarnation the play became representative of class struggle and "Third World" efforts to throw off the hegemony of the West in the post-World War II era. In his reminiscences "Zi wo yanxi yilai" (Since I Started Acting), Ouyang Yuqian remarked that performing in the Tokyo production "was a most unforgettable experience of his life" (1990: 9). As a result, he wrote another version titled *Heinu hen* (Regret of the Black Slaves, 1958) to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of *huaju*. While the earlier adaptation called on the Chinese people to save their country, Ouyang's 1958 play was a denunciation of racial discrimination in America, with the characters divided into the white oppressors and the oppressed blacks. The images document the pathos and plight of the slaves (see Fig. 3).

The portrayal of the cruel slave owners and traders follows Stowe's novel closely, but Stowe's more sympathetic characters—such as the Shelbys (who feel forced to sell Uncle Tom and the son of Eliza and George Harris because of debts) and the factory owner Wilson (who once owned George Harris)—are also exposed as hypocrites. As members of the exploiting class, their actions cannot transcend their class origins and interests. They differ from the "bad guys" like the nefarious slave owner Legree in degree, not in kind. Even the seem-

ingly kind-hearted Wilson justifies slavery by quoting the Bible: “It is said in the Bible that slaves should obey their masters. When God created men he divided them into many classes” (Ouyang 1980: 478).

Of the oppressed characters in the play, Tom is of course the prime example. As in the novel, he is portrayed as loyal, kind, and self-sacrificing. However, unlike Tom in the novel, who is a devout Christian unto death and forgives his tormentors, Ouyang’s Tom comes to a gradual awakening as a result of his bitter experiences. When he is first sold by Shelby to pay a debt, Tom is still grateful to this old master: for example, Tom instructs his wife, whom he must leave behind, to serve Shelby faithfully. After Tom is beaten by his new master Simon Legree—first for refusing to flog a female slave and later for refusing to reveal the escape plan of two of Legree’s slaves (Cassy and Emmeline)—Tom is no longer sure of his old beliefs. He says, “I used to believe that all the people could be changed with kindness. Today I



FIGURE 3. In *Regret of the Black Slaves* (produced by the Central Experimental Spoken Drama Company, 1958) Tom helps Eliza escape in act 2. (Photo: Reprinted from Ouyang 1962.)

realize that you big slave owners cannot be changed with kindness” (Ouyang 1980: 521). This realization shatters Tom’s and other slaves’ hopes of being liberated by kind Christian masters. A production photo documents the earnest style of socialist realism depicting class struggle and heroism of the proletariat that can be discerned in the stance of Tom as he is about to be burnt at the stake (see Fig. 4).

In contrast to Tom’s generally meek submission to oppression, George Harris is full of fighting spirit. He declares, “Either I’ll be free or I’ll die. I’ll never again be a slave!” (Ouyang 1980: 450) As the inventor of a machine for cleaning hemp, Harris is no ordinary slave. His polite but sharp exchanges with Wilson in act 4 represent an educated black person’s criticism of slavery on moral and legal grounds. As in the Zheng 1907 production, when Harris escapes to a mountain and is pursued by his owner, he manages to capture his former master and whip him in retaliation for the beatings Harris had received for many



FIGURE 4. Tom is burned in act 8 of *Regret of the Black Slaves* (1958). (Photo: Reprinted from Ouyang 1962.)

years. Harris's dream of being free is finally realized when he arrives in Canada with his wife, sister, and son. Ouyang's portrayal of Harris as a freedom fighter is an affirmation of resistance as the effective means against oppression. Stowe's humanitarianism is not endorsed here. The emphasis on resistance and class struggle in this play was in keeping with the communist ideology and China's stated foreign policy in the 1950s: to support the anti-imperialist struggles of the oppressed peoples in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Chinese critics commented that the play succeeded in "making the past to serve the present, and the foreign to serve the Chinese" and commended Ouyang for transforming himself from a patriotic youth of his student days into a proletarian warrior in his old age (Su 1989: 446–465).

Yu Rongjun's *Yutian* (Cry to Heaven)

The most recent version of the slave narrative can be read as a metaphorical call for freedom of speech. For the *huaju* centennial in 2007, Shanghai playwright Yu Rongjun (Nick Rongjun Yu) wrote the play *Yutian* (Cry to Heaven), which was performed at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing as the finale of the Fifth Beijing International Theater Festival on May 3. To showcase the achievements of *huaju*, Yu packed his large cast with celebrity actors such as Pu Cunxin, Lei Kesheng, Xi Meijuan, and Qin Yi, although some of them had only walk-on parts. The play adopted the format of mixed-media theater, and it was directed by the veteran woman director Chen Xinyi, who has directed the *jingju* *Mei Lanfang*, the *huaju* play *Shang Yang*, and the *huangmei xi* (a style of regional opera) work *Huizhou nuren* (Woman of Huizhou). Dramatic performance is interspersed with recitation, film clips of important moments in *huaju* history, and live performance of musical pieces such as Jerome Kern's "Ol' Man River," the Chinese version of "Amazing Grace," and Dvorak's *New World Symphony*. Chen coined a name for this play: "spoken drama symphonic dramatic poem" (*huaju jiaoxiang jushi*). This multimedia approach shows how much *huaju* has changed since the first production of *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* when getting rid of the musical and spectacular was crucial to creating the genre as a "serious" art.

The play is divided into six acts, each covering a period of the history of *huaju* from 1907 to the present. Parallel to the *huaju* development are the scenes of the black struggle for freedom. These two story lines give *Cry to Heaven* a play-within-a-play structure as the experiences of ten leading Chinese dramatists of the last century are intertwined with those of the characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

In act 1, Li Shutong, a member of the original 1907 group, tells the narrator that he and his fellow students staged *Black Slave's Cry to*

Heaven in order to awaken the Chinese people. Likewise, Tom tells Little George that many slaves risk their lives to cross the river because there is something they want on the other side—freedom.

Act 2 represents the early period of the development of *huaaju* in China from 1907 to 1918. The Manchu government's assassination of a dramatist active in the *huaaju* movement in Shanghai is mirrored in the situation of the characters in Stowe's novel. When Tom and several other slaves are sold, actor-writer Ouyang Yuqian comments that the Chinese people, too, are like slaves waiting to be auctioned off. The song "Ol' Man River" that concludes this act voices both the American slaves' and the subjugated Chinese people's longing for freedom.

The third period (1919–1936) is represented in act 3, and it witnesses considerable achievement in *huaaju* against the background of a looming national crisis, which resulted in the Japanese invasion of northeastern China (referred to as the September Eighteenth Incident). On 18 September 1931, the Japanese dynamited a section of the South Manchuria Railway and used this "Mukden Incident" as a pretext to invade Manchuria. Similarly, the conditions of the black slaves in the story deteriorate in the third episode. Tom suffers a severe beating by his master, Legree, and fellow slaves Cassy and Emmeline decide to escape.

Acts 4 deals with the war years (1937–1948) and act 5 with the Maoist years (1949–1976). During the war, theatrical performances became a powerful medium in rallying the Chinese people to fight against the Japanese invaders. As the First Male Actor points out in the script, "Since the beginning of Chinese history, drama never had such a big impact on the country and nation." But this "golden age" of drama soon turned into a "dark age" after 1949, when all dramatic activities came under government control. Borrowing Mao Zedong's famous phrase "the Chinese people have stood up," the playwright sums up the situation by having the character of an actor say: "The Chinese *huaaju* has stood up." This statement is of course a satirical comment on the subservient status of *huaaju* under the communist regime. During a relaxation of censorship ("a breathing space," as the author terms it) such as the "Hundred Flowers" period (1956–1957), Chinese dramatists sprang into action, and Lao She (1899–1966) wrote his masterpiece *Chaguan* (Teahouse, 1957), which uses the metaphorical space of a tearoom to represent China's turbulent twentieth-century history. But this brief period when Mao let "a hundred flowers bloom, a hundred schools of thought contend" was followed by more tightening of control and the decade-long Cultural Revolution (1966–1976). In the play, this period is described as when "*huaaju* chose collective silence." Actually, this silence was not voluntary, but imposed, as Jiang

Qing (1914–1991), Mao’s wife and leader of the movement, banned all other forms of performance except her “revolutionary model operas.”⁵ A most tragic aspect of this “revolution” was the persecution of tens of thousands of writers, artists, and intellectuals. Two prominent playwrights featured in this play, Tian Han (1898–1968) and *Teahouse* author Lao She, perished during this period. Tian’s death is alluded to by referring to his play *Mingyou zhi si* (Death of a Famous Actor, 1929). What sealed Tian’s doom was not this play, which he wrote early in his career, but a historical drama titled *Guan Hanqing*, written in 1958, in which he employed the strategy of “using the past to criticize the present.” The thirteenth-century playwright Guan Hanqing, who spoke out for the people, could be Tian’s self-portrait, and the oppressive rule of the Mongols in the play could be a reflection of the situation in China of the 1950s. After the Cultural Revolution broke out, Tian was arrested and died in prison.

Lao She committed suicide after suffering a humiliating beating by the Red Guards in 1966. His drowning is described obliquely in the play by the death of the slave Lucy. While the Cultural Revolution ravages the Chinese dramatists of this scene, the fortunes of the American slaves also reach a nadir. Tom is burned at the stake, and the woman slave Lucy commits suicide by drowning. The Lucy episode does not appear in Lin Shu’s translation, or in Zheng or Ouyang’s plays. Clearly, it is added to obliquely parallel Lao She’s drowning.

Act 6 covers the period 1977–2007, but, unlike in the other acts, nothing is said about the development of *huaju* during these thirty years. Instead, the entire act is devoted to describing Eliza and other slaves crossing the icy river to reach the land of freedom. This ending reminds the audience of how difficult the journey to freedom has been for the American slaves and of the ongoing struggle of Chinese dramatists.

This translation of Nick Rongjun Yu’s work is based on a text published in *Xin juben* (New Drama) 3 (2007): 49–67.

YUTIAN (CRY TO HEAVEN)

CAST

Characters in the play, historical personalities, and contemporary characters can be interchanged.

Characters from *Huaju* History [Biographical sketches of the dramatists provided by the translator.]

ACTOR, *a spokesperson for huaju today; can be played by different actors in different acts.*

LI SHUTONG (1880–1942), *a pioneer of Chinese spoken drama. Li became an accomplished artist and composer whose compositions are still performed today. Ordained as a Buddhist monk in 1918, he became known as Master Hongyi.*

OUYANG YUQIAN (1889–1962), *actor, playwright, drama educator. Ouyang was one of the founders of Chinese spoken drama and president of the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing from its founding in 1950 until his later years.*

TIAN HAN (1898–1968), *one of the founders of Chinese spoken drama and a reformer of traditional Chinese xiqu. Tian was a prolific playwright with sixty spoken dramas and twenty operas to his credit.*

HONG SHEN (1894–1955), *one of the founders of Chinese spoken drama. Hong was a playwright and a filmmaker and is best known for his work as a drama director.*

CAO YU (1910–1996), *generally acclaimed as the greatest of all Chinese huaju playwrights. Cao distinguished himself with his employment of Western dramatic techniques to depict Chinese realities. The well-knit structure of his plays, his portrayal of psychology, and dramatic conflict all show Western influence. Cao's four major works were written in the 1930s and early 1940s. After 1949, he became president of the Beijing People's Art Theater and produced two historical plays.*

XIA YAN (1900–1995), *a Chinese playwright and screenwriter. Xia was known for his leftist works such as the play Shanghai wuyan xia (Under the Eaves of Shanghai, 1937). An important member of the League of Left-Wing Writers in the 1930s, he rose to the position of vice-minister for culture by the 1960s but spent eight years in prison during the Cultural Revolution.*

GUO MORUO (1892–1978), *poet, translator, historian, archeologist, playwright, and politician who wore many hats. His most important contribution to huaju is historical plays, which feature well-known personalities as protagonists, such as the poet-minister Qu Yuan (340–278 BCE) and Empress Wu of the Tang dynasty.*

LAO SHE (1899–1966), *a Chinese fiction writer and dramatist. Lao She is the author of two masterpieces of modern Chinese literature: the novel Luotuo Xiangzi (Camel Xiangzi) and the play Chaguan (Teahouse), which chronicles fifty years of modern Chinese history with the teahouse serving as a metaphor for society. Born into an impoverished Manchu family in Beijing, Lao She is known for his portrayal of common people and his use of the Beijing dialect as a vehicle for literary expression.*

HUANG ZUOLIN (1906–1994), *a noted Chinese drama director and critic. Huang is best known for his theory of xieyi xiju (suggestive theater), which combines the symbolism of traditional Chinese theater with the realism of Western theater.*

JIAO JUYIN (1905–1975): *A Chinese director and drama theorist, Jiao was a leading practitioner of the Stanislavsky system in China and longtime director of the Beijing People's Art Theater, the nation's flagship spoken drama company.*

Characters from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*

TOM, *A black slave in the Shelby household, over thirty years old.*

CHLOE, TOM's wife, *also a slave in the Shelby household.*

PETER, TOM's older son.

ALEX, TOM's younger son.

CLAIRE, TOM's older daughter.

LITTLE MARY, TOM's younger daughter.

SHELBY, a gentleman of Kentucky, over thirty years of age.

AMELIA, SHELBY's wife, about thirty years old.

LITTLE GEORGE, SHELBY's son, about twelve or thirteen years old.

ELIZA, a slave in the SHELBY household, a mixed-blood.

LEGREE, landlord, plantation owner in the South, owns many slaves.

HALEY, Slave trader, forty to fifty years of age.

SKEGGS, auctioneer of slaves.

SKEGGS's ASSISTANT.

SAMBO, a supervisor in the LEGREE household.

QUIMBO, a supervisor in the LEGREE household and a henchman.

CASSY, a woman slave in the LEGREE household, a mixed-blood.

EMMELINE, a female slave bought by LEGREE recently, about sixteen or seventeen years old.

SUSAN, EMMELINE's mother, thirty-six years old.

ADOLF, a slave sold at auction, fifty-one years old.

PAUL, a slave sold at auction.

LUCY, LEGREE's newly bought slave.

LITTLE TOCK, LUCY's son.

STRANGER, a white buyer of slaves.

Extras for additional ACTOR voices (male and female), BLACK SLAVES, and so on.

Time: 1907–2007.

Place: Shifts back and forth between the present stage and the locale of the play Black Slave's Cry to Heaven.

Music: Jerome Kern's "Ol' Man River," Li Shutong's song "Homeland" adapted from the second movement of Dvorak's New World Symphony, the Chinese version of the spiritual "Amazing Grace" with music by James P. Carrel and David S. Clayton and lyrics by John Newton, and Li Shutong's song "Farewell" based on the music by John P. Ordway.

Costumes: All the characters (including the characters in the play, historical personalities, and contemporary characters) wear black Western-style formal dress. Actors playing the black characters wear red carnations, actors playing the white characters wear white carnations, and all the other performers wear corsages.

Stage Design: Simple, symbolic. Many movable door frames combine to create different scenes. The big picture screen serves as decoration, but is rarely used except in the last act. Occasionally it is used to project song lyrics or pictures.

Act 1: 1907

(The curtain rises on a bare and solemn stage with stirring music playing. The music and scene combine to create a ritualistic atmosphere. As the music slows, an actor enters from the wings.)

ACTOR: When a person walks on the stage, and you look at him, that's drama. Since the beginning of the human race, this kind of stage has existed—for thousands of years, even tens of thousands of years. But for the Chinese *huaju*, it's much shorter—only a hundred years old today. One hundred years ago, two Chinese students at the Tokyo Art School established the Spring Willow Society, and that began the one-hundred-year journey of Chinese *huaju*. One of those students was Li Shutong.

(Enter LI SHUTONG.)

ACTOR: In the autumn of 1907, there was a big flood in Xuzhou and Haizhou north of the Yangzi River. Tens of thousands of people became homeless. For disaster relief, you arranged a benefit performance of *La Dame aux camelias* by Dumas fils with yourself impersonating the female lead. That event was a big success.

LI SHUTONG: We'd been advocating reform of traditional opera for some time, but with very little effect. That's why I decided to adopt the Western performing arts in order to reform the old opera, transform social traditions, and enlighten the people as well as inspire them.

ACTOR: So you wrote the play *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven*?

LI SHUTONG: At that time, China was troubled by internal and external problems, including foreign troops pressed on our borders. To lament the fate of the characters in the play was to lament the situation of our country. I hoped to awaken our people.

ACTOR: It seems like the character of the Chinese *huaju* was determined at that moment.

LI SHUTONG: Was it joyful?

ACTOR: Sad, too.

LI SHUTONG: (Laughs) Joy mixed with sadness.

ACTOR: That's what you wrote just before you died. Now it's an epithet for *huaju*'s one hundred years.

LI SHUTONG: Not just *huaju*. It's also true for human affairs.

ACTOR: Human affairs are also drama. In the twinkle of an eye, human affairs have become history.

LI SHUTONG: Actually, history is only a fragment of our memory. Those

who already lived no longer care about it. Those who are still living don't need to pay attention to it either.

ACTOR: But forgetting means betrayal. We commemorate the past so we can have a better beginning. For example, take *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven*, which you acted in. Ouyang Yuqian said it was the first Chinese *huaju* play.

LI SHUTONG: Xiaogu⁶ wrote most of the script. I only had a small part in it.

ACTOR: You were simultaneously the stage designer, the costume designer, and lead actor. You even designed the playbill.

LI SHUTONG: I was a Jack-of-all-trades.

ACTOR: That play achieved many firsts: the first *huaju* script, the first real stage scenery, and the first costume design. . . . It's all because of you.

LI SHUTONG: You flatter me.

ACTOR: In that performance, the character that you played, Mrs. Shelby, attracted a lot of attention. A Japanese critic sang your praises, saying that among the Chinese actors, he admired you the most.

LI SHUTONG: Actually, I have a deep impression of Uncle Tom played by Xiaogu.

ACTOR: So why don't we invite the kind-hearted Tom to join us?

(Enter TOM with LITTLE GEORGE. The music of "Ol' Man River" is heard.)

ACTOR: That child is Little George, the only son of Tom's master, Shelby.

LI SHUTONG: I remember that in our performance Ouyang Yuqian played Little George.

ACTOR: Tom brought up Little George. They're very close. One day, Little George and Tom passed by several people who were pulling the corpse of a black slave from the river.

LITTLE GEORGE: (*Points to the front and asks*) Tom, why are people always getting drowned?

TOM: They want to cross the river, but the river's too wide, and the ice isn't frozen solid.

LITTLE GEORGE: Then why do they always want to cross the river?

TOM: 'Cause there's something they want on the other side.

LITTLE GEORGE: Like what?

TOM: Freedom.

LITTLE GEORGE: Freedom? What's that?

TOM: When you grow up, you'll understand.

LITTLE GEORGE: (*Pondering*) When I grow up, I'll give you freedom, too.

TOM: (*Sighs*) All right, George, let's go home. Your mother will be worried.

(TOM *exits with* LITTLE GEORGE.)

ACTOR: Meanwhile, in Little George's house, Eliza was terrified when she found out that Shelby was about to sell her only son, Little Harry, together with Tom to the slave trader Haley.

(*Enter* SHELBY *from backstage*.)

SHELBY: I'm Shelby. I really feel bad about selling Tom and Little Harry, but it's the only way to pay my debt. When I get some money someday, I'll definitely buy them back.

(*Enter* HALEY *and* LEGREE *from both sides of the stage*.)

ACTOR: Two people just came on stage. One is the scoundrel plantation owner Legree. The other is the money-hungry slave trader Haley.

HALEY: Slave trader? I don't like that name. I'm just a merchant. A merchant's business is to make money, and my merchandise happens to be slaves.

(HALEY *looks at* LEGREE, *then walks toward him*.)

HALEY: Hey, isn't this my old friend Legree?

LEGREE: Who? (*Turns around and shows his face*.)

HALEY: Haley. Don't you recognize me anymore?

LEGREE: Oh, Haley. How are you? (*Shaking hands with* HALEY.) May Lady Luck smile on you.

HALEY: Same to you.

LEGREE: You making a lot of money these days?

HALEY: It's a tough business. And how can I possibly compare with a big southern plantation owner such as yourself?

LEGREE: When I bought that piece of wasteland several years ago, you thought I was fool-headed. Now just look at the beautiful cotton it makes. But I'm short of workers.

HALEY: So buy more slaves. Let me help.

LEGREE: Well, to tell the truth, old friend, since God gave us the right to be masters, let's make a lot of money. What do you say? We can work together. You're welcome to join my business.

HALEY: Don't have the capital. That's why (*pointing at SHELBY*) I came here to collect some debts. I just picked two slaves. I'm sure you'll like them, too.

LEGREE: All right, then. I'll check out your merchandise when the time comes.

(*Both of them exit, smiling.*)

ACTOR: Since the buyer and the seller agreed to the deal, the fate of Tom and Little Harry seemed to be settled.

LI SHUTONG: Not yet. Eliza still has one more hope: her mistress, Amelia. In her eyes, Amelia is a warm and kind-hearted soul.

ACTOR: Who's going to play Amelia today? You?

LI SHUTONG: I'm Amelia. At that time, male actors impersonated female characters. Who's going to play Eliza?

ACTOR: I . . .

ELIZA: Oh, my God! What kind of world are we living in?

AMELIA: Eliza, you're here. Why didn't you answer when I called? You didn't hear me?

(*Grief-stricken, ELIZA can't say anything.*)

AMELIA: Eliza, what's the matter? Are you sick?

ELIZA: (*Turns around and kneels before AMELIA.*) Missis!

AMELIA: Eliza, are you crazy? Don't act like that. Get up and tell me what's troubling you.

ELIZA: (*Stands up slowly.*) Missis, this is the only child I got left. We can't sell him!

AMELIA: You really are crazy! Who's going to sell your child?

ELIZA: Master wants to sell Little Harry to a slave trader.

AMELIA: It can't be! Master has all this land and property. He would never do such a thing.

ELIZA: It's true! When I passed by here just now, I heard Master talking business with a slave trader. He sold my Little Harry. Tom, too.

AMELIA: Silly girl, you must have heard wrong. If there really was such a deal, would they let you hear it? That slave trader probably just came here hoping to take advantage of us. But Master would never give in. And even if he does, I'd never give my consent. Eliza, don't worry. (*Smiling*) Now go iron my dress and take out my jewelry box. I'm going to a party tonight.

ELIZA: (*Kneels down again, her hands pressed together*) God bless you, kind Missis. You saved this poor slave from the pit of despair.

AMELIA: Don't talk like that. Master is even more softhearted than I am.
Now go. Go get my dress ready.

(ELIZA exits with tears in her eyes.)

AMELIA: (*Talking to herself*) Could it be true? Did Shelby lose money gambling? (*Looks around and sees SHELBY.*) Shelby, I heard you made a business deal.

SHELBY: What business deal?

AMELIA: You sold Tom and Little Harry.

SHELBY: So what can I do? I owe men money.

AMELIA: You really sold them? Tom's been in our family for so many years. He looks after you and Little George. He keeps the books, and takes care of the land. He's served us with total devotion. We'd be hard-pressed to find someone as reliable and honest as he's been. How could you sell him so carelessly? I brought Eliza here from my own family. Her three children all died with only this one left. Why didn't you discuss it with me? Tom's wife, Chloe, also has four kids. When he leaves, she'll be weeping and crying all day. She won't be able to cook for us. And Eliza will be too torn up to wait on me. I just hate to see people pulling a long face all day.

SHELBY: I don't have the cash to pay Haley, so I have to give him my slaves. He wants this one and that one—by name. I hate him, but there's nothing I can do.

AMELIA: So debts have to be paid. I'm just afraid this won't be the last one.

SHELBY: You just wait and see. I'm not that fool-headed. (*Looks at his watch.*) Now I need to go out for a while. Be back at eight. Then we can go to the factory's party together.

AMELIA: Well . . . all right.

(SHELBY exits. ELIZA enters.)

ELIZA: Missis, you gonna wear that black velvet evening gown tonight?

AMELIA: Yes.

ELIZA: I got it all ready for you. The roses, too, and I laid out your jewelry box.

AMELIA: Wonderful. You can tidy up the room a little bit. (*She exits, looking very calm and relaxed.*)

ELIZA: So everything's settled. I can't depend on no one. I'll have to depend on myself.

(TOM enters.)

TOM: Eliza.

ELIZA: Oh, Uncle Tom.

TOM: Master ain't here?

ELIZA: He just went out.

TOM: (*Noticing ELIZA is not herself*) What's the matter?

ELIZA: (*Trembling*) Uncle Tom . . .

TOM: Poor Eliza, what on earth is the matter?

ELIZA: Uncle, Master owes money, so he sold you and my Little Harry to a slave trader.

(*TOM is frightened out of his wits. He tries to compose himself.*)

TOM: It can't be.

ELIZA: It's absolutely true. I just overheard it.

TOM: What? You eavesdropped on the Master?

ELIZA: I happened to pass by. At first, Master didn't agree, but the trader kept talkin' and talkin', and finally Master gave in. It looks like Missis can't help us, neither. Uncle, what do we do?

TOM: It can't be true!

ELIZA: It is. Uncle, we better think of somethin' fast. Tomorrow at dawn, the slave trader's comin' to pick us up.

TOM: What's your plan?

ELIZA: I won't let 'em take my child from me, no matter what! Uncle, let's run away.

TOM: Can you run away?

ELIZA: I don't know, but I wanna run.

(*Silence.*)

TOM: Then you better get to it!

ELIZA: What about you?

TOM: I can't run.

ELIZA: Why not?

TOM: 'Cause they'll find us out for sure.

(*ELIZA is shaking violently.*)

ELIZA: Uncle, I'm afraid.

TOM: Don't be afraid, Eliza. God'll take care of you.

ELIZA: Uncle . . .

TOM: Go quick, or you won't make it. (*Takes out money from his pocket*)

Here's some money. I won't need it anyway.

ELIZA: (*Taking the money*) I . . . Thank you.

TOM: As soon as you get out of here, run for the river. If you can cross it, you'll be safe. The ice hasn't all melted yet. Be careful. [See Fig. 5.]

AMELIA: (*Calling from inside*) Tom, Master is looking for you.

TOM: Remember, Eliza, be brave.

ELIZA: Yes, Uncle.

TOM: (*Answers loudly*) Coming . . .

(TOM exits. ELIZA stands there panic-stricken. AMELIA enters.)

AMELIA: Eliza, where are my shoes with the lace trim?

(ELIZA doesn't pay any attention.)

AMELIA: Eliza?

ELIZA: What? Missis.

AMELIA: What's the matter?

ELIZA: Oh, nothin', Missis.

(*Silence*)

LI SHUTONG: What's the matter?

ACTOR: Oh, nothing. I was just wondering why you left *huaju* so quickly. What about your ideals? Your ambitions? Your responsibilities?



FIGURE 5. Tom and Eliza. (Photo: Nick Rongjun Yu.)

LI SHUTONG: I never left *huaju*. I gave it my best . . .

(*The ACTOR still looks puzzled.*)

LI SHUTONG: (*Laughing*) Let the wind, the insects in the grass, and the cicadas on the trees explain to you.

(*Under the gaze of the ACTOR, LI SHUTONG exits. The chorus sings.*)

CHORUS: ["Farewell"⁷]

By the roadside pavilion, by the ancient road,
Fragrant grass stretches all the way to the sky.
In the evening breeze, in the music of faint flute,
Sun sets over the mountains.
To the ends of the earth,
My friends have scattered.
Let's drink a cup of wine before we part,
Tonight, I'll dream my lonely dream.

(*Light dims and curtain falls.*)

Act 2: 1907–1918

(*The sound of music, containing notes of anxiety, gradually becomes audible. The curtain rises. OUYANG YUQIAN stands in the middle of the stage with his back to the audience. An actor enters from the wing.*)

ACTOR: Many Chinese students took part in that performance. One of them was a founder of the Chinese *huaju*—Ouyang Yuqian.

(*The ACTOR looks at OUYANG YUQIAN standing in the middle of the stage.*)

ACTOR: Sir, what are you looking at?

OUYANG YUQIAN: (*Turning around*) Shutong left us so suddenly, leaving behind this empty stage. Many people followed his example to devote themselves to *huaju*, wave upon wave, heroically, tragically. Only we ourselves know the hardship it entails.

ACTOR: You played Little George in that performance.

OUYANG YUQIAN: I was originally cast as Little Harry, but I was too big for that role, so I played a woman slave and Little George instead. With only one performance, I formed a fast bond with *huaju*.

ACTOR: After you returned to China, you established a society for the

new drama. At that time in Shanghai, the new drama flourished. Do you remember Wang Zhongsheng, who acted in *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven* in Shanghai, and also founded the Spring Sun Society? He used to say that putting on a play was to awaken China, the sleeping lion.⁸

OUYANG YUQIAN: Of course I remember him. In his hand, drama became a vehicle for revolution.

ACTOR: It was precisely this power of the drama that frightened the Qing government. They killed him with thirteen bullets. It took thirteen bullets to fell this brave dramatist, his body lying on a blood-soaked stage.

(Solemn and stirring music)

ACTOR: A road of self-destruction lay behind prosperity. In the year of 1914, the merchants saw there was profit to be made in the new drama, and they rushed to take advantage of it. The so-called family drama appeared in great numbers, with vulgar plays mixed with serious works.

OUYANG YUQIAN: To sum up the situation briefly: China did not have a real drama at that time.

ACTOR: The actors were immoral, and the new drama was seen as a source of evil.

OUYANG YUQIAN: Everything was for attracting the audience. Commercial theater thrived in the market bubble and a false sense of prosperity. On the other hand, dramatic performances on college campuses flourished and produced many talents.

ACTOR: Sir, please wait.

OUYANG YUQIAN: What?

ACTOR: That scenario seemed familiar.

OUYANG YUQIAN: If we don't remember the past, history will repeat itself. As dramatists, we shouldn't forget our responsibility.

ACTOR: So, people began to desert new drama. Sir, how do you view the decline of "Civilized Drama"?⁹

OUYANG YUQIAN: Without "Civilized Drama" serving as a ferry, how could we have crossed the river to the shore of *huaju*? This drama deserves our thanks.

(A platform is moved out from behind the stage, with two performance areas. LEGREE and HALEY stand under the platform.)

OUYANG YUQIAN: *(Turns to look at the platform)* Our country was being divided by foreign powers, and we were in a precarious situation.

Our drama was in a worse state. We were like slaves waiting to be auctioned off.

SKEGGS: (*Calling from offstage*) Auction! Auction!

(SKEGGS enters hastily, ringing a bell in his hand.)

ACTOR: That's the beastly auctioneer Skeggs.

(LEGREE turns to look at SKEGGS and walks toward him.)

SKEGGS: Hello, boss.

LEGREE: Got any good merchandise?

SKEGGS: The one Haley brought isn't bad. To be honest, there aren't many good ones among the rest.

LEGREE: I know that one. How come there are fewer and fewer? The strong ones are especially scarce.

SKEGGS: It's all because those stingy slave traders never give their slaves a square meal. So they're all sick, and skinny, and pull a long face.

LEGREE: Quit the chit-chat. Pick a few good ones for me, and I'll buy you a drink.

SKEGGS: All right, I'll be right back. (*About to turn to go but he comes back and speaks in a strange voice.*) There's a girl among them, called Emmeline, still in her teens.

LEGREE: Come on. I want the big strong ones who can work in the field. What do I want a girl for?

SKEGGS: You can never be sure (*Loudly*) Auction! Auction!

(SKEGGS'S ASSISTANT brings in five black slaves—TOM, SUSAN, EMMELINE, ADOLF, and PAUL—to the platform. SKEGGS turns and mounts it.)

SKEGGS: The auction's about to start. Your attention, please.

(A group of extras goes up to the platform playing buyers. SKEGGS'S ASSISTANT pushes TOM forward.)

SKEGGS: (*Shouting*) Male slave Tom, thirty-five years old, in excellent physical condition. Diligent and hardworking, can write and calculate, drive a carriage and raise horses, and manage all household affairs. Base price, eight hundred fifty.

(Someone bids nine hundred, another yells nine hundred fifty, and still another shouts one thousand.)

HALEY: (*To LEGREE*) It took me a lot of work to get him. He's a real good one.

LEGREE: Not bad.

SKEGGS: (*Shouting*) One thousand. Any more bids? Any more bids?

LEGREE: (*Shouting*) Eleven hundred!

(*SKEGGS strikes his hammer.*)

SKEGGS: Eleven hundred. He's yours. You've got sharp eyes.

(*SKEGGS'S ASSISTANT pushes TOM to LEGREE. LEGREE raises the whip in his hand.*)

LEGREE: What's this?

TOM: A whip, Master.

LEGREE: (*Raises his fist to TOM'S face*) What's this?

TOM: A fist, Master.

LEGREE: Do you know how many people died under my fist?

(*TOM shakes his head.*)

LEGREE: Whoever dares disobey my orders, I'll bust his lungs.

TOM: Yes, Master.

LEGREE: Take him to the boat.

(*Someone drags TOM down. SKEGGS'S ASSISTANT pushes EMMELINE up. Her face is deathly white.*)

SKEGGS: (*Shouting.*) Female slave Emmeline, only sixteen years old. She's pretty and talented, can read and write, do embroidery, play the piano, talk, laugh, sing, and dance . . .

(*The slave buyers laugh loudly.*)

SKEGGS: Base price, five hundred.

SLAVE BUYER A: Six hundred!

SLAVE BUYER B: Six fifty!

SLAVE BUYER C: Seven hundred!

SLAVE BUYER D: Seven fifty!

SKEGGS: Any more bids? (*Raises his hammer and about to strike.*)

LEGREE: Eight hundred!

(SKEGGS *looks around, smiles at LEGREE cunningly, and strikes down the hammer.*)

SLAVE BUYER A: Eight fifty!

LEGREE: You're too late.

(*The crowd bursts into uproarious laughter. EMMELINE comes down from the platform. SUSAN throws herself at LEGREE.*)

SUSAN: I beg you, Master. Please buy me, too! She's my daughter, and we want to be together! Please be merciful. We'll be your faithful servants.

LEGREE: Shut up, woman. This is a slave market. There's only merchandise and merchandise here, no mothers and daughters.

(SKEGGS's ASSISTANT *comes over, separates the mother and daughter with his whip, pushes EMMELINE to LEGREE, and drags SUSAN to the auction platform.*)

SKEGGS: (*Shouting.*) One female slave, Susan is her name, age thirty-six. She can read and write, do all kinds of needlework, good at French cuisine and housekeeping. Base price, three hundred.

SLAVE BUYER A: Three hundred twenty!

SLAVE BUYER B: Three fifty!

SLAVE BUYER C: Three seventy!

SLAVE BUYER D: Four hundred!

(SKEGGS *looks at LEGREE, who shows no interest. SKEGGS strikes his hammer.*)

SUSAN: Gentlemen, I beg you to buy me and my Emmeline together. My child, Emmeline! Emmeline! (*She's dragged away weeping.*)

LEGREE: (*Turns to look at EMMELINE who is a total wreck from crying.*) Ha . . . really looks like a rose in the rain. (*Draws EMMELINE to him.*) Come, girl!

(EMMELINE *lets out a cry and passes out. LEGREE whips her twice.*)

EMMELINE: Ah (*She comes to.*)

LEGREE: (*Lifts EMMELINE*) Don't be afraid. Just do as I say, and you can expect favors from me. (*Throws EMMELINE on his shoulder. Turns to HALEY.*) Haley, goodbye.

HALEY: Goodbye, now.

(All the slave buyers turn to look at LEGREE. SKEGGS holds his hammer, and also smiles at LEGREE.)

HALEY: *(Looks at LEGREE appreciatively as he exits)* I'd say that fellow really knows his business.

SKEGGS: *(Rings the bell, loudly)* Male slave Adolf, fifty-one years old.

(The light on the platform dims. The music of "Ol' Man River" begins at far upstage as five male actors stand in the light.)

FIRST ACTOR: Dere's an ol' man called de Mississippi

Dat's de ol' man dat I'd like to be

He jes' keeps rollin'

He keeps on rollin' along

SECOND ACTOR: You an' me, we sweat an' strain,

Body all achin' an racked wid pain

Tote dat barge, lif' dat bale

Git a little drunk, an' you land in jail

THIRD ACTOR: Don' look up and don' look down

Bend your knees an' bow your head

An' pull dat rope until yo' dead

Let me go 'way from the Mississippi

Let me go 'way from de white man boss

FOURTH ACTOR: Colored folks work on de Mississippi

Colored folks work while de white folks play

Show me that stream called de river Jordan

Dat's de ol' stream dat I long to cross

ACTORS: *(Together)* Show me dat stream called de river Jordan

Dat's de ol' stream dat I long to cross

(Music rises as the actors sing with feeling.)

Ol' Man River

Dat Ol' Man River

He mus' know sumpin'

But don' say nuthin'

He jes' keeps rollin'

He keeps on rollin' along

He don' plant taters

He don' plant cotton

An' dem dat plants 'em

Is soon forgotten

But Ol' Man River
 He jes' keeps rollin' along
 Ah gits weary
 An' sick of tryin'
 Ah'm tired of livin'
 An' skeered of dyin'
 But Ol' Man River
 He jes' keeps rollin' along

(The light dims to the music. Curtain.)

Act 3: 1919–1936

(The music of “Ol' Man River” continues. The curtain rises. Lights become brighter. In the middle of the stage, there are five red Chinese-style armchairs beneath five white door frames, forming a striking color contrast. Every chair has a name pasted to it. From left to right, the names are TIAN HAN, HONG SHEN, CAO YU, XIA YAN, and GUO MORUO. Five female actors stand beside each chair, with their hands on the back of the chair. They welcome the veteran dramatists on stage. The big screen shows the stage photos of the dramatists.)

FIRST ACTOR: A table, a chair, mountains, and rivers.

SECOND ACTOR: A horsehair whisk, a speck of dust, time passes.

THIRD ACTOR: That's right, without the passage of the Civilized Drama, how could we have reached the shore of *huaju*?

FOURTH ACTOR: With the advent of the May Fourth movement, *huaju* quickly bore fruit. Opposing the classical language, promoting the vernacular, establishing schools, and putting on amateur performances, Chinese *huaju* yielded its first bumper crop.

FIFTH ACTOR: Shakespeare, Ibsen, Pirandello, Chekhov, Tagore, Wilde, and Shaw . . . these foreign names were no longer unfamiliar. The characters in their plays came alive on the Chinese stage.

ACTORS: *(Together)* And then, we produced . . .

FIRST ACTOR: Tian Han . . .

SECOND ACTOR: Hong Shen . . .

THIRD ACTOR: Cao Yu . . .

FOURTH ACTOR: Xia Yan . . .

FIFTH ACTOR: Guo Moruo.

(The music suddenly becomes light and fast, highlighting the sound of a jingju fiddle.)

FIRST ACTOR: The play *Death of a Famous Actor* was written with blood and tears: a dramatist who dedicated his life to art, an old actor who died a tragic death on the stage. His pen depicted the myriad phenomena of society, but also unwittingly portrayed his own life.

(Enter TIAN HAN. He walks from the back part of the stage to the first red chair. The FIRST ACTOR asks him to sit down.)

FIRST ACTOR: Your works were always colored with aestheticism, even that realist play *Death of a Famous Actor*.

TIAN HAN: I suffered many setbacks in my life, and had no anchor for my emotions. I tried not to be pessimistic in the midst of adversity. So I poured my feelings into my plays, but couldn't overcome my fate.

(The SECOND ACTOR welcomes another dramatist.)

SECOND ACTOR: Because of him, Chinese *huaju* began to have a director. Because of him, our stage changed from one-dimensional to three-dimensional. Because of him, stage lighting came into being. Because of him, women appeared on the *huaju* stage. Because of him, the name of *huaju* was established.

(Enter HONG SHEN. He walks from the back part of the stage to the second red chair. The SECOND ACTOR asks him to take his seat.)

HONG SHEN: Now the name of *huaju* seems too restrictive. That's something I didn't foresee. I liked the audience. I used to tell them, if you didn't like our performance, please tell us. If you liked our performance, please tell others.

SECOND ACTOR: You also said that drama is an art that depicts life.

HONG SHEN: I got it from Shakespeare. He said the whole world is a stage, and the stage is like life. There are things I didn't want to say, but had to. So I borrowed other people's voices to say it, but the more I said, the more I felt like I was acting against my own will.

(The THIRD ACTOR welcomes another dramatist.)

THIRD ACTOR: He was a highpoint in modern Chinese drama. His works never lose their stage appeal. *Leiyu* (Thunderstorm), *Richu* (Sunrise), *Yuanye* (Wilderness), *Beijing ren* (Beijing Man), and *Jia* (Family) were the products of a particular time, yet they've influenced later generations. He was Cao Yu.

(Enter CAO YU. He walks from the back of the stage to the third red chair. The THIRD ACTOR asks him to take his seat.)

CAO YU: Those were only exercises, exercises.

THIRD ACTOR: Did you achieve your ideal in drama?

CAO YU: *(A long, silent pause)* I really feel like asking this question to the stage.

THIRD ACTOR: Do you regret?

CAO YU: *(Shaking his head)* No.

THIRD ACTOR: Do you hate?

CAO YU: *(Laughing)* How I longed for a peaceful and tranquil time! *(Painfully, enunciates every word)* But I—loved—*huaju*!

(The THIRD ACTOR welcomes another dramatist.)

FOURTH ACTOR: In his comments on the play *Shanghai wuyan xia* (Under the Eaves of Shanghai), the critic Li Jianwu said that there is no exaggeration, only plain truth. The playwright employed details to bring his work to life and put real live people in his play. That was Xia Yan. His style was natural, simple, and detached, but he had the heart of a revolutionary.

(Enter XIA YAN. He walks from the back of the stage to the fourth red chair. The FOURTH ACTOR invites him to take his seat.)

FOURTH ACTOR: About the characters in your play, I feel like you were their master, but you didn't like them.

XIA YAN: I wasn't their master. They were the people around me, and I liked them.

FOURTH ACTOR: But you oppressed them, lashed at them, and hurt them.

XIA YAN: Because in a harsh environment, no matter what route people take, they still have to arrive at their destination, just like Tom.

(Enter GUO MORUO in haste. The FIFTH ACTOR welcomes him.)

FIFTH ACTOR: Mr. Guo, as a historian, you're the most successful writer of historical plays in the history of Chinese *huaju*. But you probably don't know that I very much want to act in your play *Cai Wenji*. [This play is named after its female protagonist, a famous woman poet of the Han dynasty.]

GUO MORUO: I study history. I can't predict the future. How do I know whether you want to act or not?

FIFTH ACTOR: But you're a dramatist. Can't you tell?

GUO MORUO: I've said before that, strictly speaking, I'm not an expert on anything. I'm just a homeless person who happens to break into your home.

HONG SHEN: Welcome to our home.

CAO YU: Actually, we all belong to the same family.

GUO MORUO: Today's the one hundredth anniversary of *huaju*. You all know that I'm a history buff, so even as an outsider, I can't let this occasion pass. Speaking of *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven*, even though we already have Ouyang Yuqian's adaptation, if you were to adapt it, how would you do it?

TIAN HAN: I would emphasize aesthetic appeal, to purify our souls.

HONG SHEN: I would emphasize native characteristics, to lift our spirits.

CAO YU: I would emphasize poetic quality, to voice lofty ideals.

XIA YAN: I would emphasize life experiences, to censure evildoers. What about you?

GUO MORUO: We have two options: to speak for the ancients or let them speak for us. But we've been shouting, forever shouting!

(Silence, then music.)

FIRST ACTOR: Because of the stars, night is no longer dark.

SECOND ACTOR: Because of luxuriant trees, mountains no longer appear barren.

THIRD ACTOR: With the light they generated, they guide us on our journey.

FOURTH ACTOR: With the shade they provided, our soil is moist and nourishing.

FIFTH ACTOR: Although sometimes we lose our way, and sometimes we lose our hope,

ACTORS: *(All)* When we look back, we see the vast Milky Way and shining stars. In the dark night, they always strained themselves to give us light . . .

(In the back part of the stage, TOM lies on the platform, gazing at the twinkling stars in the distance. A MALE SOLOIST sings.)

MALE SOLOIST: ["Homeland"¹⁰]

Homeland, homeland,

My beloved homeland!

The skies are blue, the wind is cool,

Homesickness follows me everywhere I go.

How are the folks back home?

They are always on my mind.
Alone in a strange land,
I feel lonely and sad.

(Enter CASSY and EMMELINE with their backs to the audience. They turn to lift the lamp to shine on TOM.)

TOM: Who is it?

CASSY: I'm Cassy, Uncle Tom. Emmeline and I came to see you.

TOM: Cassy, Emmeline, how could you come at such an hour?

(EMMELINE weeps.)

CASSY: I knew you'd be hungry, so I brought you some water and biscuits. They'll last a few days.

TOM: Oh, thank you so much.

(EMMELINE takes a blanket draped over her shoulders to cover up TOM.)

TOM: Cassy, you take Emmeline home quick. It's too dangerous to come here.

CASSY: Don't worry, Uncle Tom. I won't get into any trouble.

EMMELINE: Thank you, Uncle Tom. You suffered a beatin' 'cause of me.

TOM: Don't mention it. It's somethin' everyone should do. Remember, we gotta treat 'em with tolerance.

TIAN HAN: Yes, it's something everyone should do. But just because we're tolerant, it doesn't mean they can do whatever they want and hurt others.

CASSY: Emmeline, help me make him sit up.

TOM: I'll help myself. *(Struggles to sit up.)*

EMMELINE: How could these people be so cruel?

CASSY: *(Sneers.)* People? They're a bunch of beasts. There's nothin' they can't do.

EMMELINE: Uncle Tom, you're a real good man. I heard a lot of people prayin' quiet-like for you, prayin' for God to protect you.

CASSY: Black folks aren't lesser than white folks. We got a conscience. And our souls are cleaner than theirs.

CAO YU: I think this world can't stay this way forever.

TOM: *(Turns to look at CAO YU. Smiles with difficulty.)* I think this world can't stay this way forever.

EMMELINE: When will this all end?

TOM: We'll see it, Emmeline, not far from now, if we don't lose our faith.

CASSY: You're right, Uncle Tom. To tell you the truth, I thought about killin' myself more than once, just to cost 'em some profit. Then I changed my mind. I wanna see if there's a way out for us.

TOM: There will be. (*Hears dog barking in the distance.*) Oh, Cassy, you'd better go back. If Legree finds out, you'll be in big trouble.

CASSY: Don't worry, Uncle Tom. He won't find out. I just got him dead drunk, and he's sleepin' like a log now. If I didn't, he wouldn't leave Emmeline alone tonight.

TOM: (*Very worried*) We gotta think of a way to keep Emmeline safe from him.

CASSY: I won't let him have his way again. I wanna run. I can't wait no more, and I wanna take Emmeline with me. I've been gettin' ready a long time. If it were just me, I would've left long ago. 'Cause of Emmeline, I've waited till today. Now it's time. Uncle Tom, come with us.

TOM: (*Very moved*) Cassy, I thank you. You're smart, and brave, and you've got a good heart. I really wanna go with you, but they gave me such a beatin', I can't hardly walk.

EMMELINE: (*Weeping*) It's all 'cause of me. I should've picked more cotton.

TOM: Emmeline, that wasn't your fault. You did your best.

EMMELINE: They wanted you to beat me. If you did that, everythin' would be all right.

TOM: Foolish child, how can I beat you? You did nothin' wrong.

CASSY: Uncle Tom, let's go together. I can carry you.

EMMELINE: I can carry you, too!

TOM: No, I don't want to be your burden. If I come along, you won't get away.

CASSY: Tom, we can't leave you here by yourself.

EMMELINE: If you don't go, I won't go, neither.

TOM: (*Agitated*) Don't talk nonsense, child. You two leave quick. I gotta take care of my wound. Listen to me.

CASSY: Uncle Tom!

EMMELINE: Uncle Tom!

TOM: Five years ago, just before I was sold, a female slave in our plantation by the name of Eliza escaped with her child across the river. If you can make it over there, I hope you see 'em. Wouldn't that be wonderful? (*The sound of dogs barking in the distance.*) Go, go quick! If you run into the dogs, that's big trouble. Go! When I get better, I'll think of somethin' for myself.

(EMMELINE hugs TOM and cries.)

CASSY: We can't stand leavin' you like this. But we gotta listen to what you say. Emmeline, listen to Uncle Tom. Let's go. (*Pulls up EMMELINE.*)

TOM: Go quick. (*Picks up the blanket Emmeline gave to him and gives it back to her.*)

EMMELINE: No, you keep it . . . (*Cries.*)

CASSY: Uncle Tom, I believe what you said. This world can't stay the same forever!

Goodbye!

EMMELINE: Goodbye.

TOM: Goodbye.

(*CASSY leaves with EMMELINE. TOM struggles to stand up. He limps forward, gazing into the distance. The moon shines brightly on his face.*)

TOM: May God protect you, my children! (*Tears rolling down his cheeks.*)

(*The sound of a children's chorus singing*)

CHORUS: ["Homeland"]

Homeland, homeland,
My beloved homeland!
The skies are blue, the wind is cool,
Homesickness follows me everywhere I go.
How are the folks back home?
They are always on my mind.
Alone in a strange land,
I feel lonely and sad.

(*The sound of the chorus is mixed with the rumble of cannons. The music of "Homeland" gradually turns into that of "On the Songhua River," which a female soloist sings.*)

FEMALE SOLOIST: My home is on the Songhua River in the northeast,
There are forests and coal mines,
Also soy and sorghum all over the mountains and plains.
My home is on the Songhua River in the northeast,
Where my countrymen live,
So do my old mom and dad.
September eighteenth, September eighteenth,¹¹
That tragic date . . .

(*The scene changes.*)

Act 4: 1937–1948

(The curtain rises and the music becomes heroic and magnificent. Two male and two female actors stand under the spotlight, reciting with passion. In the background there are displays of stage photos and pictures of dramatic activities during the War of Resistance to Japan, especially the stage photos of the three famous actresses Zhang Ruifang, Bai Yang, and Shu Xiuwen.)

FIRST MALE ACTOR: How did the human race become insane?

FIRST FEMALE ACTOR: Rationality vanished in a fanatic plan.

FIRST MALE ACTOR: After so many years of evolution, so many years of civilization, savagery ruled the land.

SECOND FEMALE ACTOR: Perhaps this madness will not be recorded in history.

SECOND MALE ACTOR: Perhaps it will be erased from memory.

SECOND FEMALE ACTOR: But even meteors leave their traces on the night sky.

FIRST MALE ACTOR: That was a time of crisis, social upheaval, political unrest, and historical change.

FIRST FEMALE ACTOR: The power of *huaaju* was never so strong.

SECOND MALE ACTOR: At that time, our country was invaded, flames of war were raging, but our people were resolute and united.

SECOND FEMALE ACTOR: The power of *huaaju* also exploded.

FIRST MALE ACTOR: After the Japanese attack, Chinese *huaaju* workers quickly threw themselves into the war effort.

FIRST FEMALE ACTOR: From small city theaters they went to the big stage in the countryside.

SECOND MALE ACTOR: They were dramatists, filmmakers, teachers, students, office workers, even housewives, and village elders.

SECOND FEMALE ACTOR: Makeshift stages, auditoriums, classrooms, and sports grounds were their stage. Courtyards, marketplaces, big streets, and small lanes were their theater.

FIRST MALE ACTOR: From Shanghai to Chongqing, from Yan'an to Guilin, where there were battlefields, there were theaters.

FIRST FEMALE: From the city to the village, from the front line to the heartland, where there were performances, the people felt strong.

SECOND MALE ACTOR: To the sound of air raids, we staged our show.

SECOND FEMALE: We countered enemy fires with our passionate performance.

FIRST MALE ACTOR: Since the beginning of Chinese history, drama never had such a large impact on the country and nation.

FIRST FEMALE ACTOR: Since the inception of *huaaju*, it never enjoyed such broad participation.

SECOND MALE ACTOR: It was the power of the people.

SECOND FEMALE ACTOR: It was the power of theater.

FIRST AND SECOND MALE ACTORS: It was the power of solidarity.

MALE AND FEMALE ACTORS: (*All*) They combined to become the power of our nation.

(The music changes to "Homeland." An ACTOR enters from the back stage.)

ACTOR: It was the power of drama. Our drama was closely linked to the fate of our country and our nation. Drama became a mirror of the society, a bugle call for battle, and it never ceased to fight the invaders.

(A CHORUS sings the last part of "Homeland," its quiet and sorrowful melody forming a contrast with the earlier stirring music.)

CHORUS: I wish to go back to my homeland,
 To return to my old home,
 To talk with old friends,
 And to enjoy the happy life of times gone by.

(Under the stage light, TOM lies still on a stone slab.)

ACTOR: The moon hangs on the treetop. The insects are singing softly. Tom forgets his pain. In his dream, he seems to have returned to his homeland, to his wife and children.

(On the other side of the stage, a platform slowly moves out under a warm light. CHLOE and her four children stand on the platform. The children are all played by adult actors.¹²)

CHLOE: Children, time to go to bed.

PETER: I wanna wait for Papa to come home.

CHLOE: Papa went out. He won't be back till real late. You better get to bed now.

ALEX: No, Mama, I wanna wait for Papa.

CHLOE: You naughty thing, Papa doesn't like you no more.

ALEX: (*Crying*) Papa likes me.

LITTLE MARY: I wanna wait for Papa, too. Wait for him to tell me a story.

ALEX: Papa'll kiss me and say good night to me. That way, I can fall asleep and dream in his arms.

LITTLE MARY: Me, too. I wanna sleep in Papa's arms.

CHLOE: All right, all right, when Papa comes home, he'll kiss you and hug you.

CLAIRE: Mama, didn't you say tomorrow is Papa's birthday, and we'll celebrate with him?

CHLOE: That's tomorrow. Go to bed early tonight, so you can get up early tomorrow and celebrate Papa's birthday. Don't forget to sing the song I taught you. Sing it to him. Now, go to bed.

PETER: I won't forget. I can sing it.

ALEX: I can sing it, too.

LITTLE MARY: I'll sing it now.

CHLOE: Then go to bed when you finish singin'. Mama'll make you somethin' good to eat for tomorrow.

ALEX: OK. But I still miss Papa.

CHILDREN: (*Singing softly*) Ol' Man River

Dat Ol' Man River

He mus' know sumpin'

But don' say nuthin'

He jes' keeps rollin'

He jes' keeps rollin' along.

(*Light becomes dim. TOM sits up, looking into the distance.*)

ACTOR: Now Tom is full of hope, which gives him endless energy. For those poor and helpless people, he'll save them from treachery and violence. In his eyes, their blood is very precious.

(*All kinds of noises and commotion, mingled with the barking of dogs, are heard. QUIMBO and SAMBO are heard from offstage.*)

QUIMBO: Did you search the other side?

SAMBO: I did. Looked everywhere.

QUIMBO: You see anything?

SAMBO: No, not a thing.

QUIMBO: Then search harder.

(*Enter QUIMBO and SAMBO.*)

QUIMBO: Real strange. Yesterday at dinnertime, I saw both of them in Boss's house. How can they disappear in the twinkle of an eye?

SAMBO: I let out all the dogs. How come we didn't hear any dog barking, and they disappeared?

QUIMBO: That reed pond's full of mud. They couldn't cross it, unless they can fly.

SAMBO: Maybe they've got some kind of witchcraft and escaped.

(TOM hears their conversation. Knowing that CASSY and EMMELINE did get away, he feels relieved and lies down slowly.)

QUIMBO: What're we gonna tell the boss?

SAMBO: We'd better look harder.

QUIMBO: *(Pointing to TOM)* That fellow's a troublemaker, too.

(They walk toward TOM while talking.)

QUIMBO: Tom, how you doin'? You want a drink of water? Just say so and I'll get it for you right away. Say, why'd you get into that squabble with the boss? Just do what he tells you to do, then everything'll be okay.

TOM: I couldn't follow his orders to beat people.

SAMBO: He told you to beat other people, not yourself.

TOM: I'd rather beat myself.

SAMBO: Then it serves you right.

(At this time, QUIMBO discovers the water pitcher CASSY brought last night.)

QUIMBO: Sambo, look, what's this? *(He goes over to pick up the water pitcher.)* A water pitcher. Still water in it. Ha, ha . . . you rascal even did some smuggling! Search him. *(He pulls several biscuits from TOM's pocket.)* How'd these get here? Sambo, did you send these to him?

SAMBO: I think you did.

QUIMBO: If neither of us did, how'd they get here? *(Pointing to TOM)* Speak! Speak quick! *(Grabs TOM's blanket.)* Did he have this when he came here yesterday?

SAMBO: Impossible!

QUIMBO: Those two slaves must have come here before they ran away.

SAMBO: They came here?

QUIMBO: Maybe he was in with them.

(Enter LEGREE. He appears tired and agitated, and all the more irritable.)

LEGREE: *(Yawns, furiously)* Did you find them?

(Hearing LEGREE's voice, SAMBO and QUIMBO rush out, holding the water pitcher, biscuits, and blanket in their hands. QUIMBO rushes forward to claim credit.)

QUIMBO: Boss . . .

SAMBO: Boss . . .

LEGREE: You two good-for-nothings. You let them escape. How dare you come talk to me? Aren't you afraid of death?

SAMBO: We haven't found them yet . . .

QUIMBO: *(Hastens to add)* But we found some clue. It's . . . , I . . . , I saw this thing. *(Picks up the water pitcher.)*

LEGREE: That's my pitcher.

QUIMBO: Look at these biscuits made from white flour.

LEGREE: They're from my kitchen.

QUIMBO: No wonder we've never tasted anything like that.

LEGREE: *(Panting and shaking with anger)* Bring him here!

(The two of them stand there looking dumbly.)

SAMBO: We don't know where they escaped.

LEGREE: I mean Tom. Go bring Tom here.

(The two of them pull TOM up and drag him to LEGREE. As soon as he sees TOM, LEGREE whips him twice without stating any reason.)

LEGREE: You son of a bitch! Where did Cassy and Emmeline go?

TOM: They ran away.

LEGREE: How do you know?

TOM: I know.

LEGREE: Who brought you this water pitcher? These biscuits?

TOM: Cassy and Emmeline.

LEGREE: What about this blanket? Did they give it to you?

TOM: Yes.

LEGREE: When?

TOM: Last night.

LEGREE: When did they leave here?

TOM: Last night.

LEGREE: Did they tell you they're running away?

TOM: Yes, they told me.

LEGREE: You knew they were going to run. Why didn't you report it to me?

TOM: No reason.

LEGREE: Why didn't you run with them?

TOM: Can't walk.

LEGREE: Now tell me. Where did they go?

TOM: I know.

LEGREE: Where? How'd they run away? Which road did they take?
How'd they leave my plantation?

TOM: I know.

LEGREE: Speak!

TOM: I can't.

LEGREE: Are you going to speak or not? (*Points at TOM with his whip.*)

TOM: I can't tell you.

LEGREE: (*Raises his whip and is about to strike down very hard, then he stops.*)

Tom, don't be so muddle-headed.

TOM: My head's clear.

LEGREE: Just tell me how they escaped, where they went, and I'll excuse your behavior yesterday. I can promote you, too. Free you from slave status, and let you be a free man. I can even give you two suits of good clothes, a lot of money, so you can go to the North, or Canada, and have a good old time.

TOM: Really? That'd be wonderful!

LEGREE: I'll call a doctor to tend your wounds.

(*TOM remains silent.*)

QUIMBO: Tom, Boss gives you so many favors. If you have a conscience, you should show your appreciation. Speak up quick.

TOM: I got nothin' to say.

LEGREE: (*Kicks TOM to the ground.*) Then you'll die right now!

(*Enter the BLACK SLAVES.*)

TOM: 'Course you can kill me. But you don't got the right.

LEGREE: I "got" a lot of money. Slaves like you, I can buy as many as I like. All the good things in this world, I can have whatever I want.

Can't I put down a slave like you?

TOM: Yeah, you got everythin', but there's somethin' you don't.

LEGREE: And what's that?

TOM: You don't got a soul!

LEGREE: How dare you put me down? Stubborn as an ass. Come on, tie him to the stake. Bring . . . , bring fire to burn him. I want to see his soul.

(*The black slaves all kneel, begging LEGREE with outstretched hands.*)

TOM: No need for that. Don't give up your dignity to cruelty.

(QUIMBO and SAMBO tie TOM to a stake. QUIMBO lights the fire.)

QUIMBO: Tom, afraid?

TOM: Afraid.

QUIMBO: Then listen to me. Tell Boss how Cassy and Emmeline escaped and where they went. Boss will let you go. Why do you want to suffer like this? Speak quick!

TOM: I can't!

(The flame rises beneath the stake to which TOM is tied.)

LEGREE: Are you going to talk?

TOM: I really want to.

LEGREE: Then talk. There's still time.

TOM: (*Very weak, but speaking clearly*) But . . . I really can't.

(*In exasperation, LEGREE hits TOM with sticks. Flame rises higher and higher. In the light of the fire, TOM is smiling. LEGREE is stupefied. The angry and despairing BLACK SLAVES gradually stand up. The light dims as a female soloist sings ["Amazing Grace"] with soul-stirring melody.*)

FEMALE SOLOIST: After you walk this distance,

You're going to sleep!

After you finish listening to this song,

You can leave.

There are dreams in the stars,

And a home in the clouds,

Say goodbye to your loved ones,

Then get on your way!¹³

Act 5: 1949–1976

(*The sound of the Chinese national anthem, majestic and heroic. An ACTOR appears on one side of the stage.*)

ACTOR: The New China has stood up! The Chinese *huaju* has stood up! From local organization to government control, from free development to central planning, *huaju* companies appeared all over the country. Dramatic schools also trained many talents. In performance, the Stanislavsky system reigned supreme. In dramatic creation, the contents adhered to worker-peasant-soldier audiences. During that

time, from local communities to the army, from cities to villages, a hundred flowers bloomed, a hundred schools contended.¹⁴ It's always been like this. The Chinese dramatists have always been like this: even though they traveled a zigzag path, and every step was difficult, when given a ray of sunshine, they were full of hope; when given a breathing space, they produced a springtime.

(A black-and-white production photo of Teahouse is shown on the background screen. Enter LAO SHE. He looks at the photo as if pondering the meaning of an entire age.)

ACTOR: The play *Teahouse* encompasses three dynasties, fifty years of turbulent history, and the life stories of seventy characters. All these weighty subjects the playwright handled with ease and confidence, and he created a masterpiece of New China's *huaju*. The play is multifaceted but not confusing; its loose structure is united by a central spirit. Because of *Teahouse*, *huaju* became China's national drama. Because of Lao She, we achieved another peak in the one hundred years of *huaju*.

LAO SHE: I'm only a foot soldier in the field of literature and art. For more than ten years, I labored between my desk and a small stool, using my pen as my gun and spilling my blood on the pages of my writing. I can proudly say that I've acquitted myself with my diligence. Although a foot soldier doesn't have the grand strategies of a general, I've done everything that a foot soldier should do. That was true in the past, it's true now, and I hope it will be true in the future. On the day of my burial, I hope someone will give me a small tombstone inscribed with the following words: "Here lies a dutiful foot soldier of literature and art."

ACTOR: You may have gone to rest, but your works will live forever.

LAO SHE: Actually, it's life that's immortal.

(LAO SHE welcomes JIAO JUYIN. In the background, a colored photo of Teahouse gradually appears.)

ACTOR: It's life indeed! Inner feelings, stage recreations, poetic realm, all these form a rhythm, a symbol, a picture scroll, and certainly a path for the nationalization of *huaju*. That was Jiao Juyin, another milestone in Chinese *huaju*.

(Enter JIAO JUYIN.)

ACTOR: It's you who injected our national soul into *huaju*. Since then, Chinese *huaju* has its own character.

JIAO JUYIN: Everything came from our people and their creativity. It wasn't the accomplishment of one person.

ACTOR: You proposed to make the director the center, to create collectively, and have actors experience life.

JIAO JUYIN: To put it simply, I tried to introduce traditional opera into *huaju*, and nationalize Western drama.

LAO SHE: (*Smiling*) You and your experiments. You were always revising my scripts.

JIAO JUYIN: I was just experimenting.

LAO SHE: You tore apart the structure of my plays.

JIAO JUYIN: That couldn't be.

LAO SHE: You transformed my one-dimensional plays into three-dimensional ones.

JIAO JUYIN: Are you praising me? As a playwright, you're the designer. As a director, I'm the architect.

ACTOR: Then the actors are all building materials.

LAO SHE: All practitioners of drama are bricks and tiles.

(All three of them laugh.)

ACTOR: Shaw once told him [Huang Zuolin] that if he wanted to achieve something, he shouldn't be a disciple. Instead, he should create his own style with his own efforts. From that time on, he saw Shaw as his teacher. He started to search for something new in his early life, and after fifty to sixty years of stage practice, achieved a highpoint in the dramatic theory of *huaju*: his *xieyi* concept of theater.¹⁵

(Enter HUANG ZUOLIN. On the background screen are the photos of Stanislavsky, Brecht, and Mei Lanfang, who represent three different approaches to theater. They merge into a sketch of HUANG ZUOLIN, which then gradually disappears.)

LAO SHE: The Huang of the south and the Jiao of the north are actually from the same place. Juyin, your fellow countryman is here.

(Both of them welcome HUANG ZUOLIN.)

ACTOR: Mr. Zuolin, Your *xieyi* concept has made a lasting influence. If you were to give it a *xieyi* definition, what would it be?

HUANG ZUOLIN: Objectivity, essence.

ACTOR: What about a realistic definition?

HUANG ZUOLIN: Stanislavsky believed in the fourth wall. Brecht wanted to tear down the fourth wall. For Mei Lanfang, this wall never existed, so there was no need to tear it down.

LAO SHE: What do you know? He's usually a man of few words, but today he pours his heart out. He's more than made up for his past silence.

(HUANG ZUOLIN *smiles but says nothing.*)

LAO SHE: Juyin, I shouldn't have said that. He's clammed up again.
[See Plate 1.]

ACTOR: Today it's the one-hundredth anniversary of *huaju*. I'd really like to see you three collaborate on a production of *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven*.

LAO SHE: The original script can no longer be found.

JIAO JUYIN: Then you write one. Zuolin and I will direct it together.

LAO SHE: Mr. Ouyang already wrote another script. How dare I try again?

TIAN HAN: Mr. Ouyang wrote his play to express his deep sympathy for the oppressed people and his indignation against the colonists.

JIAO JUYIN: When times change, people's needs change. Authors' attitudes also change. The result is a new creation.

HUANG ZUOLIN: Tian Han said that, too.

ACTORS: My three masters, we've already finished performing Ouyang's play.

LAO SHE: But *Uncle Tom's Cabin* isn't finished yet. What about adding a memory to it?

JIAO JUYIN: A memory?

LAO SHE: That happened before Tom was sold to Legree. Slave trader Haley brought him to the South on a steamboat. The sun was shining on the golden waves in the river. The passengers on the top deck were chatting merrily, their voices drifting with the wind.

JIAO JUYIN: Tom sat in the cabin, feeling proud of his own honesty. Although he missed his family so much, he didn't try to run away, didn't even consider his own future, but was full of gratitude to the master who sold him.

ACTOR: How to perform this episode?

JIAO JUYIN: Make it more Chinese.

(*Seeing that HUANG ZUOLIN is not saying anything, all three of them look at him inquiringly.*)

HUANG ZUOLIN: (*Smiling, he says slowly*) Make it *xieyi*.

(*The light on them dims. A whistle sounds. A platform slowly moves out with TOM sitting on it. Slave trader HALEY enters hastily, leading the*

female slave LUCY and her child, LITTLE TOCK. LUCY is well dressed and carries a suitcase. LITTLE TOCK appears to be very shy.)

HALEY: This is Tom. I'm going to sell him to the South. Tom, this is Lucy.

TOM: How are you, Lucy?

LUCY: How are you?

TOM: (*Looking at LITTLE TOCK.*) What's your name?

LITTLE TOCK: Tock.

TOM: Tock? Nice name.

HALEY: You all stay here. You're not supposed to go up there. That place is for the upper-class people.

LUCY: I understand, Master.

HALEY: Sometimes, I'm really moved by my kindness. Other people put handcuffs and shackles on their black slaves, but I only shackle your feet. As long as you behave yourselves, you can use your hands freely.

(HALEY is about to leave. LUCY lets TOCK sit on the suitcase. HALEY comes back to look at LUCY, making her very nervous.)

HALEY: (*Points at LUCY*) Come here.

(LUCY walks toward him uneasily. HALEY takes out a document from his pocket and whispers something to her. LUCY suddenly becomes very agitated.)

LUCY: I don't believe it. I don't believe it.

HALEY: If you don't believe me, take a look at this. This is a sales contract signed by your master, John.

LUCY: This can't be. He told me I'm goin' to Louisville. He's loaned me out as a cook to a little hotel where my husband works. He told me this himself. I can't believe he'd trick me.

HALEY: Tom, she'll believe you are honest—read this to her. She acts like I'm cheating her.

(HALEY shows the document to TOM. TOM doesn't want to read it. He takes one look and nods. LUCY is stunned, she looks at TOM.)

HALEY: He's sold you. It's absolutely true.

LUCY: (*Suddenly she becomes very calm.*) Then there's nothin' to say?

HALEY: Right.

(LUCY walks over to LITTLE TOCK and holds him in her arms. She sits on the suitcase, turns around not to look at HALEY. She's dejected and lost in thought. The red color of the stage's backdrop slowly turns pale. HALEY shakes his head, walks to the front part of the stage, and lights up a cigar.)

ACTOR: Tom wanted to comfort Lucy, but he didn't know what to say. He could only watch the river with her in silence. Haley came to the top deck of the boat. What happened just now already became a memory. He was used to all this. Then a stranger approached him.

(Enter the STRANGER, who says hello to HALEY.)

STRANGER: I've been watching you for a long time. (HALEY is surprised.)

The woman you bought is quite good-looking.

HALEY: She can be considered pretty.

STRANGER: Taking her to the South? Selling her to a plantation?

HALEY: (Nods) I'm delivering goods to a plantation according to this order. I plan to include her. I heard she's a good cook, and her fingers are also good at picking cotton.

STRANGER: Plantations don't want kids.

HALEY: This kid is real bright, chubby, and strong. His muscle is as hard as brick. I have a place to raise him. I'm going to stock up with more goods. My cook just lost her child—I think she'll be the right person to raise him.

STRANGER: Make it cheap and I'll buy him. This kid can't be worth more than ten dollars.

HALEY: (Shaking his head) No, that won't do.

STRANGER: All right, buddy, what do you think is the right price?

HALEY: Let's see. . . . Actually, I can raise him myself, or hire someone to do it. He's cute and real strong. After six months or a year, he can fetch a good price. I can sell him for two or three hundred dollars. So I want fifty dollars, not a penny less.

STRANGER: Buddy, that's too far-fetched.

HALEY: (Nodding) That's an honest price.

STRANGER: Thirty dollars, not a penny more.

HALEY: (Looks at the STRANGER) What about this: we each add a little bit. Forty-five. That's my best offer.

STRANGER: Forty, what do you think?

HALEY: (Gazing at the STRANGER's eyes for a long time) Deal. Where do you get off?

STRANGER: Louisville.

HALEY: Louisville, very good. We'll get there real soon. I'll send away his mother, so you can take him with you quietly. We have to do

this quickly and quietly. I like to do everything quietly without all that crying and wailing. That's not good for the condition of the merchandise.

STRANGER: I understand.

(The STRANGER pays HALEY. HALEY counts the money, puffs out a mouthful of smoke, and walks back to the platform.)

HALEY: *(To LUCY)* All right, take it easy. When we get to Louisville, you go up with me to take a look. We'll see if you can say goodbye to your husband. Your child will stay on board so you won't try to run away. After you see your husband, I'll send for the child. Tom, look after him and don't let him run all over the place.

(LUCY exits with HALEY. The STRANGER slowly walks over to LITTLE TOCK.)

STRANGER: *(To TOCK)* Are you Little Tock? Your Mama asked me to take you to your Papa.

(LITTLE TOCK happily holds the STRANGER's hand.)

STRANGER: Let's go.

(The STRANGER exits holding LITTLE TOCK's hand.)

ACTOR: There were many people on the shore. Lucy didn't find her husband because her master lied to her. He didn't tell her husband about her coming.

(A whistle blows. Enter HALEY with LUCY. LUCY discovers to her great surprise that her child is gone.)

LUCY: *(Frightened out of her wits)* Oh my God, where did my child go?

TOM: Didn't he go see his Papa?

(They both stare at HALEY.)

HALEY: *(Calmly)* Lucy, your child's been sold. I better tell you now. You know I can't take him to the South. I found a good buyer and sold him to a good family. They like him a lot, and will raise him and provide for him better than you can. Okay, if you feel sad, go ahead and cry, but it's better to control yourself.

(LUCY looks straight at HALEY. She doesn't scream or cry, but turns to sit down in a daze.)

HALEY: That's a good woman. An intelligent and sensible woman like you shouldn't be too emotional. You know this has to happen and can't be helped.

LUCY: (*Her voice suffocating*) Oh, don't say it no more, Master. Don't say it no more.

HALEY: (*Stubbornly*) You're a smart woman, Lucy. I'll treat you well. I'll find a good master for you down river, and you'll find another husband soon. Such a pretty woman as you . . .

LUCY: (*Raises her head to look at HALEY*) Oh, Master, please don't talk to me right now. All right?

HALEY: (*Looks at her, then looks at TOM, as if talking to himself*) She takes it too hard, but at least she's pretty calm. After a little while, she'll feel better.

(HALEY exits. The stage backdrop turns deep blue. There seem to be stars on it. Calm and slow music plays as LUCY stands up, walks to the platform, and looks at the sky.)

ACTOR: Night is getting late. All the people on the ship are asleep. Everything seems so tranquil as if nothing has ever happened. Lucy stands on the deck. A breeze softly caresses her face, like her husband's big and warm hand. Stars are reflected in the river, like her son's loving eyes.

(Suddenly LUCY jumps down from the platform. TOM struggles to stand up. LAO SHE appears on the back part of the stage.)

ACTOR: Tom seems to hear someone fall in the water. That sound is like an echo from heaven.

(The light on the platform and on TOM turns dim.)

ACTOR: (*To LAO SHE*) Mr. Lao She! Mr. Lao She! Mr. Lao She!

(LAO SHE seems not to hear. He turns around and walks slowly to the back part of the stage.)

ACTOR: (*Meditating*) In 1966, in a midsummer night in Beijing, a dramatist holds a stack of manuscripts, and slowly washes himself in a

lake most familiar to him. Even at night, the lake water is still warm, but his heart is freezing and covered with frost.

(On the screen in the background, waves rise from the limpid pool of water. The waves soon disappear, and LAO SHE seems to have dissolved in the still water. The light dims. Silence spreads like death.)

ACTOR: That moment was only the prelude to a ten-year-long drama that was about to begin. The stage was resplendent like colorful clouds, but what was enacted was a farce, more accurately, a tragedy. During those ten years, Chinese *huaju* chose collective silence.

(Sorrowful music, slow and deep. The stage is awash in red, blinding and as red as blood. The light dims.)

Act 6: 1977–2007

(The music gradually becomes fast and modern sounding. A feeling of cheerfulness prevails, but the stage is still empty. The music creates a feeling of anxiety.)

From one side of the stage, an actor enters. His narration has an energetic rhythm. Under the strong stage light, ELIZA appears somewhat frightened, with her child strapped to her chest, signifying strain, but also hope.

The ACTOR's narration, the stirring melody, and ELIZA's agile body language form a beautiful, nervous, painful, and strong stage image. At first, ELIZA crosses the icy river alone, then she's joined by CASSY and EMMELINE, pushing forward with their collective strength.)

ACTOR: In the early spring, the river has risen with swift current and big chunks of floating ice moving back and forth in the clear water. Eliza escapes to the riverside, but feels hopeless. The floating ice chunks are piling upon each other, squeezing and pressing each other, and forming a giant raft. The undulating ice surface symbolizes hope, but danger lurks in the cracks.

She feels a little dizzy; her body shakes continuously. Behind her, the barking of hunting dogs can be heard. The sound of horses' hooves is mixed with their neighing.

All of a sudden, Eliza summons all the strength in her body and lets out a shrill cry, which makes the hunting dogs raise their ears, the horses' hooves stop running, and her pursuers freeze in fear. They have never heard such a cry that contains so much energy and sorrow.

With a giant leap, Eliza jumps over the swiftly flowing current and lands on a piece of ice far from the riverbank. Her pursuers are stunned. Their mouths wide open, their hands outstretched, they look like sculptures in the cold wind. The baby in her arms remains peaceful and quiet. He opens his eyes wide and clenches his fists, as if to give strength to his mother.

The ice chunk under her feet begins to move, giving out a creaking sound. The clear river water looks like the palm of a monster. She can't stop for a moment. She lets out a loud cry and jumps to another piece of ice with surprising courage. To piece after piece, she keeps jumping and stumbling. Her feet slip and slide, but she jumps up again and again. Her shoes fall off, her socks are torn, every step is imprinted with blood, but she's oblivious to everything, can't feel anything. She keeps jumping and moving forward.

The melting ice breaks with a cracking sound. Water splashes in all directions. Broken pieces of ice get embedded in her flesh. Water drops pound on her legs. She's like a wounded deer. A tremendous amount of energy is released in her body. She jumps, jumps, jumps, and goes up, up and up. When she sees the ground, she rushes to it with her last strength. On the frozen ground, she breathes hope. [See Plate 2.]

(ELIZA collapses on the ground. CASSY and EMMELINE collapse on the ground. The music strikes up hopefully. Light dims as male and female actors appear in an isolated pool.)

MALE ACTOR: It's the same stage. The curtain rises and falls. We enact our reunions and separations, and sing other people's joys and sorrows.

FEMALE ACTOR: The stage is no longer the same stage. Our dramatists advance wave upon wave, carrying forward the past traditions and forging ahead into the future. Our stage is heavy with history.

MALE ACTOR: Billowing waves used to surge here, but now all seems peaceful.

FEMALE ACTOR: On the winding path, they stumble and fall, but never give up hope.

MALE ACTOR: After crossing the icy river, they walk on the broad and level road, and walk with dignity.

(The big screen in the background shows all kinds of stage photos from 1907 to the present with increasing speed. An ACTOR walks onstage, talking to himself.)

ACTOR: The day after Tom died, a young man came to Legree's plantation. He was the Little George whom Tom had brought up. Now George had grown up. After much difficult searching, he finally found Tom's whereabouts, and wanted to ransom him, but Tom had already died. George buried Tom and turned back to go home. During the half-month journey, he remained silent.

(Enter GEORGE. He walks to the front part of the stage slowly. All the actors become BLACK SLAVES. They enter slowly and stand all across the stage.)

ACTOR: At home, everybody is waiting for him to come back, waiting for Tom who seems to have been gone a hundred years.

GEORGE: *(Takes out a stack of documents and says with deep feeling.)* My good friends, you're all free now. But you don't have to leave here, because I need you here, and this is your home. Generation after generation, many sorrows and injustices in the world have been erased and forgotten. But I want to tell you that when you celebrate your freedom, you should give thanks to that kind-hearted Tom, to repay him with your goodness. Every time you see Uncle Tom's cabin, you're reminded of your freedom.

(TOM comes out from the back stage. People make way for him. TOM walks to the front stage. As the stirring and lyrical second movement of Dvorak's New World Symphony is heard. TOM looks out into the distance. He removes the flower from his lapel and solemnly puts it on the ground.)

TOM: Nowadays in China, no matter where you are, where you stand, when you see the *huaju* stage—the shining lights, the people who stand there, the hundred years of history, you should think of the freedom we enjoy today!

(The music gradually stops. Lights dim; only a spotlight remains shining on the ACTOR, who stands quietly on one side of the stage.)

ACTOR: Many people passed through these one hundred years just because of two simple words: love *huaju*.

(Silence. The light shining on him dims. On the screen behind are the words "Love huaju," which grow from small to large, then gradually fade away as the curtain closes.)

NOTES

1. This is quoted in Ge 1997: 3. An English translation of this essay can be found in Denton 1996: 74–81.

2. Lin Shu's book was published only one year after the Boxer Uprising (1900) as troops from Austria-Hungary, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States (known as the Eight-Power Alliance in Chinese history) ransacked Peking in retaliation against antiforeign activities of the "Boxers." The Society of the Righteous and Harmonious Fist (Yihe Tuan) as the Boxers called themselves, were peasants who knew some martial arts. Their uprising first broke out in response to Germany's seizure of Shangdong as a sphere of influence, and soon spread across North China. Their ragtag army was no match for the expeditionary force of the foreign powers and tens of thousands of them were killed. In the Boxer Protocol signed in 1901 by the Manchu government, China was required to pay a crippling indemnity of 450,000,000 taels of silver, to be paid over forty years at interest rates that would more than double the amount. The Boxer Uprising followed the humiliating defeats of the Opium War (1840–1842), with the loss of Hong Kong to Great Britain, and the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), in which Taiwan went to Japan. Against such a background of national crisis, Lin's book was widely read, and his warning struck a responsive chord in the Chinese people.

3. As "outline play" implies, these works had no written script, only a brief synopsis of the events of the play. In performance, the actors' ability to ad-lib was very important. These plays could be put together very quickly, and, as a result, their quality was considered poor. Some of the favorite topics of the "outline plays" were commentaries on current political situations or comical portrayals of stock characters.

4. New Culture Movement is the name given to the reform spearheaded by *New Youth*, a journal begun by Chen Duxiu in 1915 responding to the fall of the Qing dynasty and weaknesses of the new republic. Critique of traditional Chinese culture led toward the 1919 May Fourth movement.

5. "Eight model plays" (*ba ge yang ban xi*), which consist of five *jingju*, two ballet dance dramas, and one symphonic work, were the pieces sanctioned for performance during the Cultural Revolution.

6. Zeng Xiaogu (1873–1937), pioneer in *huaju*, co-founder of the Spring Willow Society in Tokyo, and the principal writer of the play *Black Slave's Cry to Heaven*.

7. Li Shutong wrote the lyrics of this song based on the music by the American composer John P. Ordway.

8. Wang Zhongsheng (1874?–1911) was one of the early activists in the *huaju* movement and the founder of the Spring Sun Society, which was dedicated to the performance of this new drama. Wang used the stage as a forum to spread revolutionary ideas; hence, he was assassinated by a government agent.

9. "Civilized Drama" or *wenming xi* was the early stage of spoken drama.

These early performances familiarized the Chinese audiences with the acting styles and stage settings of this new Western-style drama. “Civilized Drama” declined because of its poor scriptwriting. During the 1920s there was a conscious movement to dissociate *huaju* from *wenming xi*.

10. This song was adapted from the second movement of Dvorak’s *New World Symphony* by Li Shutong. It was very popular during the war years as it expressed the Chinese people’s longing for their homeland under Japanese occupation.

11. The Japanese invaded Manchuria on 18 September 1931. “On the Songhua River” was another popular wartime song about a river in the Japanese occupied area.

12. It is a common for adults to play children’s roles in China. Most of these actors are from China Children’s Theater or Beijing Children’s Theater. When *Black Slave’s Cry to Heaven* was first performed in 1907, adults also played children.

13. Though the lyrics here differ greatly from John Newton’s composition, this is the Chinese version of *Amazing Grace*. John Newton (1725–1807) was an Anglican clergyman and a former slave-ship captain who wrote the lyrics for this well-known hymn after a religious awakening caused him to repent his past, join the ministry, and rededicate himself to Christianity.

14. “Hundred flowers” and “hundred schools” refer to the campaign “Let a Hundred Flowers Bloom and a Hundred Schools of Thought Contend” launched by Mao Zedong in 1956–1957 to promote freedom of speech. The government soon reversed its policy with another campaign, the Anti-Rightist Campaign, to punish those who did speak out.

15. The term *xieyi* refers to traditional Chinese painting done with quick and bold brushwork. Huang borrowed the term to describe the characteristics of traditional Chinese theater that aims at presenting the essence of life rather than trying to create an illusion of life on stage. He advocated integrating the dramaturgy of *huaju* with traditional Chinese aesthetics. For Huang’s explication of the characteristics of Chinese traditional theater, see his essay “On Mei Lanfang and Chinese Traditional Theater” in Fei 1999: 154–158.

GLOSSARY

Beijing Ren 北京人

Cao Yu 曹禺

Chaguan 茶馆

Chen Duxiu 陈独秀

Chen Xinyi 陈薪伊

Chunliu She 春柳社

Fujisawa Asajiro 藤泽浅二郎

Guan Hanqing 关汉卿

Guo Moruo 郭沫若

Heinu hen 黑奴恨

Heinu yutian lu 黑奴吁天录

Hong Shen 洪深

Hongo-za 本乡座

Huaju 话剧

huaju jiaoxiang jushi 话剧交响剧诗

huangmei xi 黄梅戏

Huang Zuolin 黄佐临

Jia 家

Jiao Juyin 焦菊隐

Jingju 京剧

Lao She 老舍	<i>Shinpa</i> 新派
Lei Kesheng 雷恪生	Tian Han 田汉
<i>Leiyu</i> 雷雨	Wang Zhongsheng 王钟声
Li Shutong 李叔同	Wei Yi 魏易
Liang Qichao 梁启超	<i>Wenming xi</i> 文明戏
Lin Shu 林纾	Xi Meijuan 奚美娟
<i>Mingyou zhi si</i> 名优之死	Xia Yan 夏衍
<i>mubiao xi</i> 幕表戏	<i>Xieyi</i> 写意
Ouyang Yuqian 欧阳予倩	<i>Xiqu</i> 戏曲
Pu Cunxin 濮存昕	Yu Rongjun 喻荣军
Qin Yi 秦怡	<i>Yuanye</i> 原野
<i>Richu</i> 日出	<i>Yutian</i> 吁天
<i>Shanghai wuyan xia</i> 上海屋檐下	Zeng Xiaogu 曾孝谷

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