

The Protest from the Invisible World: the Revenge Ghost in Yuan Drama and the Elizabethan Drama

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Supernatural elements, such as ghosts, demons, magic or witchcraft, are popular dramatic ingredients in the Elizabethan theatre (1587-1642), especially in the tradition of revenge tragedy, or the tragedy of blood.¹ In Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587-8), Marston's *Antonio's Revenge* (1599), Shakespeare's *Hamlet* (1601), Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (1610), and Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy* (1611), the ghost plays an indispensable role.² Scholars of the Elizabethan drama have noticed that there is a set of motifs related to the revenge theme and the appearance of the ghost in almost all of these revenge tragedies (See Appendix A, p. 8-23).

- 1) an unjust death prior to the curtain's rise;
- 2) the ghost of the wronged coming back in the evening, in person or in a dream, with thunder, lightning and comets, crying "vindicta" to its relatives;
- 3) the avenger's doubt about the ghost, hesitation and delay in the act of revenge, and his authentic or assumed madness caused by the ghost;
- 4) the act of revenge disguised in the play-within-the-play;
- 5) a series of bloody murders, duels, poisonings or suicides which may involve seven to eight people's deaths on or off stage;
- 6) the ghost watching the final scene of revenge from above;
- 7) the death of the avenger himself.³

These motifs form a convention and indicate the collective needs of the Elizabethan audience for the sensationalism produced by the ghost (Bowers, 75). But, because of the repetition in the treatment of the stage

ghost in these plays, the Halletts have pointed out, most critics tend to dismiss the ghost as "gimmicks passed on from playwright to playwright simply because of their popularity with the groundlings" (*The Revenger's Madness*, 1980, p. 12). They call the ghost a "mere machine" (Moorman, 192), a "stock apparition," a "classical puppet," a "Jack-in-the-box, popping up from Tartarus at appropriate moments" (Wilson, 55-7). Other critics have argued whether these Elizabethan stage ghosts are the avenger's subjective imagination,⁴ whether they come from Hades or from Purgatory, or whether they are the Devil himself.⁵ Such attitudes explain away the contextual and organic function of the ghost scene in the play, the emotional effect it produces on stage, and the anthropological significance it indicates.

The scholars of Yuan drama (1260-1368) are faced with similar problems when they study the revenge theme and the ghost motif in the Yuan plays.⁶ In the group of plays containing the revenge ghost, *P'en-er Kuei* (盆兒鬼), *Chu-sha Tan* (殊砂擔), *Sheng-chin Kê* (生閻金), *Tou-êr Yuan* (竇娥冤), *Hou-ting Hua* (後庭花), *Shen-nu Er* (神奴兒), *Feng-yü Lang* (馮玉蘭), there exist striking similarities. The list of motifs can be formulated as follows (See Appendix B,

- 1) an oracle, or a nightmare, in the Hsieh-tze (楔子, the prologue) or the first Che (折, the Act), fore-telling a bad fortune of the protagonist;
- 2) the protagonist being robbed and murdered on the way home;
- 3) or being wrongly sentenced by a bribed local official and executed;
- 4) the ghost of the wronged coming back on a dark evening in person, or in a dream, with wind and thunder;
- 5) the ghost of the wronged appearing in front of someone who can help him/her to plead for vindication in the court of a legendary upright judge, usually Judge Pao (包公) or Judge Chang Ting (張鼎);
- 6) or the ghost showing itself to the judge when the judge is on the way to visit the city or is reviewing cases in his study;
- 7) the ghost testifying concerning the evil-doer's crime in the court. This procedure usually is interrupted and postponed by the God of the Door and the scene of the postponement may produce a comic effect;
- 8) or the ghost testifying in the court in the Ming-fu (冥府, the Hell);

- 9) the evil-doer being sentenced to death, and the wronged being buried properly and given an official title retroactively.

These plays are often grouped as the genre of Kung-an plays (公案劇, Lawsuit Plays).⁷ The reason that these plays share such obvious similar traits is partly because the formal conventions and the stories of the Yuan drama are largely legacies of early oral narratives; sometimes the plots of several plays are even based on the same source.⁸ Critics of Yuan plays call these similar traits, especially the stage ghost, mere conventions, "chen-t'ao" (陳套) or kuan-li (慣例), and miss the organic function of the ghost in the play.

Instead of being merely a borrowed convention or a stage machinery, the revenge ghosts in these two groups of plays are essential to the plot as a whole and should be studied with more care. Goldman in his *The Actor's Freedom* (1975) suggested that the fear and awe the audience feels toward the actors are caused by the actors' freedom, to inspire them, particularly to arouse a "threat to the order of things, a challenge to the decent limits of being" (8). The uncanniness of the ghosts and the invisible and unknown world associated with them allow this kind of freedom to the utmost extent. The presence of an inimical force also provides "a kind of psychic thrust and counterthrust that connects inner states of feeling — desire, fear, hatred" (Goldman, 28). Because of the ghost's fundamental link to certain psychic states of man, the Halletts in their study of the revenge tragedy motifs suggested that the ghost should be treated as a symbol of "man's most primitive instincts" to right the violated order (21). The "unappeasable anger," the unleashed force to right the wrong, an attempt to work through the psyche of the revenger, and the call to excess, according to the Halletts, are the archetypal elements related to the Elizabethan ghosts (39). In this view, the Elizabethan revenge tragedy should be treated as an archetypal myth for the Elizabethan Age (119).

The revenge theme and the ghost motif appeal to the Elizabethan and the Yuan public taste because their audience shares experiences similar to those of the protagonists in these plays. The widespread popularity of the revenge theme and the ghost motif reveal the collective consciousness of these two cultures. In the motifs of the Elizabethan revenge plays and the Yuan revenge plays listed above, there is a common pattern: an unjust death to be redressed, a ghost demanding justice, and an ending demonstrating the law of retribution. But, underneath this common pattern, there are significant differences which indicate different emphases in the historical

experience of these two cultures at these two periods concerning the revenge ghosts. In the following discussion, I shall re-examine the organic function of the revenge ghosts in both Elizabethan drama and Yuan drama: I shall compare and contrast the manner of revenge demanded by the ghost, the emotional responses of the characters involved in the ghost scenes, and the dramatic effects the ghosts produce on the stage. In addition, I shall show that the different dramatic contracts of revenge set by the Elizabethan ghosts and the Yuan ghosts create different aesthetic experiences for the audience. On the Elizabethan stage, there is a mixture of pity and terror. But, in the Yuan drama, we do not have the call for excessive violence; instead, there is a mixture of pity and the comic on the Yuan stage. This difference is based upon the different dramatic origins of these two groups of works and the contrasting expectations of the Elizabethan and the Yuan theatre-goers.

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Ghosts by their very nature, with their weird appearance, their cries for vengeance, and the accompaniment of the eerie night wind, immediately stimulate the audience's wild imagination of the inaccessible and mysterious world. Once the gruesome atmosphere is produced by the ghost, it lingers on the stage and in the audience's mind throughout the play. In both the Elizabethan drama and the Yuan drama, the appearance of the ghost and its "unappeasable anger" determine the outcome of the revenge attempt and the tragic atmosphere; the violated order has to be corrected. But, the different manner of revenge — private blood revenge vs. court trial — demanded by the Elizabethan ghosts and the Yuan ghosts makes the emphasis vary.

In the Elizabethan revenge tragedies, the ghost scenes are often brief but take place at crucial junctures, mostly in the first Act, the third Act and the fifth Act (See Appendix C, p. 36). These ghost scenes are part of a close structure in which the anticipatory frame in the beginning, the recurring motif in the middle, and the completion of the contract at the end make the tragic situation inevitable. In Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*,⁹ from the first scene in the first Act, Revenge makes his intention explicit: Revenge and the ghost are here to "see the misterie, / And serve for chorus in this tragedie" (I. ii. 90-1). At the end of this Act, Revenge guarantees the ghost, who is grieved by the "pleasant sights" enacted in front of him,

that before they leave the stage, he will turn

Their freendship into fell despight,
 Their love to mortall hate, their day to night,
 Their hope into dispaire, their peace to warre,
 Their joyes to paine, their blisse to miserie.

(I. v. 6-9)

The purpose of revenge is pronounced unambiguously and contributes to the bleak atmosphere.

In *Hamlet*,¹⁰ the revenge theme is also introduced by the ghost. The gloomy atmosphere is first aroused by the silent apparition of the ghost of the old king to Horatio and the guards in the opening scene. When Hamlet comes to the castle, the ghost of his father tells him that he is "doom'd for a certain term to walk the night, / And for the day confin'd to fast in fires, / Till the foul crimes done . . . / Are burnt and purg'd away" (I.v. 10-3). The ghost urges Hamlet to revenge this "foul and most unnatural murder" (I.v. 25). The ghost's parting words — "Adieu, adieu, adieu. Remember me" (I.v. 91) — imprint themselves in Hamlet's brain. Hamlet swears to "wipe away all trivial fond records, / And saws of books, all forms, all pressures past / That youth and observation copied there" (I.v. 99-101). In his soliloquy, Hamlet repeats the ghost's last words "Adieu, adieu, remember me"; this time it is his determination spoken to his uncle. Before the first Act ends, the ghost's will of vengeance has become Hamlet's will and primary motive for existence.

In the opening scene of Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*,¹¹ Piero enters the stage, smeared in blood, with a gory poniard in one hand and a torch in the other. There is nothing stirring in this dead night, except "howling dogs, night crows, and screeching owls, / . . . meager ghosts, Piero, and black thoughts" (I.i. 7-8). Shortly after, Antonio enters in an uneasy state of mind and speaks with Balurdo and Alberto about his horrid dream of the ghosts. In his dream, two "meager ghosts" appear in front of him:

The one's breast seemed fresh-paunched with bleeding wounds
 Whose bubbling gore sprang in frighted eyes:
 The other ghost assumed my father's shape;
 Both cried, 'Revenge!' (I. iii. 43-6)

The terror-stricken Antonio gets to his feet and opens the window, but

he sees a more terrifying vision:

... The verge of heaven
 Was ringed with flames and all the upper vault
 Thick-laced with flakes of fire; in midst whereof
 A blazing comet shot his threat'ning train
 Just on my face. (I. iii. 52-6)

When he tries to pray, his nose bleeds (I.iii. 59). The flaming sky, the blazing comet, and the bleeding nose all are evil omens.¹³ These ominous signs, along with Piero's revelation of his vicious deeds and intention, and the dream of the ghost crying "Revenge", lead to the revenge contract.

The fulfillment of the contract agreed to at the beginning of the plays will take place in an excessively violent manner. In *The Spanish Tragedy*, before the final Act, several people have died — Andrea's friend Horatio, the servant Serberine, the traitor Pedringano, Horatio's mother Isabella. In the play-within-the-play directed by Hieronimo in the final Act (IV.iv), Hieronimo and Bel-imperia kill Balthazar and Lorenzo, and then they commit suicide. Upon this bloody conclusion, the ghost of Andrea seems to be satisfied. He announces that he will be the guide to lead the dead down to the underworld: the evil-doers to the "deepest hell, where none but furies, bugs, and tortures dwell" (IV.v. 27-30), and the good people to other better places.

The ghost of Andrugio in *Antonio's Revenge* similarly welcomes the audience to observe "the last act of [his] son's revenge" (V.i. 11):

For now the plot unites his scattered limbs
 Close in contracted bands. (V. i. 13-4)

These "contracted bands" leads Piero to meet his doomed end: his daughter and son are all dead; his ambition and intrigue are discovered by the Florentine Prince and the States of Venice; Antonio, Pandulpho and Maria have arranged their plan of revenge. Andrugio cries in exultation:

... O, now triumphs my ghost,
 Exclaiming, 'Heaven's just; for I shall see
 The scourge of murder and impiety.' (V. i. 23-5)

He wants to observe the anguish of his enemy. When Antonio and Pandulpho pluck out Piero's tongue, the ghost is happy:

Blest be thy hand. I taste the joys of heaven,
Viewing my son triumph in his black blood. (V. v. 36-7)

They then offer Piero the dish that contains his son Julio's limbs, at which sight Piero cannot utter his grief, and then they stab him blow by blow. Pandulpho says,

. . . let him die and die, and still be dying.
And yet not die, till he hath died and died
Ten thousand deaths in agony of heart. (V. v. 73-5)

The ghost of Andrugio enjoys greatly this slow process of butchering. He is finally satisfied:

'Tis done, and now my soul shall sleep in rest.
Sons that revenge their father's blood are blest. (V. v. 81-2)

The multiple deaths in the final scene of *Hamlet* and *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* create a similar bloody sensation. The irresistible demand of each ghost of excessive violence and bloody revenge are like iron bands on the avenger-hero. After the announcement of the contract and before the completion of the contract, the avenger's psychological crisis, his hesitation and his distraction, become the focus of the audience's attention.

In the Chinese Yuan plays, the contract is different. Instead of presenting the avenger as the protagonist, the victim-ghost is the center of the audience's emotional identification. Therefore, the dramatic contract here is twofold: the first one is the injustice the victim faces originally, and the second is the revenge brought by the ghost. When the play starts, the crime has not yet been committed. There is no ghost crying "vindicta" to the avenger. The tragic situation is set by the ominous signs revealed to the protagonist in the prologue, either by a nightmare or through an oracle, foreboding the coming ill fortune.¹² The oracle and the nightmare serve as a kind of anticipatory frame for the first contract. The audience follows the protagonist through a series of events while all the time expecting the crisis to happen any moment.

The focal point of the attention in the first half of these plays, thus, is not in the avenger's dilemma and hesitation, but in the process of the postponement of confronting the villain with the injustice done to the protagonist. In *Chu-sa Tan*, Wang Wen-yung (王文用) escapes death twice by a hairbreadth: the first time he discovers Pa Cheng's ill intention and cleverly makes Pa Cheng (白正) drunk, and the second time in a different inn he is waken up by Pa Cheng's loud snore next door and runs away in time. The third time when he meets Pa Cheng again in a temple, it is the end for him. In *Sheng-ching Ge*, the naive and gullible scholar Kuo Cheng, despite the inn keeper's and his wife's several warnings, insists on giving the gold pavilion to P'ang Ya-nei (衙內)¹³ in exchange for a position in the government. This offer results in his losing the treasure, his wife and his own life.

The villains the victims face are mostly lawless high-way-men or powerful local authorities. The Yuan society was a corrupted one and was full of injustice and racial discrimination. Only the Mongolians could serve in an official position and rule the people while the Hans remained at the bottom of this hierarchical social scale.¹⁴ The wealthy aristocratic people could use their influence and money to buy governmental positions. When there is a lawsuit, the uneducated judge will decide the case according to the bribe he receives. The muddle-headed local official in *Dou-er Yuan* says that all those who bring the lawsuit to the court are his parents because they provide him his clothing and food (YCH, 1507). The judge in *Shen-nu Er* also mistakes the innocent woman as the criminal and puts her to torture (YCH, 568-70). If the innocent party is poor and cannot afford to bribe the judge, he or she is sure to lose the case, and will even be executed, like Dou-er. If the common people are exploited by some local evil force like the bigwig P'ang in *Sheng-ching Ke*, there is no hope for them to call for justice.

The indignant cry of these victims' before their death is a great protest against the injustice done to them. When the bigwig P'ang is about to kill Kuo Cheng and take away his wife, Kuo Cheng can only cry: "I'll be dead this moment. I can only pray to heaven to pity innocent me. Loud is my cry!" (YCH, p. In *P'eng-er Kuei*, before he is killed by the pot-maker Chao and burnt in the brickkiln, Yang Kuo-yung (楊國用) cries, "after my death, who can serve me? High is my injustice and no one can suppress my anger" (YCH, p. 1395). Wang Wen-yung also cries, "Even if you had a palm as big as the door, you could not stop me from crying injustice" (YCH,

p. 396).

This unappeasable anger coupled with the cry of injustice is most explicitly spelled out in the famous *Dou-er Yuan*. Dou-er cries before her execution:

With no cause I am sentenced by the civil law.
 Unexpectedly I have to be executed now.
 I want to cry my injustice to move the heaven and the earth.
 . . .
 How can I not blame the heaven and the earth.
 The sun and the moon govern the day and night.
 The gods and ghosts dominate the turn of life and death.
 The heaven and the earth should be able to distinguish the good
 from the bad.
 Why now they mistake the sage as the criminal.
 The good suffers poverty and early death.
 The bad enjoys fortune and long life.
 The heaven and the earth are afraid of the evil force and help
 them to exploit the weak.
 Heaven! Earth! You don't deserve the name!¹⁵ (*YCH*, p. 1509)

This protest against heaven is strong. There's no civil law to protect the innocent and no divine intervention to prevent the injustice. The audience witnesses the process of the persecution and hears the victims' desperate cry.

The Chinese folk religion holds that the ghosts of those who do not live out their allotted portion of life because of being murdered, drowned, or committing suicide will linger around the spot of their death forever (Chien Mu, 144). These ghosts cannot enter the cycle of reincarnation until they are avenged or mollified, so they still have to suffer rain and storm in the dark wilderness.¹⁶ When Yang Kuo-yung cries – "After my death, who can save me? (*YCH*, 1395), it implies that his ghost will have no rest and will suffer the fire in the brickkiln forever. The ghost of Kuo Cheng also cries:

This bit of my soul (breath) cannot be dispersed.
 Day and night I wander in the city of the wronged.
 I want to avenge the injustice and let my anger be pacified,
 So that I can leave the underworld to be born again. (*Sheng-ching*

Ke, in *YCH*, p. 1733)¹⁷

The ghost of Shen-ny and the ghost of Kuo Cheng's father are all in a similar condition.

But when their ghosts return in the third Act (See Appendix D, p.) and set the second dramatic contract, they do not go to their relatives to ask for private revenge, nor attempt to work through the psyche of the avenger. The reason, as Yen Tien-yiu (*Yuan Society in Tsa-chu*, 1984) has pointed out, is that these are all common people and do not possess any weapon nor know to use it. Moreover, they cannot submit their case to the local government because most are corrupted and cannot protect the helpless common people (103-114). This explains why Dou-er says that she wants to appeal not to the court but to heaven (*YCH*, p. 1514). They want to urge divine retribution, which can be brought only through the underworld.¹⁸ The ghost of Wang Wen-yung revisits the temple of Tong-yuei (東嶽, the Hell) where he was killed and challenges the deity of the Hell to punish the evil-doer in order to prove his uprightness:

Exercise thy law of transmigration.
 Show me your divine power.
 Send the villain down to the hell of the eighteenth level,
 And prove that you are just for the thousands of years. (*Chu-sa Tan*, in *YCH*, p. 402)¹⁹

When he sees the villain Pa Cheng who killed him and his father and took his wife as his own, he fiercely says, "your death cannot pacify my anger" (*YCH*, p. 402). Only the villain's eternal punishment in hell can appease his hatred. Pa Cheng, like Tantalus in Greek mythology, is sentenced by the god of the hell to be a hungry ghost forever; the ghosts of Wang and his father are rewarded with fortune in their next life. This ending appears similar to the ending in Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*.

Tsou Wen-hai in his study "the Law of the Underworld and the Concept of Justice in China" (1973) suggested that in Chinese literature, there are two kinds of Utopia: one is the peaceful Taoist T'ao-hua Yuan (桃花源, the Spring of Peach Blossom) where the hermits would like to go; the other is the "Yin-ss" or "ti-fu" (陰司, 地府, the Hell) where the law is just and the judge is upright (149). The hell has a well-organized government in which the impartial King of Yen-lo (閻羅王, like the Pluto in Greek

mythology) judges the dead people's lot. If they are virtuous in this life, they can become human beings in their next life; if they make serious mistakes, they may become animals; if they have done evil things, such as murder, they will be punished eternally in hell (162). The belief in revenge fulfilled through the law of the underworld is of course a negation of the law in the human world.

A different way to complete the second contract is the trial in the court of a legendary figure, usually Pao Kung or Chang Ting. In *P'en-er Kuei*, *Sheng-chin Kê*, *Tou-ê Yuan*, *Shen-nu Er*, *Feng Yu-lang*, *Hou-ting Hua*, the wise judge's clever investigation of the case is the climax of the play. The ghosts have to testify in the court. Sometimes, they even beat the villains to force them to confess (*Shen-nu Er*, *P'en-er Kuei*). One ordinary way to end the case is to sentence the villains to death, divide their property among the relatives of the victim and the ones who help the ghosts to appeal to the court. Though the execution of the villains may be very brutal, it is never performed on stage. As for the ghosts, they can be compensated through several ways: their corpses being properly buried, the wrong verdict being changed (*Tou-ê Yuan*), a title such as "Ching-shih"²⁰ being given them retroactively (*Sheng-chin Kê*, *Hou-ting Hua*), or a ritual of prayer being held by which the ghost is sent to heaven (*Shen-nu Er*).

The vindication in the court does not suggest that the Yuan people are more rational than the Elizabethan people. It also would be misleading to assume what Shih Chung-wen has suggested in his *The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Tsa-chu* (1976) that these Chinese lawsuit plays reflect the Yuan people's "basic trust in divine and social justice to punish the villain in the end" (p. 100). The fact that Pao Kung's stories and the ghost's vindication were so popular among the Yuan people shows that this kind of justice was unattainable in real life. From the history of Sung, we know that Pao Cheng (包拯), also called Pao Kung or Pao Tai-chi (包待制), was an upright and just government official of Kai-feng Fu (開封府), the Capital of the Sung Dynasty. No aristocrat or local authority would dare to interfere with his court decisions. People even compare him to the impartial Lord of Yen Lo in hell (*Sung-shih Pen-chang* 宋史本傳, Vol. 316, qtd. in Yen, 116). By the time of the Yuan Dynasty, Pao Kung has become a well-known legendary figure. In Yuan tsa-chü, there are eleven plays which are based on Pao Kung's stories. Other judges in Yuan plays, such as Ching Kuei (金圭) or Chang Ting (張鼎), are also

legendary figures based on history (Yen, 118-24). These legendary figures, like the figures of ghosts and the judge in hell, serve as a mythical wish-fulfillment. The compensatory function of these motifs is greater than the function of realistic reflection. It also reveals a widespread unspoken disappointment among the common people of the contemporary civil law which could not right the violated order.²¹

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Now it's time for us to discuss the different dramatic effects the ghosts produce on stage. The different contracts and the different manners of revenge cause the different emotional responses of the characters involved in the ghost scenes. In the Elizabethan revenge tragedies, we often find the avengers suffering grief, doubt, hesitation and madness. This psychological crisis has its cause. Many critics have pointed out that the Elizabethan age was a time of chaos and no sure civil justice was guaranteed.²² The law was often delayed. When Hieronimo finds out that the King is not to be counted on, he cries, "justice is exiled from the earth" (III. xiii, 140). Hamlet also says after he sees the ghosts, "The time is out of joint. O cursed spite, / That ever I was born to set it right" (I. v. 196-7). The "loss of faith in legal justice, together with the doubts as to the existence of a divine justice" affect severely the mourner facing an unjust death (Sacks, 579). Moreover, the Elizabethan people shared, on the one hand, the pagan belief that the son's revenge for his murdered father is a sacred duty and the knowledge that the heir's revenge for his ancestor is his legal duty and his honor (Bowers, 39). But, on the other hand, the avenger also was aware of the social censorship of private revenge because after the fourteenth century, private revenge was regarded as a crime by law and was reproached by Christian morality as an offense to God (Bowers, 35-9). Under this condition, the avenger's dilemma is great. This disordered society, this decentralized value system and the dilemma make the burden on the avenger too heavy for him to bear. The audience watches the avenger-hero go through the process from grief, hesitation, distraction to violence. Meanwhile, the audience experiences a mixed feeling of sympathy and abhorrence, of pity and fear, of identification and repulsion.

In *The Spanish Tragedy*, the ghost of Andrea and Revenge remain on stage throughout the play and fill the stage with a gruesome atmosphere.

When other events are enacted, the ghost and Revenge keep a place in the back of the stage, as though in the back of the avenger's mind as well as in the audience's mind. Their visible presence on the stage can be taken as a symbol which concretizes this constantly felt pressure of the ghost, of the to-be-fulfilled-contract. The impatient urge of the ghost of Andrea between the Acts to see the act of vengeance reinforces the tension. At the end of the second Act, when the ghost of Andrea sees that events do not happen in the way he expects, he complains impatiently to Revenge:

Brought thou me hither to increase my paine?
I lookt that Balthazar should have been slaine:
But tis my freend Horatio that is slaine,
And they abuse faire Bel-imperia. (II. v. 1-4)

Revenge tells him not to talk about harvest when "the corne is greene" and assures him that the sickle will come when the corne is ripe (II. v. 7-9). But in the third Act, the situation gets worse. When the ghost sees the slackness of Hieronimo, and even the league between him and Lorenzo, he cries out indignantly "Awake Revenge." He appeals to all the powers in Hades — Erichtho, Cerberus, Pluto, Proserpine — to wake up and see "Such fearful sights, as poore Andrea sees" (III. xv. 6). He also blames the Revenge to be "ill advised, to sleepe":

Awake Revenge, . . .

. . . .

Hieronimo with Lorenzo is joynde in league,
And intercepts our passage to revenge: Awake
Revenge, or we are woe begone. (III. xv. 12-6)

This fierce urge of the ghost-chorus for revenge is echoed by the ghost in *Hamlet*. He reminds Hamlet not to forget the revenge and says his "visitation" is only to whet his "almost blunted purpose" (III. iv. 110-2). Hamlet knows well his duty to take revenge and is aware of his inexcusable tardiness. When he sees the ghost, he immediately asks:

Do you not come your tardy son to chide,
That, laps'd in time and passion, lets go by the important acting
of your dread command? (III. iv. 107-9)

The ghost's "dread command" is not to be ignored. The conflict between the two orders, two duties – to avenge one's wronged father vs. to obey the law of God – weighs heavily on his mind. The disorder of his mind, either authentic or pretended, is a natural result of this dilemma.

In *The Spanish Tragedy*, Hieronimo's madness is also caused by this conflict. Though the ghost of Andrea and the ghost of Hieronimo's son do not return to cry for vengeance in front of Hieronimo or other characters, the ghost motif is cleverly played in the scene between Hieronimo and the old man Bazulto. Right before this scene, Hieronimo ponders over the safe time for revenge, but he finds that "all times fit not for revenge: / thus therefore will [he] rest [him] in unrest, Dissembling quiet in unquietness" (III. xiii. 28-30). Here, Hieronimo is doubly grieved and even loses his sanity when he sees the old man's sorrow. He takes the old man Bazulto as the ghost of his unrevenged son Horatio coming from the underground demanding justice. He cries to the supposed ghost, "Goe back my sonne, complaine to Eacus, / For heeres no justice, gentle boy be gone. / For justice is exiled from the earth" (III. xiii. 143-5). He then says the old man is a fury "Sent from the emptie Kingdome of blacke night, to summon me to make appearance: . . . To plague Hieronimo that is remisse, And seekes not vengeance for Horatioes death" (III. xiii. 159-63). When the old man reminds him that he is not a ghost but a grieved man that comes for justice for his murdered son, Hieronimo says,

I, now I know thee, now thou namest my Sonne,
Thou art the lively image of my grieffe,
Within thy face, my sorrowes I may see. (III. xiii. 166-8)

This poignant grief and distraction of Hieronimo is caused at once by the deprivation of his beloved son and sight of the imagined ghost who asks for revenge.

What is implicit in *Hamlet* and *The Spanish Tragedy* is explicitly stressed by the ghost in *Antonio's Revenge*. When the grievous, despairing, and miserable Antonio comes to the church and speaks to his dead father in front of the hearse, the ghost comes to tell him the cause of his death and urges him to revenge his blood. The ghost leaves the scene with a fierce cry to wake up the Vengeance in Antonio's heart to take action:

Alarum Nemesis, rouse up thy blood,

Invent some stratagem of vengeance
Which, but to think no, may like lightning glide with horror
through thy breast. (III. i. 47-50)

He reminds Antonio that in order to avenge the crime he has to kill and conquer all his enemies.²³

Here then is Antonio's dilemma. If he follows the ghost's will and takes revenge, he will be doing criminal deeds and offending God; if he does not avenge his father, he will not be fulfilling his duty as a son and the ghost will not be at rest. When Antonio ponders upon the misfortune of being a man and the inevitability of his committing a crime and thus inviting the plague and curse from heaven, his determination of revenge weakens.

... The curse of heaven rains
In plagues unlimited through all his days;
His mature age grows only mature vice,
And ripens only to corrupt and rot
The budding hopes of infant modesty. (III. ii. 63-7)

From this passage of Antonio's monologue, we see very clearly that he is fully aware of the consequence of his revenge. The act of murder is a "devilish cruelty" (III. ii. 68) and will make him "more than a devil" (69). But, when he hesitates, the voice of the ghost of Andrugio and the ghost of Feliche are heard from above and beneath the stage (74-6). This cry from the ghosts frightens Antonio and forces him to abandon the thoughts of doubts.

Ay, I will murder; graves and ghosts
Fright me no more; I'll suck red vengeance
Out of Piero's wounds, Piero's wounds (77-6).

The ghost's active intervention in the process of revenge is effective for a second time in the scene between Antonio and Julio. When Antonio. When Antonio draws his dagger and is about to kill Julio, Julio pleads with him to think of his sister whom Antonio newly wedded. Antonio feels his resolution of revenge flagging. But, the ghost of Andrugio enters at this

moment and cries "Revenge" (III. iii. 30). The scared Antonio says to the ghost,

Stay, stay, dear father, fright mine eyes no more.
Revenge as swift as lightning bursteth forth
And clears his heart (III. iii. 31-3)

Antonio loves Julio and Julio reciprocates. The inevitability of killing Julio pains him, and he says to Julio, "Whilst thy wounds bleed, my brows shall gush out tears" (III. iii. 41).

The sorrow of killing Julio whom he loves dearly makes him behave like a madman. Holding a torch and a poniard within his bloody arms, Antonio enters his mother's chamber and speaks to the ghost who sits on the bed:

. . . This is Julio's blood;
Rich music, father! this is Julio's blood
(III. v. 21-2)

He then points to his mother and asks, "Why lives that mother?" (III. v. 23) The madness of Antonio would lead him to do anything, even to kill his mother. The ghost stops him and wants him to "pardon ignorance" since his mother does not know Piero's intrigue (III. v. 24). But, upon his departure, the ghost once again urges the act of revenge.

And now, ye sooty coursers of the night,
Hurry your chariot into hell's black womb.
Darkness, make flight; graves, eat your dead again;
Let's repossess our shrouds. Why lags delay?
Mount, sparkling brightness, give the world his day.
(III. v. 32-5)

Antonio is forced by the ghost step by step to the brink of crime and madness. His madness, his bloody arms, his torch and poniard, and his cruelty remind the audience of Piero in the opening scene. Now, Antonio's role is reversed with Piero's.

The stage effects the revenge ghosts produce in the Elizabethan revenge plays are tragic and thrilling. The grip of the ghost's will on the avenger-hero

as well as the audience is strong. The ghosts' unappeasable anger and their cry of vindicta arouse the primitive instinct of aggression in the audience. But this "desire for strong action" (Brucher, 270) or "the call to excess" (Halletts) is checked first by the dilemma imposed by social and moral sanction, then by the horror and repulsion in face of the avenger's distracted behavior and the bloody violent scene. In the tragic experience in this kind of revenge plays, the feeling of horror is much stronger than that of pity.

In spite of the anger, hatred and pitiable condition of the ghost, the Chinese Yuan plays, display a mixture similar to that of a tragicomedy. In Chinese folk tales, the image of ghosts is often frightening and horrible.²⁴ But the scene of the ghost's appearance to ask for help and the scene of testimony in the court of Judge Pao are sometimes handled in a comic manner. The transfiguration of the fearful ghost into a pitiable and even a comic one shows what the Chinese theatre-goers expect of a ghost on stage. The audience experiences at once a sympathetic identification with and a comic detachment from the ghost. In *P'en-er Kuei*, the murderer Pot-maker Chao gives the old man Chang P'ieh-ku the pot made by Yang Kuo-yung's bones to serve as chamber pot. On the way back home, the ghost accompanies the old man and makes all kinds of sounds and signs to arouse his attention, but the old man dismisses all these as mere fantasy. In the evening, when the old man wants to use the pot, the ghost moves the pot about and the old man's urine falls onto the ground. Since the old man cannot see the ghost, this scene of coarse humor is made more comic by the effect of dramatic irony produced on stage.

In *Sheng-chin Kê*, there is also a comic scene when Pao Kung's deputy Lou Ching goes to the Cheng-huang Temple²⁵ to take the ghost back to the court for a testimony. Lou Ching used to boast that no one dares to refuse him. Even if he ordered the hole in the ground to follow him to the court, the hole would do so. But when he goes to the Cheng-huang Temple, his cowardice causes him to make blunders: he enters the wrong hall, bumps into the stool and falls on the ground. When the ghost helps Lou Ching to his feet, it is funny to see Lou Ching still bully the ghost and order him to follow.

The scene of testimony is also often handled in a comic way. The testimony is almost always delayed. In *P'en-er Kuei*, the old man Chang P'ieh-ku takes the pot to the court of judge Pao. The ghost has promised that when the old man knocks at the edge of the pot three times, he will

answer him “tinglingly” (ting-ting tang-tang, 叮叮噹噹). But in the court, when the old man Chang knocks at the pot, no one answers. The guard beats the old man and throws him out of the court. When the old man is out of the court and knocks at the pot again, the ghost answers “tinglingly” that he was thirsty just now and went to find a cup of tea. This procedure is repeated again. The second time the ghost says that he was hungry and was trying to find some food. When the old man is angry and refuses to try again, the ghost explains that he cannot enter the court because of the god of the door. Pao Kung then orders the guards to burn some paper money to let the ghost in (YCH, 1404-7). The repetition of the sound “ting-ting tang-tang” itself is comic enough. The ghost’s disinterestedness in his own affair at the crucial moment makes the situation even more absurd. The absurdity becomes extremely humorous when, after the testimony, the ghost in *Sheng-chin Kê* wants the cowardly but boastful Lou Ching to accompany him back to the Cheng-huang Temple because the ghost is “afraid of ghosts” (YCH, 1733).

These comic scenes of the ghosts are presented in prose, so-called “ch’a-k’e ta-huen” (插科打諢, gag). The comic moment before the crucial scene to right the wrong seems to distract the audience from the most important purpose of the action and form a counteraction against the serious atmosphere. What is more interesting is that not only the minor character, like the old man Chang and the retinue Lou Ching, are comic, the ghosts are also comic. The combination of the tragic and the comic moments creates a queer mixed feeling for the audience. While the momery of the fierce cry of injustice still lingers in the mind of the audience, the comic deviation and the absurdity make them detached from the stage.

This mixture of comic and tragic moments is typical in traditional Chinese drama. The origin of Chinese drama can explain the comic prose scenes in Yuan drama. First, the direct origin of Chinese drama is the clown’s performance in the court. Early in Chou period (周, around 700 B.C.), the “ch’ang-yiu” (倡優) or “p’ai-yiu” (俳優) (the actor and actress) sings, dances, and mimic the action and words of the emperor to point out his misdeeds (See *General History of Chinese Drama*, Vol. I, p. 9-15). That’s why the term for joking and satirizing – “nuieh” (謔) – is also defined as “acting” in *Shuo-wen Chieh-tsi* 說文解字 (Dictionary). Second, the tradition of story-telling and vernacular folk art also influences the form of “ping-pa” (賓白) – the dialogue and gags in prose – in drama (*General History of Chinese Drama*, Vol. I, 359). Therefore, the alternating scenes

of comic or satirical action and dialogue with the serious action and verse is common in Sung, Ching and Yuan plays.

The comic scenes in a serious and tragic situation oftentimes convey a strong satirical implication. The minor characters of the villains, like the muddleheaded local officials in *Tou-ê Yuan* and *Shen-nu Er*, the lawless robbers in *P'en-er Kuei* and *Chu-sha Tan*, are all played by a clown. Even the main characters, like the victim in *Sheng-chin Kê* and *P'en-er Kuei*, and the ghosts in *P'en-er Kuei* and *Sheng-chin Kê*, can be comic. But in these scenes based on gags, the audience experiences what traditional Chinese critics of drama regard as a principle: "When you cannot cry, you laugh; the sadness of your laughter is deeper than your tears" (Lung-yiu Shih, 龍友氏); "Hide your serious intention in wild language; veil your tears in your laughters" (Li Yu, 李漁); "The best part of [*The Story of the Lute*] . . . is its mixture of bitterness and amusement" (Lu Tien-chen, 呂天成).²⁶ These comments explain the rules the playwrights go by and the expectation the theatre-goers hold. The Elizabethan people will say, "When the bad bleeds, then is the tragedy good" (*Revenger's Tragedy*, III. v. 205). But the Yuan audience does not welcome excessive bloody scene on the stage. They do not want sheer bleak tragedy; but in the comic scenes, the suppressed tragic sense looms large.

This mixture of tragic moments and comic moments can also be found in the Elizabethan drama, especially in Shakespeare's plays. The Elizabethan playwrights were also conscious of this difference from the tragedy of blood; we see the playwrights describing their plays as the "very tragical mirth" (V. i. 57) and the "most lamentable comedy" (I. ii. 12) in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the "Lamentable Tragedy, mixed full of pleasant mirth" (title-page) in Thomas Preston's *Cambyzes* (1567), or "a Moral and Pitiful comedy" (Prologue 93) in Lupton's *All for Money* (1577).²⁷ Even in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, we can see some transitional scenes of comic relief. The difference of interest is that the Elizabethan revenge ghosts or ghost scenes are never comic; their seriousness and their call for violence triggers the tragic catastrophe and maintains the feeling of horror. But the Chinese Yuan ghosts and ghost scenes are often restrained and even comic. This comic control by no means erases the tragic and unjust situation the victim is exposed to and the protest held by the ghost. This reflective and satirical comic turn, on the contrary, deepens the sense of the suppressed indignation and of the absurdity of life.

Notes

1. See Robert Hunter West, *The Invisible World: A Study of Pneumatology in Elizabethan Drama* (1939); Charles A. Hallett & Elaine S. Hallett, *The Revenger's Madness: A Study of Revenge Tragedy Motifs* (1980). Professor Prossor also pointed out that "in the extant drama produced between 1560 and 1610, twenty-six plays include fifty-one ghosts." *Hamlet and Revenge*, p. 255. Cf. Professor Prossor's "The Convention of Immortal Vengeance" in his *Hamlet and Revenge* (1971), pp. 261-75.
2. See Thorndike's *The English Tragedy* (1908); Bowers' *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy* (Princeton, 1940), p. 9. Fredson Bowers in his *Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy* (1940) divided the revenge tragedies into four stages: the Kydian Tragedy, the Reign of the Villain, the Disapproval of Revenge, and the Decadence of Revenge Tragedy. According to the different stages, the ghosts assume different images: there are the Senecan ghosts urging private blood revenge, e.g., the ghost of Andrugio in Marston's *Antonio's Revenge*, and the Christian ghosts leaving vengeance to the Providence's hand, e.g., the ghost of Montferrers in Tourneur's *The Atheist's Tragedy*.
3. Cf. Thorndike, 142-8; Bowers, 71-2; Halletts, 8-11.
4. West pointed out that nineteenth century scholars suggested that the ghost of Hamlet's father is Hamlet's hallucination. After Stoll's article (1937) on this issue, no one doubted the objectivity of the ghost (West, 48-53, 162-8).
5. Sr Miriam Joseph insisted that the ghost in *Hamlet* is a good Catholic spirit from purgatory ("Discerning the Ghost in *Hamlet*," *PMLA* 76 [1961]: 493-502), while Professor Prossor argued that the ghost of Hamlet's father is actually the Devil (*Hamlet and Revenge*, 1967, pp. 102-3).
6. In his "The Ideology of the World of Ghosts and Gods in T'sa-chu," Professor Tseng Yung-yi has pointed out that fifty out of one hundred and sixty Yuan plays have supernatural elements. See also Chen Hsiou-fang's "The Supernatural Roles in the Dreams in Yuan plays."
7. Lo ching-tang divided Yuan tsa-chu into eight types. The Kung-an play is one sub-type of genre of the Social Plays. See also Ch'i Hsiao-feng's "The Archetypal Structure of the Lawsuit Plays in Yuan Drama," *Wen-hsieh Ping-lung*, Vol. IV, pp. 179-244.
8. See Tseng Yung-yi's "the Characteristics in Chinese Classical Drama" and "Three Aspects Concerning Yuan Drama," in his *Essays on Chinese Classical Drama*. Professor Tseng points out that the plots of most Yuan plays are taken from historical stories or folk legends. He follows Wang Kuo-wei's view and suggests that since the stories are familiar to the audience, the lyrics, the music and the acting are what matters to and attracts the audience. See also Shih, Chung-wen's *The Golden Age of Chinese Drama: Yuan Tsa-chu*, (Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 21-45.
9. *The Spanish Tragedy*, ed. by Thomas W. Ross, (University of California Press, 1968). Citations of this play are from this edition.
10. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, The Arden Shakespeare, ed. by Harold Jenkins (Methuen: London & New York, 1982). Citations of this play are from this edition. The similarity between *The Spanish Tragedy*, *Hamlet*, and *Antonio's Revenge* has been repeatedly pointed out by critics, e.g., G. K. Hunter, Introduction to the Regents edition of *Antonio's Revenge* (Lincoln, 1965), pp. xviii-xxi.

11. John Marston, *Antonio's Revenge*, *The Revels Plays*, ed. by W. Reavley Gair (Manchester Univ. Press; The Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1978). Citations of this play are from this edition. This tragedy is a sequel to the comedy *Antonio and Mellida* by the same author.
12. The oracle usually says that there will be a crisis within a hundred of days (hsieh-kuang chi tzai, 血光之災).
13. Ya-wei, 衙內, the son of an influential local official.
14. In the Yuan period, the Mongolians and the "sse-mu" (色目) belong to the upper class society; the northern Han (漢人) and the southern Han (南人) belong to the lower class society. No Han can participate in governmental activities. For the racial injustice and the corruption in Yuan society, see Yen Tien-yiu's *Yuan Society in Tsa-chu* (1984), pp. 68-77. See also Chang & Kuo's *The General History of Chinese Drama* (1979), Vol. I, pp. 134-53.
15. 沒來由犯王法。不提妨遭刑憲。叫聲屈動地驚天。頃刻間遊魂先赴森羅殿。怎不將天地也生埋怨。有日月朝暮懸。有鬼神掌著生死權。天地也只合把清濁分辨。可怎生糊突了盜拓顏淵。爲善的受貧窮更命短。造惡的享富貴又壽延。天地也做個怕硬欺軟。卻原來也這般順水推船。地也你不分好歹何爲地。天也你錯勘賢愚枉做天。
16. Influenced by Buddhist thought, the Chinese believe that the soul does not die, and will be reincarnated in their next life. But the ghosts of the wronged cannot enter the cycle of reincarnation and will wander restlessly forever (Tsou Wen-hai, "The Law of the Underworld and the Concept of Justice in Chinese Culture," 162).
17. 因此一點冤魂終不散。日夜飄飄枉死城。只等報得冤來消得一恨。才好脫離陰司再托生。
18. Liang Chai (1976) explains in his article about the concept of Hell in Chinese fiction that, since the Han dynasty (but before the influence of Buddhism), people take "kao-li" (蒿里), "T'ai-san" (泰山, i.e., "tong-yuei," 東嶽), "huang-ch'uan" (黃泉), and "yiu-ming" (幽冥) as synonym of the hell where the ghosts should return. (泰山主召人魂). After Buddhism was introduced into China, people believe that the king of yen-lo (閻羅王) is the one who decides the length of one's life and the punishment and reward one should deserve after his death (35). Tsou Wen-hai also mentions that the king of Tong-yuei dominates people's life ("司命者", 162, n. 39).
19. 只願你檢驗輪迴。速顯靈威。將那斷直押送十八層地獄阿鼻。才見你的百千年天性忠直。
20. "Ching-shi," (進士), the first rank in the provincial official exam.
21. For the discussion of the chaotic and unjust society in the Yuan Dynasty, see also "The Social Background of North Tsa-chu" in Chang & Kuo's *The General History of Chinese Drama* (1979), Vol. I, pp. 134-53.
22. See Brucher's "Fantasies of Violence: *Hamlet* and *The Revenger's Tragedy* (1981); Felperin's *Shakespearean Representation* (1977); Peter Sacks's "Where words prevail not: Grief, revenge, and language in Kyd and Shakespeare" (1982). These critics similarly point out that the delay of civil justice forces the avenger to assume the role of God's scourge.
23. The ghost recites a line from Seneca's *Thyestes*, 195-6, "Scelera non ulcisceris, nisi vincis." (You do not avenge crimes unless you conquer" (trans. Keltie).
24. In *Tai-ping Kuang-chi* (太平廣記), a collection of Chinese classical tales compiled by Li Fang (李昉) in the Sung Dynasty, there are forty volumes, all together

459 pieces of stories, concerning ghosts. In these stories, the revenge ghosts are all scary and thrilling. It is interesting to note that besides the stories of fairies and gods (55 volumes), the number of ghost tales takes the second highest place. The stories of retribution rank third (33 volumes). Other kinds of stories consist mostly of only two or three volumes.

25. Cheng-huang Temple, 城隍廟, a temple worshiping ghosts. The Lord of Cheng-huang is a rank lower to the King of Yen-lo and can judge the local cases.
26. “哭不得則笑，笑之悲深於哭也”；“抑聖於狂，寓哭於笑”；“喜樂相雜”； qtd. in Su Kuo-lung's “The Characteristics of Chinese Classical Tragedy,” pp. 47, 41. in *Essays on the Aesthetic Theories of Drama* (1986).
27. For the discussion on the tragicomedy in the Elizabethan drama, see *Tragedy and Tragicomedy in the plays of John Webster*, Chap. 1-3; also F. H. Ristine's *English Tragicomedy, its Origin and History* (1910).

Appendix A
The Ghost Motifs in the Elizabethan Revenge Tragedy

| | The Spanish Tragedy | Hamlet | Antonio's Revenge | The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois | The Atheist's Tragedy |
|---|---------------------|--------|-------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Revenge as the main motive | x | x | x | x | x |
| Ghost | | | | | |
| A. Coming from Hades | x | | x | | |
| B. Coming from Purgatory | | | | x | x |
| C. Uncertain | | | | | |
| Appear to his relatives | | x | x | x | x |
| Appear to the murderer | | | | x | x |
| In the evening | | x | x | | x |
| With Thunder/lighting/ storm | | x | x | | x |
| In the Dream | | | x | x | |
| Urging the act of revenge | x | x | x | x | |
| The avenger's hesitation and delay | x | x | x | x | |
| Madness | x | x | x | | |
| A series of bloody killing on stage | x | x | x | x | |
| The death of the avenger | x | x | | x | |
| The ghost watching the final scene of killing | x | | x | x | |

Appendix B
The Ghost Motifs in Chinese Yuan Revenge Plays

| | 盆兒鬼 | 硃砂擔 | 生金閣 | 後庭花 | 馮玉蘭 | 竇娥冤 | 神奴兒 |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| ill omen in the prelude | x | x | x | | | | |
| Being robbed and murdered | x | x | x | x | | | x |
| Wrongly sentenced and executed by a bribed local official | | | | | x | x | |
| Ghost Returns 1. in the evening 2. in the day | x | x | | | x | x | x |
| Ghost appearing to the relatives a. in moonless evening b. or in bad dream | x | | x | | x | | |
| Ghost appearing to the judge a. in the court b. when the judge is on the road c. or reviewing the casebook | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Ghost appearing to a. somebody else who can help him b. the murderer | x | x | | x | | x | |
| Ghost testfying in the trial a. in the human court b. in the court of the Hell | x | x | x | | x | x | |
| Comic effect | x | x | | | | | |
| The bad people being sentenced to death | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| The innocent dead being given a title retroactively | x | x | x | x | x | x | x |

Appendix C
Ghost Scene

| The Spanish Tragedy | Hamlet | Antonio's Revenge | Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois | The Atheist's Tragedy |
|---|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Prelude I v, II v III xv, IV v | I i/v III iv | I i/iii III i/ii/iii V iv | V i/iii/v | II iv III ii IV iii V i |

Appendix D
Ghost Scene

| 盆兒鬼 | 硃砂擔 | 生金閣 | 滿庭花 | 馮玉蘭 | 寶娥冤 | 神奴兒 |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|--------|--------|--------|--------------|
| 3, 4 折 | 3, 4 折 | 3, 4 折 | 3 折 | 3 折 | 4 折 | 2, 3, 4 折 |

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