

The Architecture of the *Peony Pavilion*

Cyril Birch

Most Western lovers of Chinese plays are obliged by circumstances to spend more time reading them than seeing or hearing them performed. Few could ever hope to develop the kind of judgment the Chinese connoisseur brings to bear on their musical structure, or on the quality of singing or choreographic grace of a particular presentation. In any case, few scenes of the *Peony Pavilion* (*Mu-tan t'ing* or *Huan-hun-chi*) are still played today. The following comments on the play's construction are offered by a reader, concerned with all fifty-five scenes as T'ang Hsien-tsu originally conceived them, and convinced that the *Peony Pavilion* is a coherent total construct rather than a long-winded romance that flags sadly after a brilliant start.

I. The Marking of the Scene

Scene division in *Peony Pavilion* is accomplished by means of three features: scene title; envoi; and a threefold entrance formula consisting of aria, recited verse, and prose self-introduction, in that order.

1. *Scene titles*: these call for little comment. Each scene bears a two-character title, which encapsulates the action. This is standard practice for late-Ming plays of the *ch'uan-ch'i* (傳奇) type. Earlier plays often had four-character scene titles, and there are some oddities such as *Tung-kuo chi* (東郭記) whose scene-titles, of wildly varying lengths, consist exclusively of quotations from *Mencius* (the play being based on the story, told in *Mencius*, of the man of Ch'i who dined off grave-offerings).

2. The *envoi* to each scene is in the form of a "T'ang pastiche," a rhymed quatrain of septasyllabic lines chosen from different T'ang poets. In this

calculated display of erudition² the playwright sometimes succeeds in manufacturing a witty comment on the action of the scene. An example is the envoi to Scene 29, “Gossip” (旁疑), in which two nuns who have eavesdropped on a clandestine tryst accuse each other of the illicit amour. The envoi (lines shared between the two) reads:

Free as river mist, we still
 indulge the wiles of the world
 for few have ever reached
 true purity and grace.
 From far Lung-shan come parrots
 can speak in human tongue
 who quarrel long and fierce
 with cage's golden bars.

煙水何曾息世機。
 高情雅淡世間稀。
 隴山鸚鵡能言語。
 亂向金籠說是非。

Usually the borrowed lines are quite remarkably appropriate to the dramatic situation, though few of the resulting reconstituted quatrains hang together as well as the envoi to Scene 36, “Elopement” (婚走):

In secrecy departing
 beneath the shifting moon
 fair breezes blow on purpose
 to escort the nuptial pair;
 no onlooker understands
 the mystery of this barge
 only the happy bride
 knows all there is to know.

偷去須從月下移。
 好風偏似送佳期。
 傍人不識扁舟意。
 惟有新人子細知。

Only one scene, 16, “The Invalid” (詰病), lacks an envoi, ending instead with a recited verse. There is no apparent reason for this irregularity. The envoi to Scene 1, the prologue, is no pastiche but a set of four eight-syllable lines summarizing the action of the play. The envoi to the concluding

scene, 55, "Reunion at Court" (圓駕), is double, and despite its origin as a pastiche cleverly succeeds in resolving the tensions between varying moods: the recall of Bridal's pining and death, regret for the closing of the play and imminent departure of players and audience, yet all subsumed in a movement towards joy, the glad final reunion and the celebratory mood of the performance itself:

So green the grass on Imperial tomb
in time of the Cold Food Feast
all other music ceases
when deerskin drum beats loud.
Ah sorrow, when our fragrant souls
yearned but failed to meet
And springtime heart was tortured
by peony pavilion.
Thousandfold regret
for the passing of the blossoms;
travelers leave, travelers come
a single cup of wine.
New songs sung to an end—
joy still unseen
birdcalls rising
from the blossoming branch.³

杜陵寒食草青青。
羯鼓聲高衆樂停。
更恨香魂不相遇。
春腸遙斷牡丹亭。
千愁萬恨過花時。
人去人來酒一卮。
唱盡新詞權不見。
數聲啼鳥上花枝。

3. *Entrance-formula*: the normal scene opens with the entrance of a single character, who sings an aria and recites a verse before descending into prose with a self-introduction and statement of his or her business. This procedure is followed in forty-one⁴ of the fifty-four scenes proper (excluding the prologue).⁵ When two new characters enter together they introduce themselves after the opening aria (e.g. Scene 31); otherwise, in a joint entrance by characters already known to the audience, there is no self-introduction. This is the case in six scenes (10, 14, 18, 36, 39, 48) in which Bridal (Li-niang)

enters with another character, and in one additional scene (51) in which Miao Shun-pin and the old Privy Councillor enter together preceded by two colonels of the guard. Scenes 11 and 12 seem to form a sub-unit with Scene 10: 11 is a brief transitional scene,⁶ 12 is the direct continuation of 10. In neither 11 nor 12 does the single character on entrance make a self-introduction. Scene 43 is similarly a "continuation" of 42, and Tu Pao enters alone, or rather accompanied only by his retinue, without self-introduction.⁷ This leaves only two scenes which are truly exceptions to the rule: 32 and 54, in which a character enters alone but makes no self-introduction. In each case the character (Liu Meng-mei in 32, Spring Fragrance in 54) is already well-known to the audience, but the entrances are still exceptional: Liu Meng-mei is still introducing himself in normal fashion, for example, as late as Scene 53.⁸

The entrance-formula is thus a less reliable indicator of scene-division than the scene title or envoi. On the one hand, thirteen of the fifty-four scenes proper do not use the full formula.⁹ On the other hand, the formula may be used in mid-scene. An example is Scene 43, "The Siege of Huai-an" (禦淮). If we were to adopt the criterion of the cleared stage, as applied by Mark Rose to Shakespeare,¹⁰ we should in fact regard "The Siege of Huai-an" as four scenes rather than one. But since the scene has only one title and one envoi, and a single song-set with coda, it seems preferable to regard it as a composite scene and subdivide it into four sequences, as follows:

Sequence one: Tu Pao enters, sings an aria, and after a brief exchange of dialogue with his staff recites a verse. He does not make a prose self-introduction (note that the action flows directly from that of the preceding scene: Tu Pao at the end of Scene 42 sets out for Yangchow, and his first words of dialogue in Scene 43 are "I am weary of marching."). He urges his staff on to attack the rebels, and all exit.

Sequence two: The rebel Li Ch'üan enters with Dame Li and their men. He sings an aria, does not recite a verse, but makes a prose self-introduction. Tu Pao reenters, they do battle, and the stage clears.

Sequence three: Two civil and two military officers enter in turn, sing an aria and recite a verse between them, then make prose self-introductions: this is the first time in Scene 43 that the full entrance-formula is observed. They exchange comic badinage, then leave to welcome Tu Pao, clearing the stage for the third time.

Sequence four: Tu Pao reenters and sings an aria. This time there is

no recited verse and no self-introduction. For the remainder of the scene he discusses prospects with his officers.

Peony Pavilion contains five more composite scenes of this kind, and in each case the clearing of the stage leads to some special effect.¹¹ Scene 10, "The Interrupted Dream" (驚夢), as its title suggests, necessarily places an interpolation between two sequences of courtship. It is the Flower Spirit who interrupts, entering (with verse and prose self-introduction) upon a cleared stage to entertain the audience while the love-making itself is taking place offstage. The stage clears again when the Flower Spirit exits prior to the lovers' reentrance.

A second major event, the death of Bridal Du, is marked by clearing of the stage at the midpoint of Scene 20, "Keening" (鬧殯), which we should therefore regard as a composite scene comprising two sequences. The first sequence ends with Bridal's exit, dying, on the arm of her father. The second begins with the maid, Spring Fragrance, reentering alone to report Bridal's death and (uniquely) to address the audience directly: "Oh, you who watch (列位看官們, *Lieh-wei K'an-kuan-men*, the formula used by the old storytellers), what is there we can do?"¹²

The two sequences of Scene 27, "Spirit-roaming" (魂遊), divide when Sister Stone and the young nun clear the stage to eat their evening meal. This makes way for the important entrance of Bridal, appearing for the first time in ghostly form. When the sisters subsequently reenter they come face to face with Bridal and recoil in terror as she exits past them.

The succeeding scene, 28, "Union in the Shades" (幽媾), has at least a close approach to the cleared stage when Liu Meng-mei, half-way through, composes himself to sleep, leaving the stage essentially "empty" for Bridal's entrance. It is noteworthy that the last four composite scenes we have listed all comprise two song-sets rather than the customary one. In the cases of Scenes 20, 27 and 28 the histrionic and musical breaks coincide, that is to say, the clearing of the stage occurs between song-sets. The effectiveness of this must be considerable, as a new song-set begins Fragrance's mourning in Scene 20, or Bridal's response to Liu in Scene 28. In Scene 10 the division of the scene into two parts by clearing of the stage does not correspond to the musical division: the second song-set has already begun by the time the lovers leave the stage and the Flower-Spirit enters.

The last of the composite scenes is 52, "The Search for the Candidate" (索元). Again as the title implies, this is a scene of searching, when Camel

Kuo and two Colonels of the Guard crisscross the stage in their pursuit of Liu Meng-mei. The scene comprises four sequences altogether.

We have been discussing cases in which the entrance formula lacks one of its three constituents, the prose self-introduction, and we have seen that if we include certain composite scenes (10, 43) the self-introduction is a feature of forty-three of the fifty-four scenes' proper. The opening aria is even less frequently omitted. Only five scenes do not open with an aria. In three of these (7, 34, 37) it is Tutor Ch'en who enters: 7 and 34 are comic scenes, 37 is brief transitional. Scene 11, also brief transitional, is the fourth of the five. The fifth is exceptional, Scene 26, the only major scene to open with verse (recited by Liu Meng-mei) rather than aria.¹³

There are few exceptions, again, to the rule that the opening aria will be followed by a recited verse. This may be a *tz'u* (詞), a *shih* (詩) or simply a couplet of the "proverbial saw" type. In nine scenes¹⁴ no such verse follows the opening aria. But in seven of these cases¹⁵ what happens is a sort of "pre-entrance" by minor characters, quickly followed by the entrance of one or more characters who do in fact recite a verse after the opening aria. Scene 35 is a comic scene: it is evidently in comic scenes that the rules are most likely to be suspended. Scene 23, "Infernal Judgment" (冥判) is not only a comic scene in tone and function but exceptional in every way. It is the scene in which the infernal Judge grants Bridal permission to return to the mortal world. Though technically it is a grand scene (very long, and containing climactic action and many participants), the major dramatis persona to appear is Bridal herself, who does not sing and is given only half a dozen lines of dialogue. The song-set is Northern,¹⁶ and the Judge, who appears nowhere else in the play, is the sole singer. Structurally, in fact, the scene resembles an act from Yuan *tsa-chü* (雜劇) except that it opens with song rather than recited verse (上場詩, *shang-ch'ang shih*), and closes in the *Peony Pavilion* convention with a T'ang pastiche envoi.

Scenes, then, in *Peony Pavilion* are either single or composite, are titled, open in the great majority of cases with the threefold entrance-formula, and close in all cases except one with an envoi. The next feature we shall examine is the locales or settings of the successive scenes:

II. Settings

One working definition of the *ch'uan-ch'i* scene would be: a clearly-marked division of a play which groups (one or more) characters in one place. One of the more remarkable structural features of *Peony Pavilion* is the absence of any pair of consecutive scenes, among the total fifty-five, which share the same setting. The nearest we come to identity of setting is in certain blocks of scenes (see chart for these "blocks") which share the same general locale. Scenes 9 through 12 form a block, their common theme being Bridal's yearning for love. The general locale through the block is the Tu residence, but the specific settings switch back and forth as follows:

Scene 9: a verandah of the Tu residence.

Scene 10: alternation between Bridal's chamber and the rear garden.

Scene 11: Madam Tu's chamber.

Scene 12: as 10.

Similarly, Scenes 26 through 30 form a block depicting the union of Liu Meng-mei with Bridal's spirit-form. The locale is the Apricot Shrine, but the specific settings are Liu's room for the even-numbered scenes, and the main hall of the shrine for the odd-numbered.

Scenes 49 through 53 narrate the adventure of Liu's confrontation with Tu Pao. But scenes 49 and 50 are set near or in Huai-an, and scenes 51-53 in Hangchow: the Imperial court in 51, the streets of the city in 52, then in scene 53 the jail followed by Tu Pao's residence.

Changes of setting within a single scene, as in the last example mentioned, are quite common but never radical. Between two consecutive scenes, in contrast, the change of setting may be quite extreme, reflecting the complete shift of thematic focus. Thus Scene 5 forwards the theme of Bridal's education and is set in the Tu residence at Nan-an, but the following scene moves to the vicinity of Canton and to Han Tzu-ts'ai, who at this early stage of the action has never heard of Tu Pao or his daughter.

Related to these constant changes of setting is the alternation of on-stage characters as scene follows scene. No scene opens with the precise grouping of characters on-stage which closed the preceding scene. There are in fact only five cases of "carry-over" of characters from the preceding scene:

Scenes 9-10: Fragrance ends 9 in the company of the Gardener's Lad, and opens 10 by entering with, or shortly after, Bridal to share the latter's first aria;

Scene 11-12: Fragrance ends 11 in the company of Madam Tu, and opens 12 alone;

Scenes 21-22: Liu ends 21 in the company of Commissioner Miao, and opens 22 alone;

Scenes 35-36: Bridal and Sister Stone end 35 in the company of Liu, and enter together to open 36 (this is the only scene in which *two* characters continue directly from one scene to the next, and there is a change of setting from garden to shrine);

Scenes 42-43: Tu Pao ends 42 in the company of his wife, and opens 43 on the march with his army.

In the absence of sets or backdrops, settings may be depicted in arias and dialogue. In fact however this happens less frequently than one would expect. Not every scene, by any means, contains descriptions of physical setting. Nor is this necessary: when Scene 53 opens with the entrance of Liu Meng-mei, for example, we recall that when Liu was last on stage (Scene 50) he was being ordered to the Hangchow jail. He reminds us that this is now our stage with his opening lines, "Beaks of malicious sparrows/landed me in jail," and later in the same opening song he refers to his "palliase of straw." The sense of the venue is then reinforced by the entrance of jailer and turnkey, in appropriate costume: there is evidently no feeling that a verbal description of the setting is needed.

Sometimes a kind of verbal scene-shifting will occur, with a brief description of the new setting. This happens in scenes below the level of major or grand. Such descriptions occur in at least seven scenes, as follows:

in brief transitional scenes:

37, Tutor Ch'en describes the opened grave;

51, the opening lines state the setting as the Imperial court;

in a transitional scene:

49, Liu arrives before the walls of Huai-an, whose watch-towers and banners he describes in dialogue;

in martial scenes:

31, a refrain sung by Tu Pao's staff describes the battlements of Yangchow;

43, Tu Pao sings of battle scenes as he breaks into the besieged city of Huai-an;

in comic scenes:

34, dialogue refers to Ch'en's herbshop with its placards;

52, an aria describes the broad boulevards of Hangchow.

But there is another kind of verbal reference to setting which is much

more functional than the brief statements just described. This is the close linkage between action and setting which is characteristic of certain major and grand scenes and is accomplished by continual use of place imagery in song and dialogue. The clearest example would be Scenes 10 and 12, *Ching-meng* (驚夢) and *Hsun-meng* (尋夢), in which Bridal's love-longings are counterpointed and reinforced by almost continuous reference to the garden setting. The lyrics of these scenes are among the most admired in the entire play, and are replete with landscape or garden imagery from the opening aria onwards:

From dream returning, orioles coil their song
through all the brilliant riot of the new season
to listener in tiny leaf-locked court.

夢回鶯轉。
亂煞年光遍。
人立小庭深院。

Fragrance describes the garden scene in recited verse:

while on the lacquered walkway
traces of gold-dust glitter
there on the lodge at pool's edge
mosses make a green mass

畫廊金粉半零星。
池館蒼苔一片青。

and so on. Liu Meng-mei on entrance immediately picks up the Arcadian garden motif:

As song of oriole purls in warmth of sun
so smiling lips open to greet romance.
Tracing my path by petals borne on stream
I find the Peach Blossom Source of my desire.

鶯逢日暖歌聲滑。
人遇風情笑口開。
一徑落花隨水入。
今朝阮肇到天台。

The Flower Spirit describes the love-making of Liu and Bridal in horticultural

euphemisms:

Ah, how the male force surges and leaps
as in the way of wanton bee he stirs
the gale of her desire
while her soul trembles
at the dewy brink of a sweet, shaded vale.

單則是混陽蒸變。
看他似蟲兒般蠢動
把風情搗。
一般兒嬌凝翠綻
魂兒顫。

In Scene 12, after an opening spot of comedy from Fragrance, Bridal resumes the garden imagery which permeates this scene also. She closes her first aria with the lines,

Is it concern for falling blossoms
draws my dawn thoughts to the garden?

可爲惜花。
朝起庭院。

Later, walking alone in the garden in quest of her dream love, she sings of plastered walls, meandering stream, and the tree-peonies about the pavilion. At last she comes to the flowering apricot which will eventually shelter her mortal remains. She apostrophizes this tree in two arias, and ends with a brilliant summation of the entire block of scenes in a line derived from the T'ang poet Liu Ch'ang-ch'ing (劉長卿):

the blossoming branch mocks her who sleeps alone.

Comparable interplay between the mood of the scene and its physical setting is a feature of several of the principal scenes, as follows:

20 (grand), the scene of Bridal's death, with its reiterated images of clouds across the moon, of wind and rain; but it is noteworthy that these images occupy only the first sequence of this composite scene, ceasing with Bridal's exit;

24 (major), Liu sings of the deserted garden in images which contrast with the elegance depicted in 10 and 12; the images of decay are resumed in

Scene 35 (major);

27 (major), recurring references to incense-smoke, lanterns, and prayer-banners evoke the shrine setting of this scene of Bridal's ghostly return;

28 (grand), there are reiterated references to Liu Meng-mei's screen-enclosed couch and the gauze-covered window of his room in the shrine which is the lovers' rendezvous; note that this scene, numerically central in the play, is also the true fulcrum in that it marks the lovers' first meeting outside of dream;

48 (grand), Bridal sings in cryptic fashion,

Here in the paleness of this empty court
I watch and wait for the fullness of the moon
這閒庭院。
玩清光長送過這月兒圓。

—the desolation of the tumbledown inn, stressed throughout the scene, effectively frames the joy of reunion for mother and daughter (full moon equals *t'uan-yuan* [團圓]) with which the scene culminates;

55 (grand), "jeweled palace" and "royal censers" initiate a string of images of Imperial magnificence as the appropriate setting for the culminating reunions and final denouement.

This is not an exhaustive list: other major or grand scenes in which images of physical setting contribute strongly to mood include 7, 23, 32, 33, 50 and 54.

A third category of setting imagery calls for comment. This is a type of set-piece, an elaborate scenic description in aria form, which has a symbolic function relating to the singer's life-situation rather than a strictly narrative function in the play.¹⁷ The earliest example in *Peony Pavilion* occurs in Han Tzu-ts'ai's opening aria and recited verse in Scene 6, "Despairing Hopes" (悵眺). The verse reads as follows:

Ancient terrace eluding
reach of banyan's branches
commands the perilous walls
of Chia-tzu Cove below.
Where once the Prince of Yueh
made merry with song and dance
now only the partridge

wheels on the silent air.

榕樹梢頭訪古臺。
下看甲子海門開。
越王歌舞今何在。
時有鷓鴣飛去來。

This is a quite conventional and acceptable kind of “cherishing antiquity” (懷古) poem in itself, with a partridge borrowed from Li Po. But a clear clue to the symbolism of the poem is given by the lines of the preceding aria:

Before my gaze from the Terrace of Prince Chao T'o
sea and sky meet at horizon:
will the “roc's flight” of my future be as limitless?

越王臺上海連天。
可是鵬程便。

The purpose of Scene 6 is to express the lofty ambitions of the minor character Han Tzu-ts'ai and of his friend Liu Meng-mei, the hero of the play, ambitions which are temporarily blocked by society's neglect of their talents, as the two men indicate in a duet which serves as refrain:

Heaven will ordain
and it is vain to search for precedents
all up and down the length of history
while cold mist shrouds the trees' decay
on weed-grown terrace.

由天那攀今弔古也徒然。
荒臺古樹寒煙。

Ironically, they do in fact spend the scene charging “up and down the length of history,” discussing the misadventures of their respective ancestors, Han Yü (韓愈) and Liu Tsung-yuan (柳宗元).¹⁸

These “set-piece” descriptions of the Terrace of Prince Chao T'o symbolize the situation of the characters concerned, and in this way fulfil a different function from the setting-references previously examined: they do not, that is to say, serve to convey an appropriate mood for important action in the play, as do the garden references in Scene 10 and so on. The “objective correlatives” of desolate places continue to symbolize Liu Meng-mei's unfulfilled ambitions. The hardships he must survive on his road to success are vividly evoked by his second aria in Scene 22 (he is journeying to the capital for examination):

From stark branch
 the shrill of hungry kite.
 Ridge already far behind
 this lone wandering spirit
 prey to sickness.
 Hailstones whirl
 riddling the rags about my head,
 whistling through my shredded umbrella
 cold wind pierces my thin gown.
 Twisting trail
 longed-for inn nowhere in sight.

樹槎牙餓鷲驚叫。
 嶺迢遙病魂孤弔。
 破頭巾雹打風篩。
 透衣單傘做張兒哨。
 路斜抄。
 急沒個店兒梢。

This motif of the hardships assailing the aspiring young scholar is resumed in Scene 44 when Liu takes leave of Bridal to seek news of her parents. He sings

My whole desire, to present myself to your parents
 in carriage with team of four,
 you by my side, like Ch'ien-nü returning in splendor . . .

俺滿意兒待駟馬過門。
 和你離魂女同歸氣高。

And then, just as happens in the Yuan model *Ch'ien-nü li hun* (倩女離魂), he projects an image of the lonely road before him:

In autumn dusk
 script-forms of wildgeese against the setting sun
 distracted soul night-moored on Ch'in-huai River.

秋霄。
 雲橫雁字斜陽道。
 向秦淮夜泊魂消。

All of the other comparable “set-piece” landscape descriptions relate to male characters: specifically, to either Liu Meng-mei or Tu Pao, and to their progress in their careers. I comment below on Scene 8, “Speed the Plough” (勸農), the charm of whose pastoral verses reflects the humane quality of Tu Pao’s

administration. The bucolic lushness of this scene is recalled and strongly contrasted in Scene 42, "Troop Transfer" (移鎮). Tu Pao, now Pacification Commissioner, is on his way by boat to a dangerous assignment at Huai-an. His aria *Ch'ang-p'ai* (長拍) furnishes one of the loveliest and most explicit descriptions of setting in the entire play. 42 is a major scene, but the particular action at this point certainly does not call for such specific detail of locale: Chang Ching in fact considers the scene too long-drawn-out.¹⁹ The whole point of the aria, as I see it, is rather to elicit our sympathy for the aging official, torn from his peacetime tranquillity to serve the court in its time of crisis and danger:

Signs from Heaven of autumn's approach
 signs from Heaven of autumn's approach
 breath of the "metal" wind
 mist enfolds trees by painted bridge
 beneath the city's watchtowers.
 Warmth of summer retreats
 gently begins the chill
 as a thin drizzle clings to trailing robe.
 Now forward our painted bark between faery banks
 to meet the rising tide, the wind's stern breath
 and spume of flying spray;
 specks in the sky, white gulls
 swoop across our course;
 when the wind drops at sunset
 our sails' reflection quivers by the rushes' green.
 Muffled by thick clouds, sounds of pipe and drum—
 and somewhere the songs of water-chestnut gatherers
 rouse in the mind a longing for rustic peace.

天意秋初。
 天意秋初。
 金風微度。
 城闕外畫橋烟樹。
 看初收潑火。
 嫩涼生微雨沾裾。
 移畫舸。
 浸蓬壺。
 報潮生風氣肅。
 浪花飛吐。
 點點白鷗飛近渡。
 風定也落日搖帆映綠蒲。
 白雲秋牽的鳴簫鼓。
 何處菱歌。
 喚起江湖。

III. The Transmission of the *Peony Pavilion*

Aoki Masaru²⁰ gives a full synopsis of the action of *Peony Pavilion*, in the course of which he indicates those scenes which at the time of his writing (the late nineteen-twenties) still remained popular in the repertoire. Since the plot of the play is well-known I will repeat here only an outline of Aoki's synopsis, italicizing those parts of the story still performed. It will be seen that these represent, in the main, climactic points of the action:

Stage 1: Liu Ch'un-ch'ing dreams of a beauty and changes his personal name to Meng-mei, "Dream of Apricot." Prefect Tu Pao engages Tutor Ch'en for his daughter Bridal (Li-niang), whose *maid Spring Fragrance teases the tutor unmercifully*. (Scene 7, *Kui-shu* [閩塾], known on the *K'un-ch'ü* [崑曲], stage as *Hsueh-t'ang* [學堂], or more popularly as *Ch'un-hsiang nao hsueh* [春香鬧學].)

Stage 2: *Tu Pao tours his prefecture to exhort the farming folk to diligence. They praise his beneficent administration* (Scene 8).

Stage 3: *Bridal, tempted by her maid, strolls in the rear garden of the prefectural residence. She dreams of a young scholar who makes love to her by a pavilion set among peonies. She is woken from her dream by the Spirit of the Flowers*. (Scene 10, *Ching-meng*, but divided by *K'un-ch'ü* troupes into three scenes, *You-yuan* [遊園], *Tui-hua*, [堆花], *Ching-meng*).

Stage 4: *Bridal, lovelorn, revisits the garden. Close by the peony pavilion she finds a flowering apricot tree, by whose side she expresses her wish to be buried* (Scene 12).

Stage 5: *Alarmed by her own increasing haggardness, Bridal paints her self-portrait and inscribes thereon a poem referring to her dream-lover's name as Liu or Mei* (Scene 14).

Stage 6: The medical skills of Tutor Ch'en and the prayers of a Taoist nun, Sister Stone, prove unavailing. *Bridal repeats her request to be buried in the garden and to have her self-portrait placed beneath a nearby rock, and dies*. Tu Pao charges Tutor Ch'en and Sister Stone with the care of a shrine in her memory before leaving to take up new duties as Pacification Commissioner at Yangchow (Scene 20, *Nao-shang*, also performed as *Li-hun* [離魂]).

Stage 7: Liu Meng-mei, en route to Lin-an for the examinations, is saved from a storm by Tutor Ch'en and taken to Bridal's shrine to recuperate. *Bridal is tried before an infernal judge, and on the intercession of the Flower Spirit is granted return to life* (Scene 23).

Stage 8: Liu Meng-mei finds Bridal's portrait beneath the rock in the garden of the shrine (Scene 24).

Stage 9: Liu contemplates the portrait in his room (Scene 26, Wan-chen [玩眞], also performed as Chiao-hua [醮畫]).

Stage 10: Summoned by a mass said by Sister Stone, *Bridal returns in ghostly form and gives herself to Liu* (Scene 28, performed in two parts).

Stage 11: *Bridal reveals her identity and asks Liu's aid in returning to living form* (Scene 32).

Stage 12: Liu and Sister Stone open the grave and restore Bridal to life (Scene 35).

Stage 13: Liu, accompanied by Bridal and Sister Stone, embarks for the examinations in Lin-an. The traitor Li Ch'üan leads a vanguard of the Chin armies against Chiang-nan, and besieges Tu Pao in Huai-an. Tutor Ch'en, seeking Tu Pao to inform him of the "desecration" of his daughter's grave, is tricked by Li Ch'üan into believing that the rebels have killed Madam Tu and Spring Fragrance, and sent with this false report to Tu Pao. *Tu Pao, despite his grief, sends Ch'en back to Li Ch'üan with a message designed to induce Li to surrender* (Scene 46).

Stage 14: Li Ch'üan surrenders on the urging of his wife (to whom Tu Pao has promised a title). Madam Tu is reunited with Bridal in Lin-an. *Liu Meng-mei, in rags, angers Tu Pao by his claim to be the husband of a daughter Tu believes long dead, and is arrested* (Scene 50).

Stage 15: *Tu Pao accuses Liu of desecrating Bridal's grave, and has him beaten.* Imperial messengers arrive in search of Liu, who has just been declared Prize Candidate. But not even the explanations of Tutor Ch'en, now promoted Grand Secretary for his part in the pacification of Li Ch'üan, can appease Tu Pao's anger (Scene 53).

Stage 16: *Liu and Tu present their respective cases in memorials to the throne. Bridal arrives to claim her father's recognition. Her story (which is also Liu's) is declared true, and all receive marks of Imperial grace* (Scene 55).

Peony Pavilion has never lost its popularity, but many of its fifty-five scenes have been played only rarely in almost four centuries. An early abridgement, *Huan-hun-chi*, by Lü Shuo-yuan (呂碩園, Lü T'ien-ch'eng [呂天成]),

in forty-three scenes, is the last piece in Mao Chin's *Sixty Plays*,²¹ which also contains the full fifty-five scene version: *Peony Pavilion* is thus the only play to appear twice among Mao Chin's sixty. In the mid-Ch'ien-lung period a compilation of currently-performed *ch'uan-ch'i* scenes was given the title *Chui-pai-ch'iu*.²² Twelve scenes from *Peony Pavilion* are included (more properly eleven, since Scene 10 has already split into two, its first part receiving the separate title *You-yuan*): this makes *Peony Pavilion* the third best-represented play in this eighteenth-century anthology, after *P'i-p'a-chi* (琵琶記) with twenty-six scenes and *Ching-ch'ai-chi* (荆釵記) with nineteen. By the early twentieth century, as we have seen, Aoki Masaru identifies sixteen scenes as still in the repertoire.

Comparison of the three sources (the Lü abridgement, the Ch'ien-lung period anthology, and Aoki's list) reveals some interesting facts. To begin with, Lü Shuo-yuan's first principle in making his abridgement seems to have been to speed up the action. Of the first seventeen scenes he excises no less than eight, or about half; of the remaining thirty-eight scenes he cuts out only four. He seems to have lacked interest, especially, in the supporting characters Tutor Ch'en and Sister Stone. Ch'en has Scene 4 for his self-introduction, and is dominant in Scene 5; Sister Stone has the remarkable solo Scene 17, "Sorceress of the Tao" (道覲), in which she weaves one-half of the entire *Ch'ien-tzu-wen* (千字文) into a punning, salacious description of her wedding-night; and the comic Scene 34, "Consultation" (詞藥) is shared by these two characters. All these scenes Lü omits. He omits also two martial scenes, 31 and 43; almost all his remaining cuts are of transitional scenes.

Of all the twelve excised scenes, only one survived none the less as far as the twentieth-century stage, and was also one of the eleven scenes included in the eighteenth-century *Chui-pai-ch'iu*. This is Scene 8, "Speed the Plough." It is a grand scene (ten of the sixteen scenes still in the modern repertoire are grand scenes, having many singers and/or particularly important action, and often particularly fine songs); but it is a most unusual one. The usual grand scene will engage several of the principals of the play: in this case, the Prefect Tu Pao, Bridal's father, is the only principal to appear. The scene contains many other characters, but none of these appears elsewhere in the play. Tu Pao tours his prefecture to "speed the plough." He is attended by untermings, greeted by elders, and serenaded successively by farmers, a herdboy, mulberry girls and tea-pickers, to all of whom he responds also in

song. The scene makes a charming pastoral interlude, full of pleasant good-humor, which heightens (as Aoki points out) the spring mood of the succeeding "garden" scenes. Its highly-patterned construction must make it an enjoyable theatrical experience, as the groups of country folk, decked with flowers and singing patter-songs (小曲, *hsiao-ch'ü*), pass across the stage in reenactment of the ancient spring rituals. There was good reason, then, for it to survive on the modern stage; and the *Chui-pai-ch'ü* version of the scene, characteristically, gets extra comic mileage from a couple of clowns arguing in broad Soochow dialect over who spilled (or more likely swigged) wine from the jug they are carrying. T'ang Hsien-tsu's functional (as distinct from strictly theatrical) reason for writing the scene was the establishment of Tu Pao's character as a conscientious and benevolent administrator, even as he is gently satirized for the distance between his august prefectural state and the dung and discomfort of the fields he governs. It must be admitted, however, that Scene 8 does almost nothing to forward the action of the play. One commentary²³ suggests that the scene takes place only to get Prefect Tu away from his residence so that Bridal may take her fateful garden stroll. Lü Shuo-yuan's motive for dropping the scene, then, was his impatience, already noted, to get on with the story.

Another scene of a very special kind, which was retained in Lü's abridgement, collected into *Chui-pai-ch'ü* and still in performance at the time Aoki was writing, is Scene 23, "Infernal Judgment." Its plot-function is to secure permission for Bridal to return to the world of the living; yet Bridal does not appear until two-thirds of the way through this very long scene, and even then is given no more than half a dozen lines of dialogue. The sole singer is the infernal judge, who appears nowhere else in the play. This is the first big scene in the play for the *ching* or "heavy,"²⁴ and it makes enormous demands on him. As noted above, the scene resembles an act of a Yuan *tsa-chü*, with a complete song-set of ten arias in the *hsien-lü* (仙呂) mode, commonly used for the *tsa-chü*'s first act. Two of the ten songs are of extraordinary length. It is customary in Yuan plays for the *Hun-chiang-lung* (混江龍), the second song of the *hsien-lü* set, to be quite long, but here the judge sings over eighty lines as, prompted by his clerk, he introduces himself as none other than that court officer whose statue stands beside the Lord of the Eastern Peak and the City God in every city temple in the land. With a wealth of puns and allusions he declares his terrible powers, yet at the same time suggests he is not above accepting the occasional bribe. When the clerk

reminds him that his brush has dried out (he has been standing a long time as a statue, and has gathered a thick layer of dust), he sings:

It can be moistened—at a price:
ten gold ingots
ten strings of cash
or a nice pile of paper
in appropriate denominations.
要潤筆十錠金十貫鈔紙陌錢財。

His second long aria is the *Hou-t'ing-hua-kun* (後庭花滾), of about fifty lines, including a set which tells the story of an amorous maiden via rhyming puns on the names of thirty-eight flowers proposed by the Flower Spirit.²⁵

The richness of T'ang Hsien-tsu's comic invention appears very clearly if we compare this Judge Hu of *Peony Pavilion* with the stock, humorless underworld judges in Yuan plays like *Pi-t'ao-hua* (碧桃花), or contemporary *ch'uan-ch'i* like Wang Yü-feng's (王玉峰) *Fen-hsiang-chi*²⁶ (焚香記). Awesome as he might be in his governance of the courts of Hades, a ripple of all-too-human desire crosses his mind at the sight of Bridal, whom his clerk suggests he might like to "keep for a while as concubine," and his eventual leniency towards her is prompted in no small measure by sheer snobbishness, the discovery that her father is the esteemed Tu Pao, now Governor of Huaiyang. It is the warm with of this comic portrayal of the judge that has kept the scene alive. Lü's abridged version cuts out the long *Hun-chiang-lung* aria and the trial of the four male offenders, but keeps the flower-punning aria; the *Chui-pai-ch'iu* version of the scene shortens the *Hun-chiang-lung* to a more manageable score or so of lines, and omits the flower-punning *Hou-t'ing-hua-kun* aria. Cuts of this sort make the scene less of an ordeal for the singing role; and the flower sequence, like Sister Stone's punning monologue in Scene 17, is no doubt better suited to silent reading than to oral performance.

The most striking revelation of our comparison is the unpopularity of the second half of *Peony Pavilion*. The *Chui-pai-ch'iu* preserves eight scenes from the first half of the play, and two of the last three scenes (denouement and grand reunion). But between Scene 26 and Scene 53, only Scene 40 is selected. This, as it happens, is one of the least significant of the entire play, a transitional scene between two very minor characters, Liu Meng-mei's servant Camel Kuo and Sister Stone's nephew Scabby Turtle.

Camel Kuo, reduced to penury, is in search of his master; Scabby Turtle, after much teasing, tells him of the latter's departure for Lin-an. The teasing provides great scope for clowning, and the *Chui-pai-ch'iu* version adds a good deal of dialect embroidery to the original text.

Aside from this chance survival, it is evident that the *Chui-pai-ch'iu* editors,²⁷ at least, had little interest in the second half of the play, i.e. in the adventures of Bridal, her lover and her parents between the ghostly wooing and final reunion. Aoki's list of scenes still retained in the twentieth-century repertoire, similarly, has great gaps for the second half of the play.

The chart of structure I present below offers one way of obtaining a conspectus of the play's narrative structure. It is based on the premise that each scene relates to one or other of the three principals: Bridal, her lover or her father. Most scenes link up into blocks, the largest of which are such sequences as 9 through 25 (Bridal's yearning for love and consequent death from pining: this block is non-continuous), or 33 through 37 (five consecutive scenes revolving around Bridal's disinterment). A "non-continuous" block is interrupted by individual scenes whose function is to foreshadow future events (伏線, *fu-hsien*): thus, the block 9 through 25 is interrupted by scenes like 13, "In Search of Patronage" (訣謁), where Liu, who has not yet met Bridal other than in dream, leaves for the examinations in the capital, or 15, "A Spy for the Tartars" (虜諜), which introduces the subplot of rebellion, related to Tu Pao's future career. Scene 8, "Speed the Plough," characterized above as unusual, appears unique in that it is neither a "foreshadowing" scene nor a part of a block. Since all of the foreshadowing scenes are, by definition, merely facilitators of the action of later scenes, it is not surprising that most of them turn out to be transitional, and that none of them appears either in *Chui-pai-ch'iu* or in Aoki's list.

The blocks covering Scenes 38 through 49 (Tu Pao's pacification of Li Ch'üan's rebellion, and Liu Meng-mei's attendance at the examinations) are represented in *Chui-pai-ch'iu* only by the vulgar clowning of Scene 40, as already noted, and on the twentieth-century stage only by Scene 46, "The Rebels Countered" (折寇), which shows Tu Pao grieving over the report (actually false) of his wife's murder. For audiences of both the Ch'ien-lung era and the modern age, it is evident that *Peony Pavilion* meant first and foremost Bridal's dream of love (Scenes 10 and 12), her death (Scene 20), her ghostly wooing (Scenes 23, 24, 26, 28), and her ultimate reconciliation with her doubting father (Scenes 53, 55).

At least as closet drama (案頭戲, *an-t'ou-hsi*), however, *Peony Pavilion* is by no means dull in these later sequences. The rebels, Li Ch'üan and his dame, though they have disappeared from the modern stage, offer all the fun of the hen-pecked warrior, whose deeds of valor are restricted to the marriage-bed. Dame Li greets him with the lines,

Your nightlong ferocity at the frontier
has thoroughly worn me out—at the front 'ere,
你夜來鏖戰好粗雄。
困得俺核心沒縫。

and shortly afterwards lays down the law for the coming campaign:

Dame Li: Now hear my orders, Prince-errant of the Great Chin: no matter where your armies pass, not one solitary female is to be taken into your possession. Any contravention of this and I'll have your head in a court-martial!

Li Ch'üan: I wouldn't dare!
(Scene 38, "The Scourge of the Huat" 淮警)

The hero's attendance and inevitable success at the examinations is a stock feature of *ch'üan-ch'i* romances, and it is not unknown to find the notation in an otherwise complete text, "Scene number so-and-so: examination scene as usual."²⁸ A comic strain is often introduced by presenting one or more of the hero's rivals as a clownish ignoramus;²⁹ sometimes the examiner himself is played by the buffoon actor.³⁰ T'ang Hsien-tsu uses his examination scene to satirize the petty-mindedness of leading candidates, whose proposals for national defense policy are straight sexual innuendo. But his originality shows more clearly in his appointment as Chief Examiner of a man whose previous commission has been the assessment of tribute jewels. This makes possible Scene 21, "The Interview" (謁遇), in which elaborate gem imagery builds up to the identification of Liu Meng-mei as a true "hidden pearl" among men; there is a reprise of the motif in the examination scene itself, 41, "Delayed Examination" (耽試), when the examiner congratulates Liu on his essay:

Our sacred lord surveys his realm
intent with a single sweep of his net
to gather in this lost pearl
these jade-like tears of your concern.

聖主垂旒。
想泣玉遺珠一網收。

In a further neat stroke of dramaturgy, the report of the rebellion, by delaying publication of Liu's examination success, generates suspense and sows the seed of future conflict with Tu Pao.

The logic of the story T'ang Hsien-tsu has to tell demands that Bridal's reunion with her parents be delayed for a long period, and that during their separation her father Tu Pao develop a strong antipathy towards the lover Liu Meng-mei (whom he in fact suspects of desecrating his daughter's grave). These factors are crucial if Tu Pao's refusal to acknowledge his daughter is to make psychological sense; and this kind of credibility in turn is essential for the full development of the antithesis between passion and reason which is the philosophical burden of the play.³¹ Therefore the protracted subplots of the last third of the play, Tu Pao's suppression of Li Ch'üan, and his arrest and beating of Liu Meng-mei when the latter has just been declared Prize Candidate, are not at all extraneous, but wholly necessary to our understanding of the central conflict.

But the chief dramatic value of which truncation of the second half has deprived modern audiences derives from Bridal's own meditations on her history. On first reading (or, presumably, viewing), *Peony Pavilion* seems to be guilty of the kind of repetitiousness that mars, for modern taste, even some of the greatest of the Yuan *tsa-chü*.³² Two comments are called for in this connection. First, when a character must be brought up to date on events which have transpired and are already well-known to the audience, T'ang Hsien-tsu seldom settles for straight recapitulation. We have already noted that Scene 40, "In Search of the Master" (僕貞), was incorporated (under the title "Asking the Way") into the *Chui-pai-ch'ü* for the sake of its farcical potential. All that is necessary in this scene is for Scabby Turtle to inform Camel Kuo of the recent adventures of his master Liu Meng-mei. But Scabby has a genius for self-dramatization. Even before he confronts Camel Kuo he has entertained the audience with a vivid fantasy of his experience in court: he is released from torture only when the hoop around his head seems to be squeezing his brains out, though what is actually flowing

is merely the pus from his sores. After much miscellaneous clowning, he casts Camel Kuo into despair by wildly exaggerating Liu Meng-mei's conviction as a grave-robber, his flogging, torture, and sentencing to be "pulled" (strangled). Only after thoroughly terrifying Liu's poor servant does Scabby finally admit that Liu has merely journeyed to Lin-an to attend the examinations. Again, in Scene 47, "Raising the Siege" (圍釋), Tutor Ch'en has only to deliver to the rebels Tu Pao's offer of titles and amnesty which the audience already knows all about. T'ang Hsien-tsu turns the scene into a comic delight by bringing onstage, prior to Ch'en's arrival, a ludicrous but threatening barbarian, the ultimate in ethnic insults—who is cut completely from the scene by the sober-sided abridger, Lü Shuo-yuan.

Second, in the matter of Bridal's own numerous recalls of her years in the shades, T'ang Hsien-tsu presents no monotonous reiteration, but an incremental celebration of the play's central theme, the power of love. Actual recapitulations of the story are surprisingly few when we consider the play's great length and complexity. Bridal repeats to herself, at the end of Scene 10, the details of her momentous dream-union, just ended. In the pivotal Scene 32, "Spectral Vows" (冥誓), she narrates her history, quite briefly, for the benefit of the lover with whom she has just exchanged marriage-vows. In Scene 48, "Mother and Daughter Reunited" (遇母), Bridal specifically declines a full recapitulation:

In shallow earth you laid your child
 where bones grew cold and sleep came slow;
 the cold food you offered at the Feast of the Dead
 there south of the River
 was more than I could eat.
 Never dreaming of such a day as this
 now I find that past time
 impossible to relate.

你拋兒淺土。
 骨冷難眠。
 喫不盡爹娘飯。
 江南寒食天。
 可也不想有今日也。
 道不起從前。

Scene 55, "Reunion at Court," opens with one of the very few lengthy recapitulations in the play, when Tutor Ch'en narrates in some detail the feud

between Liu Meng-mei and Tu Pao. Subsequently each major character must relate his or her adventures for the Emperor's ears. Bridal's recital of her resurrection, in this final case, consists of no more than four or five sentences of prose.

More frequent than straight recapitulations are various recalls, tender or playful by turn, of the love-making between Bridal and Liu Meng-mei. Their unions are twice described in explicit detail: first, during the dream in Scene 10, the Flower Spirit sings the lines quoted above ("Ah, how the male force surges and leaps. . ."). Later, in Scene 30, "Disrupted Joy" (權撓), Liu and the ghostly form of Bridal consummate their love in a series of four beautiful arias. Critics are not supposed to use words like "beautiful," but these lines are, simply, full of beauty. The arias form a reduplicated sequence, alternately sung (接唱, *chieh-ch'ang*).³³ Bridal has brought Liu a gift of green apricots and plantain flowers. He comments,

Then the apricots will be sour as my own unfulfilled ambitions, while the
flowers will glow pink as my lady's lovely cheeks.

They drink, and Bridal sings,

Then seek to pick
no rarer fruit nor bloom
for in this Apricot, sir, you must know
all graces gather,
while this fair plantain flower
flowers for you,
也摘不下奇花果。
這一點蕉花和梅豆呵。
君知麼。
愛的人全風韻。
花有根科。

upon which Liu responds,

To pursue:
the flower wilts as lovelorn maid,
fruit's taste sours tongue
as thwarted hope of amorous swain,
yet joy is born as heart of plantain flower
secretly unfolds

moistened by apricot fragrance in the night. . . .

細哦。
這子兒花朶。
似美人憔悴。
酸子情多。
喜蕉心暗展。
一夜梅犀點污。

Bridal recalls the dream-encounter in Scene 12, "Pursuing the Dream," alone next day in the garden; in Scene 27, "Spirit-roaming," when her wandering soul first chances on (without yet recognizing) the sleeping Liu Meng-mei; in the following scene, "Union in the Shades," when she offers herself to Liu by prompting his memory of their earlier dream-love:

From cold secluded vale
a flower you bring to bloom in dark of night.
Unbetrothed am I
as you must surely know
cherished as daughter of good family.
Tenderness
at peony pavilion,
bashfulness
by rocky path,
rustling of breeze
by study window. . . .

幽谷寒涯。
你爲俺催花連夜發。
俺全然未嫁。
你個中知察。
拘惜的好人家。
牡丹亭嬌恰恰。
湖山畔羞答答。
讀書窗淅唼唼。

—and finally, playfully, in Scene 39, "Hangchow" (如杭), when, as her husband, Liu questions her as to the predestined nature of their first meeting.

The later, ghostly wooing is the subject of Bridal's reminiscence to Sister Stone in Scene 36, "Elopement," and then again in the same scene to Liu himself when Bridal proclaims herself still virgin:

Hidden longings possessed my ghostly form
too feeble to resist
the surge of the male force. . . .

—That was my ghostly form: only now do I bring you my real self.

Finally, in Scene 54, “Glad News” (聞喜), appears Bridal’s last recall of her spectral romance, in a passage of reminiscence before Spring Fragrance: the maid presses too close on details of the love-making, and Bridal stops short with a mild rebuke of her impertinence.

This rather tedious listing here of Bridal’s recalls of her love-making may at least serve to bring out an important critical point: it is precisely these varied reminiscences which construct for us the character of Bridal and delineate her relationships with the other dramatis personae. To Liu Meng-mei she is tender as a mistress, gently teasing as a wife. With Sister Stone, who despite her prurience has proved the most constant supporter of the resurrected girl, she is child-like, trusting,

tender infant you must raise anew.

(Scene 36, “Elopement”)

重嬌養起這嫩孩兒。

With Spring Fragrance she maintains the proper mistress-maid relationship; before her mother she hesitates to discuss the matters of her heart; and to her stern father, on their reunion in the final scene of the play, she speaks only of Liu’s qualifications as a son-in-law, and not at all of her passion for him. Conversely, each of her interlocutors, on these occasions, shows his or her characteristic pattern of curiosity about Bridal’s adventures: from Sister Stone’s sympathy, Liu’s need to understand, Spring Fragrance’s impertinent nosiness, through to Tutor Ch’en’s dispassionate scholarly (or pedantic) interest in the proceedings of the infernal court, when in the final scene he questions Bridal about the treatment there meted out to the Southern Sung traitor Ch’in Hui.

Moreover, though we have been stressing the continual recalls which are so prominent a feature, it is worth noting that the play’s development is not at all backward-looking, no mere falling-off from the early climaxes of Scene 10, “The Interrupted Dream,” and Scene 20, the death scene. It is part of T’ang Hsien-tsu’s genius in constructing his massive romance to foreshadow future actions by present clues. These can be quite overt, as in the “foreshadowing” scenes noted above and conspicuous in our chart, or so subtle as to

be almost unnoticeable. To give just two examples: in Scene 12, Bridal in the course of describing the garden setting hints at her own death:

strand by strand willows hover
string by string elm-seeds dangle--
offering of coins to mourn the spring.

一絲絲垂楊線。
一丟丟榆莢錢。
線兒春甚金錢吊轉。

The image mentally prepares us for her discovery, later in the same scene, of the flowering apricot she determines shall provide her burial site. At the point of death, in Scene 20, Bridal's exit lines contain the certain prediction of her return to life:

Ah, how can
the moon, once set, rise again
or the burnt-out lamp glow red?
怎能够月落重生燈再紅。

The dramatic romances of the Ming and early Ch'ing periods form a well-defined corpus and include many masterpieces as well as much run-of-the-mill writing. As objects of literary study they have been more sadly neglected than almost any other branch of Chinese literature. Traditional *ch'ü-hsueh* (曲學) gives us very clear insights into the musical effectiveness of the plays, and this is of particularly great value since we have so little opportunity of actually witnessing performances. But traditional *ch'ü-hsueh* is only a foundation. We must build a total literary analysis on this foundation if we are to do justice to the plays as literature. This is not to treat the plays as closet-drama, or as just another kind of storytelling. It should be possible to bring all the elements together: dialogues, verses, songs; exits and entrances; the selection of song-sets and the shifts of locale; foreshadowing and characterization; patterns of imagery and the effectiveness of low comedy: everything that goes to make *Peony Pavilion* an unforgettable experience, not just for the favored audience of a three-day performance, but for the lover of drama too who sits reading the text in the silence of his study. This should be one goal, at least, for the study of Ming drama.

Peony Pavilion: Chart of Scenes

, Prologue: 1

	Lover	Heroine Education	Father	
		3		
Career	Wooing	4	Career	Rebels
		5		
2		7		
	22		8	
6	24			15
	26	Yearning	31	
13				19
	Resurrection	9	42	
21		10	43	38
		11	46	
39	33	12		45
40	34	14		47
41	35	16		
	37	17		
49		18		
50		20		
51		23		
52		25		
53				
		Spirit-union		
		27		
		28		
		29		
		30		
		32		
		Marriage		
		36		
		Reunion		
		44		
		48		
		54		
		55		

Peony Pavilion: Table of Surviving Scenes

PP	Lü	Chui	Aoki	PP	Lü	Chui	Aoki
1	1			29	21		
2	2			30	22		
3	3			31			
4				32	23		x
5				33	24		
6				34			
7	4	x	x	35	25		x
8		x	x	36	26		
9				37	27		
10	5	x	x	38	28		
11				39	29		
12	7	x	x	40	30	x	
13	6			41	31		
14	9		x	42	32		
15				43			
16	10			44	33		
17				45	34		
18	12			46	35		x
19	8			47	36		
20	13	x	x	48	37		
21	11			49	38		
22	14			50	39		x
23	15	x	x	51	40		
24	16	x	x	52	41		
25	17			53	42	x	x
26	18	x	x	54			
27	19			55	43	x	x
28	20		x				

Notes

1. *Mu-tan-t'ing* (牡丹亭) or *Huan-hun-chi* (還魂記), by T'ang Hsien-tsu (湯顯祖, 1550-1616). Previous studies of the structure of the play, from various points of view, include Aoki Masaru (青木正兒), translated Wang Ku-lu (王古魯), *Chung-kuo chin-shih hsi-ch'ü shih* (中國近世戲曲史), Shanghai, 1936, 237-240; Chang Ching (張敬), *Ming-Ch'ing ch'üan-ch'i tao-lun* (明清傳奇導論), Taipei, 1961 (includes a classification of scenes into categories from "brief transitional" to "grand"); same author, *T'ang Jo-shih Mu-tan-t'ing Huan-hun-chi ch'ing-chieh p'ei-t'ao chih fen-hsi* (湯若士牡丹亭還魂記情節配套之分析), *Soochow Journal of Humanities*, 1, March, 1976, 1-14 (scene-by-scene analysis of musical structure); P'an Ch'ün-ying (潘群英), *T'ang Hsien-tsu Mu-tan-t'ing K'ao-shu* (湯顯祖牡丹亭考述), Chia-hsin Cement Company Foundation, 1969, 54-62; and Iwaki Hideo (岩城秀夫), *Chugoku gikyoku engeki kenkyu* (中國戲曲演劇研究), Tokyo, 1972, 230-257 (a very acute commentary on the development of the narrative).
2. Hu Shih (胡適), in his preface to *Chui-pai-ch'ü* (see below, note 22), derides the T'ang pastiche as "a fashionable silly game" of late Ming times.
3. The regularity of envois in *Peony Pavilion* is particularly striking when one compares such a play as *Huan-sha-chi* (浣紗記), of whose forty-five scenes no less than nine lack envois.
4. In three scenes (45, 51, 55) out of these forty-one, the full and formal opening is preceded by a brief "stage-setting" in which rebel sentries cross the stage or officers of the guard take up their stations.
5. The prologue consists of song followed by verse, no prose, no self-introduction by the prologue-speaker, the *mo* actor who from Scene 4 on plays the role of Tutor Ch'en.
6. Classification of scenes in this paper follows Chang Ching, see above, note 1.
7. Chang Ching, in her 1976 article (see above, note 1), describes Scene 43 as a crowd-pleasing martial scene which is inessential to the action of the play, the kind of scene which points up the distinction between closet and stage effectiveness.
8. Omission of the self-introduction is particularly surprising in the case of Scene 32, "Spectral Vows," a pivotal scene (in that it foreshadows the resurrection of Bridal Tu), and separated by the preceding martial scene from the "Spirit-union" block (see below, and chart). It is a grand scene with no less than sixteen tunes. Scene 54, according to Chang Ching (1976 article), is functionally a transitional scene but is built into major scene status by slow songs to manipulate audience anticipation of the final reunion.
9. Again, it is instructive to compare *Huan-sha-chi*, in which only eleven of the total forty-five scenes do open with a single character using the full formula.
10. Mark Rose, *Shakespearean Design*, Harvard, 1972. Rose proposes that scene division in Shakespeare's plays be based on a single feature, the cleared stage. He rejects the arbitrary divisions of the Jacobean editors and postulates instead a concept of the scene as a segment marked at either end by an empty stage.

- Scenes redefined in this way show, in Rose's analysis, symmetries of design which have been obscured by the received, more arbitrary methods of scene division.
11. Outside of these, the cleared stage occurs only in three scenes, 32, 45, and 53. Scene 32 is noted above for its lack of full entrance-formula, and we might view Liu Meng-mei's initial entrance and early exit as a simple prelude to the scene proper. The prelude, however, begins the long song-set which Bridal picks up (with the same tune, *Yueh-yun-kao* [月雲高]) on her entrance. 45 is transitional, an "on the road" scene where sentries cross the stage before Tutor Ch'en's entrance. 53 opens with Liu in jail before he is dragged off to Tu Pao's court.
 12. The cleared stage is used to similar effect in *Ching-ch'ai-chi* (荆釵記), Scene 26, when Yü-lien attempts suicide but is saved from drowning by a boatman.
 13. Chang Ching comments that this scene was "added by the singers."
 14. 21, 23, 25, 31, 35, 45, 51, 52, 54.
 15. All except 23 and 35.
 16. Northern arias are used also in Scenes 19 and 51, and alternate with Southern in the finale, but 32 is the only scene to employ a full-length Northern set of ten arias. It is not unprecedented for a *ch'uan-ch'i* play to contain what amounts essentially to a *tsa-chü* act (折): Scene 12 of *Huan-sha-chi* comprises a Northern song-set of nine arias sung by the *mo* character Kung-sun Sheng, and there are other examples.
 17. A locus classicus of this device would be Chang's apostrophe of the Yellow River, symbolic of his own ambitions, in *Hsi-hsiang-chi* (西廂記), I, 1.
 18. Hou Wai-lu (侯外廬), *T'ang Hsien-tsu Mu-tan-t'ing Huan-hun-chi wai-chuan* (外傳), in *Lun T'ang Hsien-tsu chü-tso ssu-chung* (論湯顯祖劇作四種), Peking, 1962, offers the interesting argument that *Peony Pavilion*, in its philosophical import, achieves a "return of the souls" of Tu Fu and Liu Tsung-yuan, who are cited as the ancestors of the heroine and hero respectively, and whose works are frequently quoted in tandem. However, it is hard to accept Hou's contention that Han Tzu-ts'ai, as the descendant of Liu Tsung-yuan's rival Han Yü, is depicted in the light of sour pedant. It is true that Han is given a *ch'ou* role, but this is only for convenience, or perhaps to accentuate the comedy of his exchange of allusions with Liu Meng-mei. Han Tzu-ts'ai's part in the action (limited to Scene 6 plus a brief entrance in the finale) is purely to aid Liu's advancement, and there is no negative element in his portrayal.
 19. 1976 article, see above, note 1.
 20. See above, note 1.
 21. Mao Chin (毛晉), *Liu-shih chung ch'ü* (六十種曲) reprinted Taipei, 1970.
 22. *Chui-pai-ch'iu* (繡白裘), reprinted Taipei, 1967.
 23. In *Wu Wu-shan san-fu ho-p'ing Mu-tan-t'ing* (吳吳山三婦合評牡丹亭), 1694 edition in National Taiwan University Library.
 24. For convenience, I suggest the following English equivalents for *ch'uan-ch'i* role-types: *sheng* (生), hero; *tan* (旦), heroine; *lao-tan* (老旦), dame; *t'ieh* (貼), soubrette; *mo* (末), elder; *wai* (外), support; *tsa* (雜), extra; *ching* (淨), heavy;

- ch'ou (丑), buffoon.
25. T'ang Hsien-tsu was addicted to this kind of word-play: Scene 20 of his first play, *Tzu-hsiao-chi* (紫簫記), has a similar sequence capping the names of trees.
 26. Aoki also compares the scene, very favorably, with the Hades scenes of T'u Lung's (屠隆) *Tan-hua-chi* (曇花記).
 27. According to the preface by Ch'eng Ta-heng (程大衛) dated 1770, the collection was edited by Ch'ien Te-ts'ang (錢德蒼) from an original compilation by "Wan-hua chu-jen" (玩花主人).
 28. E.g. *Hsun-ch'in-chi* (尋親記), Scene 28.
 29. Cf. *P'i-p'a-chi* (蕉帕記), Scene 8; *Ching-ch'ai-chi* Scene 4, etc.
 30. *Chiao-p'a-chi* (蕉帕記), Scene 26; *San-yuan-chi* (三元記), Scene 27.
 31. See my article, "Some Concerns and Methods of the Ming *ch'uan-ch'i* Drama," in C. Birch, ed, *Studies in Chinese Literary Genres*, Berkeley, 1974, 220-258; Chinese translation by Lai Jui-ho (賴瑞和) to appear in *Chung-wai Wen-hsueh* (中外文學).
 32. *Tou O yuan* (竇娥冤) is an egregious offender in this regard.
 33. T'ang Hsien-tsu uses the same reduplicated sequence again in Scene 16 of his later play *Nan-k'o-chi* (南柯記).