

# LYRICISM VERSUS DRAMATIC CONFLICT: *CH'ANG – SHENG TIEN* AND *ALL FOR LOVE*

W. P. Li

李文彬\*

## 摘 要

本文為比較研究，分兩部份。

第一部份討論長生殿，指出此劇深受中國抒情傳統影響。

原因有二：第一，全劇描繪的主要是男女主角唐明皇與楊貴妃的愛情生活。作者的目的是在營造一自足而又理想化的愛情世界，對此一世界之外的政治與社會情況著墨不多；因此我們看到的是男女主角在愛情過程中的悲喜與慾望，以及藉此而呈現出的人格與理想。此與中國抒情詩之言志傳統若合符節。第二，劇中之場景與物件多具象徵作用，頗類抒情詩之意象，代表或彰顯男女主角之情意。

第二部分探討 *All for Love*。此劇描述的亦為帝王因愛情而「傾國」之故事，但全劇之重點不在抒情而在衝突。原因是作者以亞里士多德的戲劇理論為基準而寫成此劇，而亞氏特重戲劇衝突。因此我們看到的不是自足而理想化的愛情世界，而是愛情與現實世界的其他價值，如榮譽、友情、親情等，發生強烈衝突之情況。作者之意圖亦不在呈現愛情的崇高，而在強調面對價值突衝時作理性選擇的重要。

Hung Sheng's 洪昇 *Ch'ang – sheng tien* 長生殿 and John Dryden's *All for Love* were written approximately at the same time: the former in 1688 and the latter 1677. Moreover, both plays tell of an emperor who loses his empire for the love of a beautiful woman. With these similarities as points of departure, a comparative study of the two plays may prove interesting and fruitful. The present paper attempts to discuss the two plays within their different cultural contexts, and then to point out, through careful comparison, a fundamental difference between them. Since *Ch'ang sheng tien* is strongly influenced by the Chinese lyrical tradition, and *All for Love* is a play in the form of typical Western classical drama, lyricism becomes the dominant element in the former, while dramatic conflict forms the quintessence of the latter.

*Ch'ang – sheng tien* deals with the love story about Emperor T'ang Hsün – tsung

---

\*作者為本校英國語文學系教授

唐玄宗(r.712–56) and his consort Yang Yü–huan 楊玉環, two famous historical personages.<sup>1</sup> The playwright Hung Sheng apparently has more to convey than mere historical facts. In a preface to the play, Hung Sheng mentions that he wrote the play because he had been deeply moved and inspired by “the sincerity of love [between the Emperor and his consort], which is rarely found in imperial families” 情之所鍾，帝王家罕有。<sup>2</sup> The focus of his play is therefore placed upon the intense emotion of the lovers, which, to be sure, has not been recorded in history. Accordingly in his rendition of the story about these two historical personages, a minimum of historical facts support a highly charged lyricism. By lyricism I mean the poetical act of the lyric in which the poet expresses his “intent” to the reader. Here I refer to the traditional Chinese view about the function of poetry, exemplified in the dictum “Poetry expresses intent” (詩言志).<sup>3</sup> The word “intent” may encompass the sensibility and feeling, and even the whole being of a lyric poet. The center of attention in this poetical act lies not so much in the representation of the external world as in the presentation of the inner world of the lyrical self. That is why Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg define the lyric as “a direct presentation, in which a single actor, the poet or his surrogate, sings, or muses, or speaks for us to hear or overhear.”<sup>4</sup> When the poet expresses his intent, or when he “sings, or muses, or speaks,” he is more concerned with his own being than with the world around him; the latter serves only as images or symbols to bring out the former. In this sense, the world rendered by the lyric poet, as Kao Yu–kung 高友工 has aptly demonstrated, is private and self–contained:

This symbolic world [of the lyric] is composed of qualities in the form of images, structured by formal internal rules, such as parallelism. Since it does not refer outwardly to the contextual world, its meaning is directed inward, toward this qualitative dimension, an ideal, or idealized, world of self–containment and self–contentment.<sup>5</sup>

But this private and self–contained world is by nature transitory; it is only a moment of reverie in which the poet engages himself in the delineation of his inner landscape, totally oblivious to the outside world. Eventually he has to wake up, reluctantly or not, and recollect himself to face reality again. This lyrical moment, however, is meaningful to him in that it shows certain aspects of his true being.

This poetical act, when adopted by dramatists, will be naturally modified. For one thing, the lyrical self becomes the protagonist who moves from scene to scene to

present his self-portrait. And side by side with the idealized world of self-containment is a reality which functions either as a contrast or as a threat to the idealized world of self-containment. As a result, what we will see in a lyrical drama is a detailed presentation, through progression of scenes and elaborations of images, of the protagonist's inner world of sensibility and feeling on the one hand, and a reality hostile to this private world on the other.

The world built up by the lovers in *Ch'ang-sheng tien* is obviously an idealized one, in which the lovers live privately without any concern for what happens outside their world. This idealized world of love has already been established in Scene 2 as the Emperor decides to put all political affairs aside in order to enjoy himself among the company of women:

As the whole empire is reported to have enjoyed prosperity and  
peace, and the time is splendid,  
Why not make merry?  
I would like to indulge in the pleasures of love for the rest of my life,  
Without any desire to live in the celestial land on white clouds.<sup>6</sup>  
昇平早奏，韶華好，行樂何妨。  
願此生終老溫柔，白雲不羨仙鄉。(p.3)

He is fascinated by Yang Yü-huan's beauty and chooses her as his Precious Consort (*kuei-fei* 貴妃). At the end of the Scene, he bestows on her a hairpin and an exquisite box, both made of gold. As the hairpin is in the shape of two birds flying together and the box in that of a heart, they demonstrate unmistakably the Emperor's pledge of love for her. Recognizing the symbolic meaning of the gifts, Lady Yang also reveals her yearning for a lasting relationship with the Emperor: "I wish that our love is as firm as solid gold, / And that the hairpin never splits apart and the box never breaks" 惟願取情似堅金，釵不單分盒永完(p.6). Throughout the play, the hairpin and the box have been frequently mentioned by the lovers. Even at the time when Lady Yang is put to death, she brings them with her to the grave and then to the celestial land where she dwells. They become in effect the embodiment of the idealized world of love.

As the world of love is built up, the lovers begin to engage themselves in the pursuit of sensuous and aesthetic pleasures. They go to appreciate the beauty of nature, compose music, and perform dances. They have completely lost themselves in the enjoyment of love: "In flowery mornings they cling to each other, / And at moon-lit nights they cuddle together, / Enjoying wholeheartedly the pleasures of

love." 花朝擁，月夜偃，嘗盡溫柔滋味(p.15). They do not care about what happens outside their world of love; nor does the outside world disturb their enjoyment. Their world is completely private and self-contained.

Music and dance, at this stage, become the dominant images. Scenes 11, 12, 14, 16 are totally devoted to the description of the lovers' making and enjoyment of music and dance. In a dream, Lady Yang finds herself in the moon, and is able to learn the heavenly music and dance called "Rainbow and Feathery Garment" (ni-ch'ang yü-i 霓裳羽衣). She teaches the palace musicians to play the music, and performs the dance before the Emperor who is also a great music lover. During the performance of the heavenly dance, she herself "looks like a goddess,/ Flying down from the moon" 渾一似天仙，月中飛降(p.73). The dance and the dancer thus become one. Even after she died, the music still exists among the palace musicians, and is identified with her, and the romance between her and the Emperor.

It is significant that Hung Sheng has not indicated in the play any relationship between Lady Yang and the barbarous general An Lu-shan 安祿山.<sup>7</sup> This relationship has been described with obscenity in almost all the sources from which Hung draws his material for his play.<sup>8</sup> For instance, it appears in Pai P'u's 白樸 *Wu-t'ung yü* 梧桐雨, a play in the *tsa-chü* 雜劇 genre.<sup>9</sup> Excluding it from the play, Hung has substantially enhanced the privateness and self-containment of the idealized world of love shared by the Emperor and Lady Yang. An Lu-shan is represented throughout the play as the power of external reality which finally destroys the idealized world of love.

An idealized world is not necessarily a perfect one: disturbances may sometimes arise within the world. But all disturbances serve in the long run to bring the world of love to a more private and self-contained state. For example, in Scenes 8 and 9, the Emperor is very upset by Lady Yang's jealousy of his temporary relation with one of her sisters. He sends Lady Yang back to her own home. Soon both the Emperor and Lady Yang regret what they did. Yang sends a lock of her hair to the Emperor to remind him of the love they had shared. On seeing the lock, the Emperor immediately calls her back. Their love is greatly intensified because of this incident: "As we have now tasted the bitterness of love-sickness,/ We love each other ten times more than before" 從今識破愁滋味，這恩情更添十倍(p.36).

In the idealized world of self-containment, as has been suggested, images refer inwardly to the lyrical self. The seasonal images in this play possess exactly such a function. The play covers a span of twelve years, but only two seasons -- spring and autumn -- have received treatment. The Emperor turns his mind from political affairs to love in the early spring: "Rain and dew from clouds herald the approach

of spring;/ And plants in the palace gardens begin to grow luxuriantly” 層霄雨露回春，深宮草木齊芳(p.3). It seems that the vitality shown in spring goads him into the tender thought of love. From Scene 4 to Scene 9, spring has been dealt with in relation to the pleasures of love:

In springtime, the river looks splendid.  
Busy in serving the Emperor in his enjoyment of feasts or of the  
views of the palace bathed in spring,  
The new Precious Consort has won much imperial favor.  
At spring nights, at spring nights, they lie together face to face;  
Who knows how passionately they make love?<sup>10</sup>  
春江上，景融融。催侍宴，望春宮。新來倚貴添尊重。春宵裡，春宵裡，比目兒和同。誰知得雨雲踪？(p.26)

The beauty of nature, the feasts, and the voluptuous nights – all these pleasures come with spring. Not only does spring make the enjoyment of love possible, but it also reflects the minds of the lovers who long for love. When the Emperor drives Lady Yang out of the court because of her jealousy, the views of spring make him regret having sent her away:

The spring breeze blows silently,  
And the curtains in the palace rooms are only half drawn.  
How difficult it is to pass the slow – moving day!  
Listening to the birds that are still singing happily,  
And looking at the newly – sprung flowers that seem to engage in  
beauty contest,  
I feel remorse.  
春風靜，宮簾半啟，難消日影遲遲。  
聽好鳥猶作歡聲，觀新花似鬪容輝，追悔。(p.34)

Without love, spring seems unbearable. The singing birds and the blooming flowers reveal the Emperor's inner yearning for the love he has rejected on the one hand, and herald a happy reunion of the lovers on the other.

The autumnal landscape also reflects the inner world of the lovers. Autumn is a cold season, and the most impressive scene of the season for the lovers is the stars of Herd Boy (niu – lang 牛郎) and Weaving Maiden (chih – nü 織女), shining brightly beside the Milky Way: “The rain rushing on the wu – t'ung trees brings slight

coldness;/ The Milky Way stretches across the sky,/ With the two stars twinkling among thin clouds" 雨遇梧桐微做冷，銀河宛轉，織雲點輟雙星(p. 99). The coldness of autumn echoes the coldness in Yang's mind: she is afraid that the Emperor's love for her will become cold like the autumn wind: "Our love sealed by the hairpin and the box should last long;/ I would not like to be forsaken as the fan is put away when the autumn wind arises" 釵盒情緣長久訂，莫使做秋風扇冷(p.99). And the legend about the Herd boy and the Weaving Maiden who live forever in love also brings out her fear of the inconstancy of human love.<sup>11</sup> She says to the Emperor:

I think that, though the Herd Boy and the Weaving Maiden can only see each other once a year, their love is eternal. I am afraid that the love between your Highness and me would not be able to last as long as theirs.

妾想牛郎織女，雖一年一見，卻是地久天長。只恐陛下與妾的恩情，不能夠似他長遠。(p.100)

The Emperor promises that he will never change his love for her. What occupies the lovers' minds now is the question of eternal love. With the stars of the Herd Boy and the Weaving Maiden as witnesses, they exchange vows of everlasting devotion and constancy in the Palace of Eternity (ch'ang-sheng tien): "With a love so intense and profound, we wish to be husband and wife in every life through all eternity, never parting from each other" 情重恩深，願世生生，共為夫婦，永不相離(p.102). The sensuous love shown in spring grows into a genuine one in autumn, and the Palace of Eternity becomes a symbol for the maturer love.

As has been pointed out before, the idealized world of self-containment is transitory by nature. The inhabitants have to step out of it to face reality again. In fact, the world we have discussed above is built precariously on a reality hostile to its existence. Therefore, juxtaposed to the scenes describing the idealized world of love are those which indicate the hostile reality. The ambition of An Lu-shan is dealt with in Scenes 3, 13, 17, and 20; and the suffering of the people is touched upon in Scene 15. The Emperor is blind to both An's ambition and people's suffering because he has been completely absorbed in the idealized world of love. As An Lu-shan raises an army to attack the capital of the empire, that private world of self-containment is shattered into pieces, and the lovers find themselves in deep trouble: Lady Yang has to be put to death, and the Emperor has to go in exile.

The influence of the lyrical tradition on this play is so overwhelming that lyricism still prevails even after the lovers are separated by death. Another private

world of self-containment arises from a new reality: the Emperor gives the throne to his son, and Lady Yang becomes a deity after her death. Still committing to their pledge of mutual devotion, the lovers—one on earth and the other in heaven—lament their fate of separation. So deeply do they immerse themselves in sorrow that they entirely ignore other things happening around them. This world is even more idealized than the former one in that it extends to cover a territory peopled by supernatural beings who take compassion on the lovers and try to bring them together with their powers. This mythic dimension takes the world of the lovers far away from the touch of any practical human intervention. Private and self-contained, the world is isolated and hovering above human community.

It seems that autumn has never faded away since it made its first appearance in the play. During the exile, the Emperor is in profound depression, and the melancholy autumn scene reflects his depressed mind:

On the way of interminable journey,  
How much sorrow and loneliness one has to suffer?  
At long distance, clouds and mountains overlap,  
Like my annoyances and griefs mixing and rising together.  
The resonant voice of autumn is heard in the rustling of leaves falling  
incessantly from trees.  
The sight of a wild goose flying alone in the open sky  
adds grief to sorrow.  
萬里巡行，多少悲涼途路情。看雲山重疊處，似我亂愁交并。無邊落  
木響秋聲，長空孤雁添悲哽。(p.131)

Autumn even follows him back to the palace. Listening to the autumn rain pelting incessantly on the wu-t'ung trees at a sleepless night, he recalls the happy time when he lived with Lady Yang, and bemoans his present state of loneliness:

Cold wind fights with chilly rain the whole night through.  
Drop by drop the rain drips and rushes whistling to the wu-t'ung  
trees.  
Soughing and again soughing, it taps on my heart and arouses  
sorrowful melancholy—  
Intermittently, it seems to relent but comes again.  
.....  
Sitting alone with only an oil lamp by my side,

I regret that I cannot listen to this with my beautiful love.  
Thinking of the happiness in old times, I cannot help bursting into  
tears.

冷風掠雨戰長宵，聽點點都向那梧桐梢也。  
蕭蕭颯颯，一齊暗把亂愁敲，才住了又還飄。  
……人獨坐，廝湊著孤燈照也，恨同聽沒個嬌嬌。猛想著舊歡娛，止  
不住淚痕交。(p.194)

The melancholy atmosphere of autumn fills every corner of the second idealized world. No other seasons set in to take its place. This perpetual autumn is certainly less a natural phenomenon than an image reflecting the inner landscape of the protagonist.

The play ends with the happy reunion of the lovers: the Emperor becomes a deity after his death, and is taken to the moon where he meets again Lady Yang. The consummation of their love marks the completion of the portrayal of the Emperor and Lady Yang as ideal or idealized lovers. Their love affair, as the playwright speaks through the mouth of a minor character in the play, is "really a commendable story for all ages" 真千秋一段佳話也(p.128). And this "commendable story" is made possible by concentration on the effect of lyricism, or to be more precise, on the delineation of the lovers' private world of self-containment. It is interesting to note that some historical facts which may reduce or mar the lyricism of the story have been deliberately ignored by the playwright. In the play we would not be able to find the historical T'ang Hsün-tsung whose political ignorance brought wars and calamities to his empire, and the historical Yang Kuei-fei notorious for her wantonness and greed for power. What we actually see, as demonstrated above, are a pair of idealized lovers who reveal intense emotional responses to the pleasures and frustrations of love.

When we turn to Dryden's *All for Love*, we find that we are in a entirely different world: we cannot trace out in the play the lyricism which has been so remarkably demonstrated in *Ch'ang-sheng tien*. *All for Love*, as John Bailey has noted, "is drama in the shape of drama."<sup>12</sup> It is drama in Aristotelian sense of the word: its quintessence lies not in lyricism but in dramatic conflicts among characters within a framework of classical unities of time, place, and action.

It is a commonplace to say that drama, in the Western tradition, contains some sort of conflict, usually the conflict of a protagonist against an antagonist, an opposing force, or even himself. In defining the word "drama," for example, the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* has this to say: "Drama is usually



expected to represent stories showing situations of conflict between characters, . . . "13 This association of drama with conflict can be probably traced back to Greek tragedy in which conflict plays an important part. Greek tragedy is often concerned with the pathos, or the emotional crisis, of a hero. And moments of pathos arise from, in Aristotle's terms, reversal of fortune (peripeteia) and recognition of truth (anagnorisis), the two essential elements in the plot of a successful tragedy.<sup>14</sup> The tragic hero is usually caught up in a developing conflict, such as Oedipus's conflict with his predestination, or Antigone's with the power of her king, which eventually leads to the reversal of the hero's fortune from good to bad, and his change from ignorance to knowledge of some bitter truth of life. The resolution of the conflict is the dénouement of the play, which usually means the downfall of the tragic hero.

The Greek conceptions of tragedy were regarded as aesthetic norms in the Neoclassical age.<sup>15</sup> Dryden himself professed in his "Preface to *All for Love*" that, unlike Shakespeare in *Antony and Cleopatra*, he adhered strictly to the three unities allegedly derived from Aristotle's *Poetics*: "the unities of time, place, and action [are] more observed than, perhaps, the English theatre requires."<sup>16</sup> In fact, besides the three unities, he has also added to the story of *Antony and Cleopatra* a heightened sense of dramatic conflict. This is what we are going to see in the following discussion.

The play *All for Love* tells of the love affair between the Roman emperor Mark Antony and the Egyptian queen Cleopatra, with its focus on the last day of their lives on earth. But the world of love described in *All for Love* is not private and self-contained at all: it keeps in close contact with the external world. In fact, love is represented in the play as a value which stands in sharp conflict with other human values, such as honor, friendship, and familial duty. The lovers are so busy dealing with people who try to force their ways into the world of love that they do not have the opportunity to be together alone for just one single day.

In the first Act, Ventidius, Antony's general, comes to visit Antony who hides himself in a temple, feeling down and out because of his defeat in Actium. In talking to one of Cleopatra's eunuch, Ventidius reveals his opposition to the love between the Egyptian queen and his emperor:

Oh, she has decked his ruin with her love,  
Led him in golden bands to gaudy slaughter,  
And made perdition pleasing: She has left him  
The blank of what he was.

I tell thee, eunuch, she has quite unmanned him.  
Can any Roman see, and know him now,  
Thus altered from the lord of half mankind,  
Unbent, unsinewed, made a woman's toy,  
Shrunk from the vast extent of all his honors,  
And cramped within a corner of the world?

(I. i. 170–79)

Ventidius tries to move Antony from Cleopatra by appealing to his sense of honor. He urges Antony to fight again like a Roman soldier; and he informs him that twelve legions are waiting for him to lead to the battlefield: "Up, up, for honor's sake; twelve legions wait you,/ And long to call you chief" (I. i. 337–38). But he also tells him that the soldiers refuse to march unless Antony leaves Cleopatra:

They said they would not fight for Cleopatra.  
Why should they fight indeed, to make her conquer,  
And make you more a slave? to gain you kingdoms,  
Which, for a kiss, as your next midnight feast,  
You'll sell to her? Then she new – names her jewels,  
And calls this diamond such or such a tax;  
Each pendant in her ear shall be a province.

(I. i. 359–65).

But Antony loves Cleopatra very much, as he proclaims: ". . . she deserves/ More worlds than I can lose" (I. i. 368–69). Thus Antony is caught between the sense of honor as a Roman soldier and his love for Cleopatra. This is the first of a series of conflicts which the play tries to present.

The reluctance of the soldiers to fight for Cleopatra reminds us of something similar in *Ch'ang-sheng tien*: in Ma-wei Station 馬嵬驛 the soldiers refuse to fight against the rebellious troops unless the Emperor agrees to kill Lady Yang. Here, indeed, also lies potential conflict of values. For the Emperor, there is a choice to be made between love and kingdom, and for Lady Yang, between life and death. But we see no conflict in the play. The Emperor tamely succumbs to the request of the soldiers, and Lady Yang is willing to die for the Emperor. Both of them seem to know what to do in this situation and do it accordingly. No conflict is arranged and developed at all.

This lack of conflict might have something to do with what Ch'ien Chung-shu 錢鍾書 has called the "peculiar arrangement of virtues in a hierarchy"

manifested in traditional Chinese society in general, and in Chinese drama in particular:

Every moral value is assigned its proper place on the scale, and all substances and claims are arranged according to a strict "order of merit." Hence the conflict between two incompatible substances loses much of its sharpness, because as one of them is of higher moral value than the other, the one of lower value fights all along a losing battle.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, the "order of merit" enables people in traditional Chinese society to know how to behave themselves in any given situation. Conflicts between two values can always be readily resolved by choosing the higher one according to the hierarchical "order of merit." As a result, conflicts are always perfunctory and receive no serious treatment in Chinese drama.

Conflict is really rare in *Ch'ang-sheng tien*. The only significant conflict is between An Lu-shan and Lady Yang's brother Yang Kuo-chung 楊國忠 in their struggle for power. It is rendered, however, in only one scene (Scene 13) and serves as only one element of the external reality which eventually destroys the idealized world of love. What the playwright concerns most is lyricism: the intense emotion of the protagonists aroused in a given situation. Thus what we see in the incident of Ma-wei Station is that Lady Yang bemoans her evil fate, and the Emperor, after Lady Yang died, engrosses himself in sorrowful remorse.

But conflict is the center of interest in *All for Love*. Let us return to the play to see how Antony behaves himself in a situation similar to that of the Ma-wei Station. At first, like the Emperor in *Ch'ang-sheng tien*, he succumbs to the request of his soldiers—but only temporarily. The sense of honor cannot claim victory over love in so easy a manner. In Act II, Cleopatra appears to fight back. She recalls the love she has shared with Antony, and reveals that her first lover is not Caesar but Antony: "He first possessed my person; you, my love;/ Caesar loved me; but I love Antony" (II. i. 354-5). She has even refused a kingdom offered by Octavius because of her loyalty to Antony. She is willing to die rather than to part with Antony. She makes her appeal directly to Antony's feeling of love:

And yet you leave me!

You leave me, Antony; and yet I love you,  
Indeed I do; I have refused a kingdom;  
That is a trifle;  
For I could part with life, with anything,  
But only you. Oh, let me die but with you !  
Is that a hard request?

(II. i. 400 – 06)

Thus love, represented here by Cleopatra, clashes sharply with honor, represented by Ventidius. They must have grappled with each other in Antony's mind too. Ventidius wins in the first Act, but Cleopatra turns the tables in the next.

Antony and Cleopatra cannot live in love and peace even after love triumphs over honor. There are always other values coming from external reality to challenge the world of love. Dolabella comes from Octavius' camp to pay Antony a visit, from which further conflicts are brought about. According to Antony, Dolabella and he are close friends, "We were one mass; we could not give or take,/ But from the same; for he was I, I he" (III. i. 96 – 7). As a close friend, Dolabella chides Antony for loving Cleopatra, a woman who will make Antony lose his empire. What is more, he brings Antony's lawful wife Octavia and their children from Rome to Egypt so as to remind him of his familial duty. Thus friendship and familial duty join together, exercising their effects on the mind of Antony. Antony is now a torn man: on the one hand, he loves Cleopatra; on the other, he is deeply moved by the pleas of his friend and his family. Knowing not what to do, he asks Dolabella for help:

O Dolabella, which way shall I turn?  
I find a secret yielding in my soul;  
But Cleopatra, who would die with me,  
Must she be left? Pity pleads for Octavia;  
But does it not plead more for Cleopatra?

(III. i. 334 – 38)

Dolabella of course advises him to leave Cleopatra and receive his lawful wife and children. At last, friendship and familial duty win Antony over to their side.

To intensify the conflict between love and familial duty, Dryden arranges a personal encounter between Cleopatra and Octavia. As we all know, Dryden derives the material of this play largely from Shakespeare's tragedy, *Antony and Cleopatra*.<sup>18</sup> But in Shakespeare's work, Cleopatra and Octavia have never met face to face. In his "Preface to *All for Love*," Dryden makes clear why he adds such an encounter:

I judged it both natural and probable, that Octavia, proud of her new-gained conquest, would search out Cleopatra to triumph over her; and that Cleopatra, thus attacked, was not of a spirit to shun the encounter. And 'tis not unlikely that two exasperated rivals should use such satire as I have put into their mouths; for after all, though the one were a Roman, and the other a queen, they were both women.<sup>19</sup>

The "satire" Dryden has put into the mouths of these "two exasperated rivals" is nothing but taunts against each other: Octavia accuses Cleopatra of usurping her right of a lawful wife by practicing "lascivious art" to her husband, while Cleopatra derides Octavia's inability to hold Antony with her "household clog," and proclaims that she genuinely loves Antony. The sharp conflict between a wife and a mistress is manifest in the dialogue below:

- Octav. Thou lov'st him not so well.  
Cleo. I love him better, and deserve him more.  
Octav. You do not, cannot: You have been his ruin.  
Who made him cheap at Rome, but Cleopatra?  
Who made him scorned abroad, but Cleopatra?  
At Actium, who betrayed him? Cleopatra.  
Who made his children orphans, and poor me  
A wretched widow? only Cleopatra.  
Cleo. Yet she, who loves him best, is Cleopatra.  
If you have suffered, I have suffered more.  
You bear the specious title of a wife,  
To gild your cause, and draw the pitying world  
To favor it: the world condemns poor me.  
For I have lost my honor, lost my fame,  
And stained the glory of my royal house,  
And all to bear the branded name of mistress.

(III. i. 448 – 63)

The conflict of love with friendship and familial duty has not yet finished. Cleopatra is down but not out. At the suggestion of her eunuch Alexas, she tries to arouse Antony's jealousy by pretending to love Dolabella. "Jealousy's a proof of love" (IV. i. 74), as she believes, so Antony shows his true love for Cleopatra

through his jealousy. Feeling that Dolabella has taken his place in Cleopatra's mind, Antony gives himself up to anguish. After all, he is most concerned with Cleopatra's feeling towards him. He drives Dolabella and Octavia away, and chooses to live with and die for Cleopatra.

From the above, we can see that honor, friendship, and familial duty all make their appeals to Antony, and threaten to destroy his love for Cleopatra. Antony seems to recognize the validity of these values and accepts them temporarily when he is pressed by their just claims. But love proves too strong a passion in his mind. The power of the play lies precisely in the direct conflict between love and these values. Each act of the play is designed to illustrate Antony's temporary acceptance and eventual rejection of these values for the sake of love. In contrast, the Emperor in *Ch'ang-sheng tien* has never been bothered by any pressures on his love for Lady Yang, except at the moment when he is forced to have her killed. Honor, friendship, familial duty, or any other human values existing in the external reality, matter little in the world of love shared by the Emperor and Lady Yang, but they matter a great deal in that shared by Antony and Cleopatra.

Images are plenty in *All for Love*, but unlike those in *Ch'ang-shang tien*, they do not have the function to reflect the inner landscape of the lovers, or to represent symbolically the world of love. Cleopatra gives Antony a bracelet as an emblem of her love; but the bracelet receives no further treatment. Antony compares twice Cleopatra to a jewel (V. i. 274, 367), but it means only that he cherishes her, and nothing else. Jewels are also used by Cleopatra as gifts for Antony's commanders. Music is mentioned, but only once -- "Give me some music," says Antony, "I'll soothe my melancholy" (I. i. 228, 229) -- and then it is heard no more. These images, along with many others in *All for Love*, do not have the symbolic dimensions and unifying functions which we find in the gold hairpin, the exquisite box, and the music of "Rainbow and Feathery Garment" in *Ch'ang-sheng tien*. Kenneth Muir has observed:

His [ Dryden's ] images do not spring naturally from his theme, as the leaves from a tree; they are improvised; and though they may illuminate separate ideas, feelings, and even characters and scenes, they serve to destroy rather than to create the unity of the whole.<sup>20</sup>

Images in a lyrical work have to "create the unity of the whole" -- i.e., to present the self-portrait of the lyrical poet or the protagonist. *All for Love* has no such images. This does not follow that *All for Love* is not a good play; it only shows that

the play is different from *Ch'ang-sheng tien* in nature.

In *All for Love*, which concerns itself mainly with conflicts of values, it is not images but reason that serves to unify the whole story. Reason, a catchword in the Neoclassical Age when Dryden lived, permeates the play. Because conflicts of values appear in the form of verbal confrontations, each character who represents a certain value has to support his point of view with reasons. Ventidius, Dollabella, Octavia, and Cleopatra come to Antony with pleas for honor, friendship, familial duty, and love respectively, and all for good reasons. Antony vacillates from one side to another because he recognizes the reasonableness of each plea.

Not only do characters justify their claims in terms of reason, but they also use the word "reason" frequently. Ventidius asks Antony for "a better reason" to mobilize the soldiers (I. i. 353). Cleopatra, who represents love, proclaims, "I soared, at first, quite out of reason's view" (II. i. 21). And her eunuch Alexas regards himself as a man of "reason undisturbed" (II. i. 87). Dolabella brings Antony's family to Egypt as "reason" for urging Antony to leave Cleopatra. But the word sounds most resonant and impressive when Antony utters it at the end of the play:

Since I have heard of Cleopatra's death,  
My reason bears no rule upon my tongue,  
But lets my thoughts break all at random out.

(V. i. 314-16)

Overwhelmed by the news of Cleopatra's death, Antony seems to lose his reason. In its stead, love -- the "noble madness" as Cleopatra once called it (II. i. 17) -- now rules his head. Finally he sees how important Cleopatra's love has been to him: "I was but great for her; my power, my empire, / Were but my merchandise to buy her love" (V. i. 270-71). In this kind of "noble madness," he kills himself as an assertion of the supremacy of love. Viewed in this light, Antony's tragedy -- and grandeur -- lies precisely in his final denial of reason in favor of love.

*Ch'ang-sheng tien* and *All for Love* are two great plays which merit careful scrutiny. The analysis above is certainly not exhaustive: it only points out a fundamental difference between them. Being products of different cultures, they will naturally bear the mark of different cultural influences. The Chinese lyrical tradition gives *Ch'ang-sheng tien* a strong flavor of lyricism, while the Western classical tradition of drama enables Dryden to concentrate on the manipulation of conflicts in *All for Love*. Since this fundamental difference may exist generally between Chinese

drama and Western drama, the analysis above may be of some value to scholars interested in the comparative study of these two dramatic traditions.

### Notes

1. For official biographies of the Emperor and Lady Yang, see *Chiu T'ang-shu* 舊唐書(*po-na ed*), 8.1a–9.16b, and 9.13b.
2. Hung Sheng wrote two prefaces for this play; the quotation appears in the second preface entitled "Li-yen" 例言. See Hung Sheng, *Ch'ang-sheng tien* (Taipei: Hsi-nan shu-chü, 1975), p. 1. This edition will be used throughout our discussion, and further page references to it will appear in the text.
3. For a thorough discussion of this dictum, see Chu Tzu-ch'ing 朱自清, "Shih-yen-chih pien" 詩言志辨 (Taipei: Kai-ming shu-chü, 1964), pp. 1–29.
4. *The Nature of Narrative* (Oxford University press, 1966), p.4.
5. "Lyric Vision in Chinese Narrative tradition: A Reading of *Hung-lou Meng* and *Ju-lin Wai-shih*," in *Chinese Narrative*, ed. Andrew H. Plaks (Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 229. Kao is here talking about the formal significance of "regulated verse" (lü-shih 律詩) in Chinese lyrical tradition. Parallelism refers to the middle two couplets in a "regulated verse."
6. The "celestial land on white clouds" refers to the Taoist paradise where immortals live. The believers in the religious Taoism hold that only those who have eliminated all human passions and desires through self-cultivation may become immortals. For a vivid demonstration of this conception, see the famous T'ang short story "Tu Tzu-ch'un chuan" 杜子春傳, in *T'ai-p'ing kuang-chi* 太平廣記(*Szu-k'u-ch'üan-shu* 四庫全書ed.), 16. 1a–6a.
7. For the official biography of An Lu-shan, see *Chiu T'ang-shu*, 200A. 1a–4a.
8. For a discussion of the sources of *Ch'ang-sheng tien*, see Tseng Yung-i 曾永義, *Ch'ang-sheng tien yen-chiu* 研究(Taipei: Shang-wu yin-chu-kuan, 1969), pp.42–52.
9. See Tsang Mao-hsün 臧懋循, *Yüan-ch'ü hsüan* (Shanghai: Chung-hua shü-chu, 1936), pp. 348–64.
10. Literally the last line should be translated as "Who knows the trace of rain and cloud?" "Rain and cloud," in Chinese literary tradition, is a metaphor for love-making. The metaphor originates from Sung Yü 宋玉(c. 290–c.223 B.C.) who describes the love-making between King Huai of Ch'u 楚懷王 and a goddess euphemistically in terms of rain and cloud. See his "Kao-t'ang fu" 高唐賦, in *Wen-hsüan* 文選 (Taipei: Cheng-chung shu-chü, 1971), 19. 1b–6b.
11. The time-honored legend about the Herd Boy and the Weaving Maiden has it that the Herd Boy lives on one side of the Milky Way and the Weaving Maiden on the other side. The lovers see each other once a year through the bridge formed by magpies over the Milky Way on the 7th of the 7th lunar month. They have become, in effect, paragons of true and everlasting love. For details, see Hung Shu-ling 洪淑苓, *Niu-lang chih-nü yen-chiu* 牛郎織女研究(Taipei: Hsüeh-sheng shu-chü, 1988).



Lyricism versus Dramatic Conflict: *Ch'ang-sheng Tien* and *All for Love*

12. "Dryden and Shakespeare," in *Twentieth Century Interpretation of All for Love*, ed. Bruce King (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1968), p.16.
13. Chris Baldick, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford University Press, 1990), p.61. See also *The Harper Handbook to Literature*, eds. Northrop Frye et al (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p.154 under the entry "Dramatic Structure."
14. See Leon Golden's translation of Aristotle's *Poetics*, in *Classical and Medieval Literary Criticism: Translations & Interpretation*, eds. Alex preminger et al (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1974), pp. 118-19.
15. For detail, see Oscar G. Brockett, *History of the Theatre*, 3rd edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon. Inc., 1977), pp. 134-36.
16. See *John Dryden: Selected Criticism*, ed. James Kinsley and George Parfitt (Oxford University Press, 1970), p. 150.
17. Ch'ien Chung-shu, "Tragedy in Old Chinese Drama," first published in *T'ien Hsia Monthly* I (1935), 37-46, and reprinted in *Renditions* IX (Spring 1978), 85-91; the quotation is from the latter, p.90.
18. "In my style I have professed to imitate the divine Shakespeare," says Dryden in "Preface to *All for Love*," p.157.
19. "Preface to *All for Love*," p.151.
20. "The Imagery of *All for Love*," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of All for Love*, p.42.