Monks, Bandits, Lovers, and Immortals

Eleven Early Chinese Plays

Edited and Translated, with an Introduction, by

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Dr. R. K. M. Hoon's Dramatis personae in order of appearance

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Moving Heaven and Shaking Earth: The Injustice to Dou E

(opening male lead extra, dressed as madam cai)\(^3\)

Flowers have a day they will bloom again
Humans have no years of second youth!

I am Madam Cai, a citizen of Chu Prefecture. Of the three of us who were in my family, my husband, unfortunately, passed away long ago, and I have just a single boy who is now eight years old. We two, mother and son, pass our days and months together in a rather well-to-do household. In Shanyang Commandery here lives a certain Scholar Dou, who asked last year to borrow five taels of silver. Now the interest and principal should amount to ten taels.\(^4\) I've sought this silver several times, but he can't afford to pay me back. Now, Scholar Dou has a young daughter that I've had in mind to make my daughter-in-law and so balance out the debt of those ten taels. He said that today was an auspicious day to bring her to give to me. So, today I won't go out collecting debts, but just stay at home and wait. Scholar Dou should arrive any time now.

(dou tianzhang enters, leading the child, dou e [and recites])

In my belly I've tasted to the full every affair of the world,
In my fate I've not been the equal of anyone under heaven!

I'm Dou Shi, also known as Tianzhang. My ancestors were residents of Jingtao district of the capital, Chang'an. From my youth I practiced the studies of a Confucian and read much of the Codes and Documents.\(^5\) But before I could

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3. This is a rare instance that clearly demonstrates that male players portrayed female roles, although the text itself stems from the Flavours Bureau and may represent only court practices. The Green Boxer Collection (Qingfou ji), which describes the talents of actresses, makes it quite clear that women played male roles. But, because Xia Tingchi (c. 1500–1600), author of the Green Boxer Collection, covered only actresses in his collection—he intended on writing a later work on famous actors—we cannot prove from his text that males played female roles on the urban stage, although we can surmise that that was the case.

4. This was the so-called "kid interest" (zhangao li), a form of taxation that doubled the amount of interest and principal every year.

5. The Book of Odes (Shijing) and the Book of Documents (Shuojing) were two of the traditional Five Classics of the Confucian curriculum; here they are metaphorical for the classical canons.
advance to seize either merit or fame my wife passed away, leaving me with this girl, whose childhood name is Duanyun. She's seven now, but was three when she lost her mother. I'm as poor as if I were scoured clean! Now, I'm living here in Shanyang Commandery in Chu Prefecture. There is a certain Madam Cai who lives alone with her son. She's a rich woman and since I had no traveling funds, I borrowed five taels of silver from her, a loan that now adds up to ten taels with interest and principal in like amount. She's asked me for it several times, but I have no way of repaying her. I never guessed that she would keep sending someone to persuade me to give her my girl for her daughter-in-law. Now the Spring Register takes and the Examination Field opens and I have to make my way to the capital to sit for the examinations. But, alas, I lack any travel money. I've no way out now but to give Duanyun to Madam Cai as a daughter-in-law. But, what proper daughter-in-law? It's clearly the same as selling her to pay off the ten taels that I borrowed before and to borrow a bit more beyond that—just enough to see me to the examinations will suffice. Oh, Duanyun, there's no other way out for your father! Well, as we've been talking, we've reached Madam Cai's house. Is Madam home?

(Madam Cai): Please come in and sit down, my scholar. I've been waiting a long time!

(They act out greeting each other, Dou): I've brought my daughter straightaway to you today, Madam. Dare I say she'll become your daughter-in-law? Simply use her as you will. I have to go to sit for the examinations now and can only hope that you'll look after her. (Madam Cai): You owe me ten taels of silver, but I'm returning the loan documents to you now and in addition loaning you two more taels of silver for travel expenses. Please don't think it too insignificant an amount! (Dou): Thank you, Madam. First I owed you so much silver and now you give me more for travel—this kind of kindness must be repaid another day. Madam, out of consideration for me—if my daughter ever acts the silly old person, please take her in hand. (Madam Cai): Just don't worry about it; I'll treat her as my own. (Dou kneels and speaks): Madam, if Duanyun ever needs a beating, out of consideration for me, please just scold her. If she should be scolded, then just reprimand her lightly. Daughter, it won't be the same as when you were with me. As your father, I was capable of going easy on you. If you ever get naught here, you're in for a beating or a scolding. After I leave now, will we ever see each other again? (He acts out grieving.)

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6. The Spring Register (zhusheng) was the list of successful candidates from the spring examinations for the degree of the Advanced Scholar (jusheng) that was held every three years.

7. This is a reference to the story of the Lord of Mengezhang and Feng Yuan. Feng was exiled as a remainer in the Lord of Mengezhang's household, but was poor and unnoticed. One day he was given fish to eat. Later he repeated his actions and sang, "Oh, long sweet hills, let us return; we serve food without fish." He was given fish to eat. Later he repeated his actions and sang, "Oh, long sweet hills, let us return; we go out but without a charter." He was given a chance. Finally, he sang, "Oh, long sweet hills, let us return; there is no way to maintain my family!" The Lord of Mengezhang finally employed him and Feng's wise actions on behalf of his lord provided him with a lifetime of security. Here, of course, the lament is not only that Dou Tianzhang is both unrecognized for the worthy man that he is, but also that he must desert his daughter, since he is also poor and without a way to keep his family intact.

8. This is the end of the first scene; in other editions, this has been fleshed out to include a short song suite and thereby function as the standard wedge that often occurs in Yuan drama.

9. "Bute I herbal" (juseu) is the generic name given to pharmacopoeia in China.
changed her name to Dou E. Who could have guessed that my son would die so soon after marriage? That was already three years ago, and my child Dou E has been a chaste widow since. I told her that I was going into the city to try and get my money from Peerless Physician. I've already reached his gate. Is Peerless Physician here? (Peerless Physician) Madam, I don't have any money in the house. Come with me to my country house so I can get some. (Madam Cai) I'll go with you. (They act out walking, Peerless Physician) We're out of the city! There's no one to the east, no one to the west! If I don't do it now, I'll never do it! I've brought a rope along. Oh, Madam, someone's calling you! (Madam Cai) Where?

(He acts out strangling Madam Cai. Old Man and second comic act out racing on. Peerless Physician hastily runs off. Old Man acts out saving Madam Cai. Second comic speaks) Father, it's a rich woman; she was almost strangled to death! (Old Man) Madam, where are you from? What's your name? Why would someone want to strangle you? (Madam Cai) I am named Cai, and am from this city, where my daughter-in-law and I live. There's this Peerless Physician who owes me twenty taels of silver. He tricked me into coming outside the city where he tried to strangle me to death. I... if it weren't for you and brother here... how could my life have been saved? (Second comic) Old one, did you hear her? She said that she has a daughter-in-law at home. If you want the woman, then I want her daughter-in-law. Tell her! (Old Man) Madam, you have no husband, I've no wife. What do you think about being my old lady? (Madam Cai) What kind of talk is this? I'll give you a substantial sum of money as thanks! (Second comic) If you're not willing, I'll strangle you myself! (Madam Cai) Brother, let me think it over a bit! (Second comic) Think! If you go along with my old man, then I'll want your daughter-in-law. (Madam Cai says in aside) If I don't go along with you, then you'll strangle me! (Speaks) Why don't the two of you, father and son, come home with me? (Second comic) Let's go!

(All exit.)

(female lead costume at Dou E enters) I am Dou Dianyun, a person from Chu Prefecture. At three I lost my mother; at seven I was separated from my father. My father gave me to Madam Cai as a daughter-in-law and she changed my name to Dou E. At seventeen I was married to my husband, but unfortunately he passed away three years ago. Now, I'm twenty. There's a certain Peerless Physician in this town who owes us twenty taels of principal and interest. We've asked for it many times, but he's never given it back. Now, my mother-in-law has gone personally to collect it. Oh, Dou E, when will come the time that my fate shines through?

The Injustice to Dou E

([EMBOLIOMO] Dou E jiangchan)

A belly stuffed with idle sorrow,
Many years of suffering endured,
Steadily in their presence:
There is no end, no cessation—
Morning, evening, it always remains.

(Hangxiang lanyi)
In yellowing dusk and the whiteness of day,
Forsaking to eat, neglecting sleep—both frustrating.
What came last night in dreams
Lies today in the heart.
"Earth endures, heaven goes on and on,"20 that's hard enough to get through,
But old grievances and new vexations: when will they ever end?
These damned eyes suffer,
Sorrowing brows furrow,
Heartfelt thoughts knot in profusion:
Threads of my heart go on, and on, and on, and on,
O when will this ever end?

(You buku)
Did my eight signs not say I should endure a whole life of worry?
Who else is there like me,
Who can find no end, no termination?
Isn't it said, after all;'A human heart will find it hard to flow forever like water'?21
From the age of three, after my mother passed on,
And long after seven, when I separated from my father,
I married a man to share my life.
But, he too plucked out the shorter straw,
Leaving both mother and wife to guard their empty rooms.
Truly, who will ask after us, worry about us?


21. The "eight signs" are the eight heavenly stems and earthly branches of times associated with the year, month, day, and hour of her birth that are used for divination,
"Tianzhi b"

Isn't it because in some former life I burned incense, but not to the end.\(^\text{12}\)
So all the affairs of my future
Are wiped out with one brush stroke?\(^\text{13}\)
I encourage all to hurry and cultivate their future lives in this one—
I will wait in service upon Madam
And keep filial charity in my mourning—
My words will be fulfilled!

Madam went to collect debts. I wonder why she isn't back yet?

(PATHER ZHANG, MADAM CAI DONKEY ZHANG ENTER TOGETHER, MADAM CAI SPEAKS) You, father and son, wait here by the door a second. I'll go in first.
(DONKEY ZHANG) Mother, you go in first and say that your son-in-law is waiting at the door! (MADAM CAI ACTS OUT SPEAKING, DON E Speaks) Mother, you're back. Do you want to eat? (MADAM CAI ACTS OUT CRYING, Speaks) Oh, child, how can I tell you?

(Yiheuri) (DON E SINGS)
I see her tears overflow, spilling ceaselessly drop by drop,
Emotions held in check, but depressed and anxious from constant worry.
Here, I busily greet her, hurry to ask what's wrong.
There, she wants to explain it all.

(MADAM CAI) How can I tell you?
Just look at her:
One-half hesitation, the other half shame!
Madam, why are you so vexed and weeping this way?

(MADAM CAI) I went to ask the Peerless Physician for my money and he lured me outside the city wall where he strangled me. Fortunately, a certain Mister Zhang and his son, Donkey Zhang, saved my life. So, I summoned old Zhang to be my husband—and that's why I'm so troubled. (DON E) You're off the mark, Madam! Think again! We don't lack money in our house to use; and you're old—why are you seeking a husband? (MADAM CAI) Child, I had no other choice! (DON E) Mother, listen to me!

\(^{12}\) The incomplete burning of incense refers to a common belief that one's hardships in this life are the result of not worshipping the Buddha with all one's reverence in a former life, karma.

\(^{13}\) The "brush stroke" is that of the judicial instruments in the afterworld.
I'm afraid they're going to pass the gate. (Donkey Zhang!) We've been summoned to pass the gate today.

Hats, hats, are bright and shiny,
Today we're to become bridegrooms;
Hats, hats, are handsome and neat,
Today we're to become the guests of honor.

What fine husbands! What fine husbands! Not bad! Not bad!

(OU E) You jerk, stand back!

(Weisheng) (Sings)
I think that women
Should never believe what issues from the mouths of men!
Look at what—heaven goes on and on, earth endures—
What you have taken in a boorish old bumpkin
Who drags in some stubborn ass.
Old favor and love has been wiped away with a single stroke.
You should ponder what you have done—
My father-in-law ran the prefectures and knocked around the provinces,
And worked so hard to wind up with a rock-solid fortune that lacks nothing.
Oh, father-in-law was who secured it for us,
And now Donkey Zhang wants to enjoy it!
This is a case of "One person plants the earth but someone else reaps the harvest!"

(Exit.)

(Father Zhang and Madam Cai speak together) Old one, let's go have some wine.

(Exit.)

(Donkey Zhang) Dou E isn't willing, so is it all washed up? For better or worse, I'll make her my wife. I'll go and have some wine.

(Exit.)

(Peersless Physician enters) I am Peersless Physician. When I lived Madam Cai outside the city to strangle her, I bumped into two guys who saved her. I'll open up my simples shop today and see who comes in. (Donkey Zhang enters)
But never discuss how to run a proper family;  
They only pick up all idle gossip,  
Chat about their husbands or traps for catching phoenixes.  
Just show off their fund of irrational, vague lies.

(Liangzhusu)  
Could any of them mind a stove or clean the utensils like Madam Zhuo?  
Could any of them raise a tray level with their eyebrows like Meng Guan?  
These days there is a kind of vile woman  
Whose talk is hard to figure,  
Whose actions are hard to understand,  
Old favor they turn away from to forget,  
New love they favor and take a liking to.  
On top of that, their husbands' graves the veins of earth are still fresh,  
As they hang new clothes on their racks.  
Where are those who would travel the border regions to bring down the Great Wall with their weeping?  
Where are those who would happily throw themselves into the Great River where they wash silk?

18. "To catch phoehinaxes’ is to make an innocent fall for a trick and be trapped in a situation that brings harm to him or her.
19. Zhuo Weiju was the wife of Sima Xiangru. They were extremely poor after they married, and she helped him run a wine shop in Zhengding. She has become one of the models of the perfect wife in Yuan drama see Memo 1994.
20. Meng Guan was "fat, ugly, and dark-skinned" when she was married to Liang Hsung at thirty. She dressed up in fine clothing for Liang, but he ignored her for seven days. He acknowledged her only after she had changed into normal workday clothing, when he remarked, "This is Liang Hsung’s wife." It is unknown if the Liang family really had a wife named Meng Guan.  
21. This is Meng Guan's wife. They lived in seclusion in the mountains in the state of Wu. Liang hired him as a thief and his wife, Meng Guan, would prepare him his dinner every night when he returned from work. She would present him his food by raising the serving tray 'till it met her eyebrows'; that is, showing him respect by not looking directly at him. Presenting the tray becomes a common phrase to indicate mutual respect and love between spouses.
22. According to folk legend a certain Pan Qi Liu was sent to work on the Great Wall during the reign of the First Emperor of the Qin. His wife, Meng Jiubu, went to seek him, but he was dead. She wept so bitterly that the Great Wall cumbled to reveal his bones.
23. Wu Zhuo was being pursued by troops of the state of Chu. He met a woman washing silk on the Yangzi. She gave him something to eat, and then he asked her that she not inform on him. To show her sincere resolve not to betray him, she threw herself into the river and drowned.

The Injustice to Dou E

Where are those who would climb up the green mountain to be turned into immortals?  
Lamentable!  
Shameful!  
Women now do not have what it takes to be human!  
Most only couple in lust, few have any resolved!  
Those women who have come before shame them,  
And there's no way they can say, "There are no footsteps for me to follow in!"

(Dou E)  
The mutton tripe soup is finished, and I should take it in. (Donkey Zhang) Let me take it in. (He acts out taking it, speaks) It lacks salt and vinegar. Go get some. (Dou E makes a false exit. Donkey Zhang acts out putting the herbs in. Dou E enters, speaks) Here's the salt and vinegar. (Donkey Zhang) Poor some in! (Dou E sings)  
You say  
That it lacks salt, is missing vinegar, and has no taste at all,  
And that I must add some seasoning, put in some pepper before it's smacking good.  
I just want my mother to be healed swiftly.  
Drinking a cup of rapeseed  
Is better than sweet dew pouring over the body?  
You three can still rejoice over your happy union!

(First Zhang) Child, is the soup ready? (Donkey Zhang) Yes, take it to her. (First Zhang takes the soup, speaks) Madam, eat a little soup. (Madam calls) I've troubled you. You eat a mouthful first, and then I'll eat. (First Zhang) You eat. (Madam calls) You have some first. (First Zhang acts out eating, Dou E sings)  
(He xinzang)  
One says, "Old master, you eat first."  
One says, "Oh, Madam, you first."  
I have a hard time listening to such talk—  
No matter how hard I try, I can't keep myself from getting angry!

24. A faithful wife climbed a hill every day to look for her husband's return. She was finally transformed into a stone, a "hanging-for-husband stone."
25. It was believed that sweet dew raised from flowers in a prosperous reign, and that it congealed into a sweet substance. If a person consumed it, then he or she would have immortal life.
Those new marriage relations are all her happiness,  
And she never thinks about the principled way of husband and wife  
from days before  
When they were together always.  
This woman’s heart is like willow flax tossed by the wind;  
Shall never be willing to become a “Husband-hanging Stone.”  
Old favor can never come up to this new happy match!  
All she wants is to be a wife for a hundred years.  
Would she be willing to send winter clothes a thousand miles away?26

(pather zhang) I ate this soup, and now I feel dizzy. (madam cai) Old one . . . how come you’ve gotten sick after eating this soup? (madam cai calls out, speaking) Old one, stay alert! Try to hang on! (She acts out wailing) (dou x sings)

(Dou x says)  
You’re spending your vexation and worry on nothing.  
You don’t understand:  
A human life or death  
Is just the wheel of transmigration!  
Afflicted by this kind of illness,  
Assailed by those ills of the seasons,  
Or running into windy chills and summer sweats—  
Some die because of starvation, glutony, work and labor—  
Everyone knows [the source] of his own symptoms27  
Human fate is linked to heaven, linked to earth;  
Can another person substitute for us?  
The years allotted to one have nothing to do with the life you are living!  
You were together for a few mornings, a few days  
As a single family sharing a single life,  
But there were no sheep or wine, bolts and rolls of cloth!  
There were no “flowered red” money packets or gifts of wealth28  
“Clenching fists, we make a life to pass our days,  
Opening our hands, it’s as if we let it all go!”29

26. A reference again to Meng Jiangnu, who had sent her husband winter clothing before she learned that he was dead.
27. “The source of their symptoms” means what their lot is.
28. Traditional wedding gifts.
29. We take this to be a common saying, which in this case means “You had some time together; but now he is dead and gone.”

The Injustice to Dou E

Don’t you fear outsiders laughing at your shame?  
It’s not that I, Dou E, am recalcitrant or obstinate,  
But I can’t persuade you—one wise in the world’s ways  
Who weeps and wails, wails and weeps,  
Who vexes heaven and troubles earth!  
Hmph! I would have been better had you been loathe to forsake  
the one from your youth—your first husband!  

(pather zhang acts out dying. madam cai speaks) Oh, what shall we do? He’s dead!

(dou x sings)

I really couldn’t care at all,  
Don’t have a single tear of concern!  
Don’t let your mind be as if you’re drunk,  
Your intentions be as if you’re doltish:  
Your sentiments soul flutters away,  
Your hands wave, feet fly.  
You weep and wail so!

(madam cai) All right! You’ve poisoned my old man to death! You still want to end it clean! (madam cai) Child, I think you’d better go along with him! (dou x) Mother, how can you say such a thing? (sings)

(geet)  
This guy manipulates my old mother to marry him off to me!  
You murdered your father yourself, who are you trying to scare?  

(madam cai) Just marry him! (dou x [sings])

For me, A single horse finds it hard to carry two saddles30  
Remember when your son was alive and we were husband and wife!  
Now you would make me marry another?  
I can’t stomach that!

(donkey zhang) Well, Dou E, you’ve killed my old man—do you want to settle it officially, or do you want to settle it privately? (dou x) What do you mean by settle it officially? Settle it privately? (donkey zhang) If you want to settle it officially, then I’ll drag you off to the yamen offices. You’ll confess to the charge of murdering my old man. If you want to settle it privately, then you can become my old lady and I’ll let you off! (dou x) There’s no crime in my

30. A proper woman does not take a second husband.
heart, I'm happy to go to court with you! (DONKEY ZHANG drags DOU E off as they exit.)

(cLOWN, costumed as official, leads runners and entourage)

Most diligent and earnest when acting the official,
I demand money from whoever comes to file a suit.
If a superior should come to audit the files,
On pretext of illness I stay at home behind locked doors!

I am the Prefect of Chu Prefecture. Today I'm ascending the hall to hold court. Zhang Qian, call the ranklet! (ZHANG QIAN acts out calling, DONKEY ZHANG enters dragging DOU E, speaks) I want to file a charge! I want to file a charge! (ZHANG QIAN speaks) Come over here!

(They act out greeting. DOU E and DONKEY ZHANG together act out kneeling. CLOWN also performs the act of kneeling, speaks) Please rise. (ZHANG QIAN) Your honored, he is the one filing a charge, why are you kneeling to him? (PREFECT) Don't you know that it is precisely those who come to file charges that are my mother and father? That they provide me food and clothing? (ZHANG QIAN acts out responding, PREFECT speaks) Which of you is the plaintiff? Which the defendant? Speak in accordance with the truth! (DONKEY ZHANG) I am the plaintiff, DONKEY ZHANG. I am charging this woman with mixing up a poisonous concoction to kill my father. I pray that you will be my advocate. (PREFECT) Which one put in the poison? (DOU E) It has nothing to do with me! (DONKEY ZHANG) And it certainly wasn't me! (PREFECT) Well, it wasn't either of you; it must have been me. (DOU E sings)

(MAYANG guan)
O great one, you are as bright as a mirror, as pure as water,
Reflect on the truth or falsehood of my inward nature.
This potage was originally full-spiced with the five flavors,
I know nothing else about it!
He made an excuse to taste it,
And when his father ate it he got dizzy and passed out.
I am making no absurd evasions in this court of law—
Your honor! What would you have me groundlessly say?

31. The court runners and lower officials would open court by forming two ranks and calling out in a loud and solemn voice that court was in session.

(pREFECT) "People are base creatures; if you don't beat them, they won't confess!" Zhang Qian, beat her for me! (ZHANG QIAN acts out beating DOU E. He does it three times, he acts out spewing water on her, DOU E sings)

(MA YUANG)
I can't bear this unfeeling club,
Oh, mother,
This is something you did all by yourself, who else is there to blame?
I universally urge all women, who marry once or a second time,
To consider my case a noted example.

(GAN HUANG/er)
All Who cries and shouts so loud and fast?
I can't stop wailing and weeping,
My sentiment soul just returns to me
And I nervously
Only to fall dizzy and pass out,
Struggling to get through a thousand kinds of beating and whippings—
Look at the fresh blood dripping and dropping—
One stroke falls,
One rivulet of blood,
One layer of skin!

(CAI-sha)
I've been until my earthly soul scatters, my sentient soul flees away,
My fate covers the stones of the Yellow Springs.
Who will ever know the injustice in my bowls?
I never poisoned my father-in-law, the crime for which I now face responsibility.
Your honor! I beg you to illuminate the truth of it with your bright mirror!

(pREFECT) Are you going to confess? (DOU E) I really didn't poison him! (PREFECT) If it wasn't you, then beat that old lady for me! (DOU E) Stop, stop, stop! Don't beat my mother, I'll confess! It was I who poisoned father-in-law. (PREFECT) Bring the cangue and cangue her up! Put her in death now! Take her tomorrow to the civic execution ground to carry out the sentence. (MADAM CAT) Oh, Dou E, this pains me to death. It was all my doing that sends you to your death! (DOU E sings)

32. The water was to review her.

35. Yellow Springs was the Chinese Hades.
Guan Hanguing

(Wishing)
I'll turn into an injustice-carrying, grievance-bearing ghost without a head
But I'll never allow that sex-loving, wild, and lascivious thief with a brazen face to go free!
I think that blue heaven Cannot be deceived.
I think that the heart of men Cannot be deceived.
An affair of injustice Is known to heaven and earth.
I struggled to the end,
Fought to the finish,
But now it's turned out like this,
So what's left to say?
I was wronged and so confessed to poisoning my father-in-law to death.
Oh, mother, I dragged you in
To be beaten.
But can I allow you to be beaten?
If I don't die, how can I save you?
(Exits.)

(Donkey Zhang) Tomorrow they'll kill Dou E, so I'll hang around the yamen awhile.
(Exits.)

(Madam Cai) Tomorrow they'll kill Dou E in the marketplace. Oh, child. This pains me to death!
(Exits.)

(Prefect speaks) Tomorrow I'll behead Dou E, but there's nothing left to do today. Bring me my horse, I'm going home to have some wine.
(Exits.)

(Act 3)

(Extra, costumed as Overseer of Executions, enters) I am the Overseer of Executions, and today we carry out the sentences of the condemned. Seal off the mouth of the alley and don't let anyone pass. (Crows: acts out striking three drum rolls and beating the gong three times. Executioner acts out grinding his blade. Executioner acts out waving the flag. Holder of the head acts out sounding the drum and gong. Dou E enters wearing a cagoule. Executioner speaks) Move a little faster, seal off the mouth of the alley! (Dou E sings)

([Dihengqing mode] Duanzheng hou) I've groundlessly run a foul of the emperor's law,
And all in a muddle suffer its punishment.
I utter a cry of "Injustice!
To shake earth and startle heaven.
Heaven and earth are where I should bury my enmity!
O Heaven, you provide no ease for men!
(Guan xinshu) There are a sun and a moon to appear day and night,
There are mountains and rivers to provide a mirror for past and present.
Heaven! Contrary to belief you do not discriminate the pure from the turbid—
And you clearly mix up Robber Zhi and Yan Yuan!14
Those of virtue suffer poverty and want, and then are cut off short in life.
Those who create evil enjoy riches and wealth, and then are given extended years.
Heaven! You do nothing but fear the strong and cheat the weak.
I never suspected that heaven and earth would just push their boats along with the current!15
Earth! You don't discriminate good from evil, and so how can you be earth?
Heaven! Today I bear wrongs, carry injustice, and grievously lay plaint to a heaven
That makes me speak alone, utter words alone in vain!

14. Robber Zhi was a notorious bandit often mentioned in classical texts. Yan Yuan was the brightest and most morally advanced of Confucian disciples. See Analects 6:7; "What a worthy man was Yan Hui! Living in a narrow alley, inhaling on a basket of grain and a handful of water—other people could not have borne such hardship; yet it never spoiled Hui's joy. What a worthy man was Hui!" (trans. Slingerland 2005, p. 66).
15. That is, heaven and earth would simply go whichever way the current took them with no regard for righteousness.
(executioners) Dou E: Move along! You're going to be late. (Dou E sings)

(Tong xian'ai)
Me, wrenched by this cangue,
Twisting left, slanting right,
Me, pushed by people, falling forward, tilting back.
Dou E has something to tell you, brother....

(executioners) What do you want to say?
If we go along the street ahead, I'll be stricken with enmity,
But take the street behind and I'll die without grievance.
I'm not just being willful!

(executioners) You're facing execution now and are on the way to the execution ground. What relatives do you have? (Dou E sings)

(Dundae ling)
You push me on to the execution ground, and ask what relatives....

(executioners) What do you mean by the front street? What do you mean by the back street? (Dou E)

If we go by the front street... I beg of you, a little consideration,
If I go by the back street....
I won't hold any grudges against you, brother!
If I go by the front street... I fear mother will see me.

(executioners) You can't even be concerned with your own life now, why are you worried about her? (Dou E)
If she sees me wearing the cangue and locked in chains and on the way to the execution ground...

It will make her uselessly die of anger, oh!
Make her die of anger, oh!
I plead with you, brother: as I approach this danger, please grant a person a little grace.

(madam cai enters, speaks) Heaven! Aren't you my daughter-in-law? My child! Oh, this pains me to death! (executioners speaks) Old lady, stand back! (Dou E) I have my mother-in-law here so that I can give her some advice.

(executioners) You, old lady, come forward! Your daughter-in-law has something to say to you. (madam cai speaks) O child, this is killing me. (Dou E) Mother, it's all because you weren't feeling well and wanted some mutton tripe soup to eat. I fixed it and he said that it lacked salt and vinegar. Deceived by Donkey Zhang, I went to fetch some vinegar and salt, and then he put the poison in the soup. He made me take it to you to drink. No one expected you...
Guan Hanqing

(executioner:) Shut up! What a thing to say! (executioner waves the flag, DOU & SING)

(Weibrong) Today, a dumb woman takes her medicine and still suffers death."38 "The plow ox suffers the whip for its master."

(executioner:) It's getting dark! It's snowing! (executioner sweeps away the snow, acts out praying to heaven, executioner, waving the flag, acts out covering up, DOU 81)

When the frost fell they began to know to speak of Zou Yan.39 When the snow flies then is displayed the injustice to Dou E!

(The blade is run along the stone. executioner cuts off her head. DONKEY ZHANG displays corpse. executioner speaks:) A great job! Let's go have some wine.

(All respond in unison and exit. They exit bearing the corpse.)

[Act 4]

(DOU TIANZHANG enters:) I am Dou Tianzhang. Thirteen years have already passed since I parted from my daughter, Duanyun. After I arrived at the capital, I passed the Advanced Scholar examination on the first try and was awarded the post of Participant in Executive Affairs. I am incorruptible, capable, pure, and upright, of the finest and most unyielding integrity. Thanks to the grace of our Sage Ruler, who looked on me with favor, I have been given the rank of Surveillance Commissioner of the Two Hai River Circuits. I go from place to place to inspect prisons and audit records, and I have been empowered with the Golden Plaque and the Sword of Authority so that I can investigate crooked officials and corrupt clerks. I behead first and memorialize the crime later.40 I am both happy and sad—happiness is holding a Censorial post, in charge of punishments and sentences. Sadness is the fact of having given over my seven-year-old Duanyun to Madam Cai as a daughter-in-law. After I assumed my 38. Is this an allusion to a story well-known in Yuan times? Or Dou E's description of her silent acceptance of death?
39. One of the distant sources of this drama, this is the story of Zou Yan (a. 398–448 AD) who was a loyal minister to his king. He was slandered and thrown into prison. He raised his head to weep in heaven and in the middle of the summer it began to snow. This later becomes a common allusion to injustices severe enough to invite heaven's displeasure.
40. He "beheads first" as opposed to the common practice of having all regional death sentences reviewed by the central government before execution.

post, I sent someone to Shanyang Commandery in Chu Prefecture to ask the wheelsaboats of Madam Cai's household. The neighbors there reported that Madam Cai moved that year to someplace else. Up to this point there has been no news. I have wept for my child, Duanyun, until my eyes are hazy and dimmed, and worried and sorrowed over her until my hair has grown white. I've come to Yang Prefecture in Huaiyin, trying to find out why it hasn't rained for three years in Chu Prefecture. I'll rest awhile in this hall behind the Yang Prefectural Office. Zhang Qian, tell all officers and clerks in the offices that there is no leave today, but that we will meet early tomorrow.

(ZHANG QIAN:) All departmental secretaries and attached officials of the court! Today all are excused from attending, but we will meet early tomorrow (TIANZHANG:) Zhang Qian, tell the departmental secretaries that they should bring out any case files that need to be audited, and I'll review them by lamplight. (ZHANG QIAN acts out bringing case files, TIANZHANG:) Zhang Qian, set up a lamp for me. You've worn yourself out. Why not go get some rest! If I call you, then come; if I don't, then don't bother. (ZHANG QIAN lights the lamp.)

(EXIT.)

(TIANZHANG:) I'll look over several of these cases first. A certain criminal, Dou E, poisoned her father-in-law to death. This is strange—the very first case I look at involves someone with the same surname as me. The crime of poisoning one's father-in-law lies among the sins of the "Ten Abominable Crimes."41 Among those with whose surname are some who don't fear the law! Well, this case is already closed so there's no need to look at it. I'll place this file at the bottom of the pile and look at another. But wait! All of a sudden there's a surge of dizziness. I'm getting old and I'm worn out from being on horseback. I'll steady myself on this desk and rest a bit. (He acts out falling asleep. GHOST DOU E enters, SING)

([SUHANGDAO MODE:) Xinhui ling]

Everyday I cry, stuck fast and weeping on the "Home-gazing Terrace."42
Boiling over with anger, waiting for my enemy.  
Now steadily slow, roaming in darkening fog.  
Then keenly afoot, coming in a whirlwind.  
Now locked in fog and buried in clouds:  
I can pop up fast as a ghost!

(title "ghosts off into the air, speaks") Spirits of the door, those guardians of the gate, will not let me pass... I am the daughter of the Surveillance Commissioner, Dou Tianshang. Because my father does not know of my unjust death, I've come to cast it all in his dreams. (ghosts act out seeing her father and weeping, Tianshang also acts out weeping, speaks) My child, Duanyun, where are you? (Dou E makes a false exit, Tianshang acts out awakening, speaks) How strange. I had just closed my eyes when I saw my daughter Duanyun in a dream—just as if she were in front of me... I'll look again at these cases. (ghosts does the action of going over and manipulating the lamp, Tianshang) How strange! Just as I was getting ready to look at these cases, the lamp suddenly flared and then darkened. Zhang Qian is already asleep, so I'll have to trim it myself. (He goes to the eastern side of the stage and does the action of trimming the lamp, ghosts act out reversing the filaments, Tianshang) Well, I've trimmed the lamp so that it's brighter. Let's look a second time at the cases. There is a certain criminal, Dou E, who poisoned her father-in-law to death. How strange! This is the first case that I looked at and then placed at the bottom of the file! How can it be on top again? Well it's a closed case, so I'll put it back on the bottom and look at another file. (ghosts act out manipulating the lamp, Tianshang) Really weird! How come the lamp is flickering? I'll trim it again myself. (He goes to the eastern side of the stage and does the action of trimming the lamp, ghosts act out reversing the filaments, Tianshang) Well, I've trimmed the lamp so that it's brighter. Let's look at another case file. There is a certain criminal, Dou E, who poisoned her father-in-law to death. Hmph! This is strange! I clearly put this case file at the bottom of the stack. How come, when I just went to trim the lamp, this thing winds up on top again? There must be a ghost in this hall behind the Yang Prefectural Office. Even if there is no ghost there is certainly an injustice in this affair! I'll put it at the bottom of the pile again and look at another case. (ghosts act out manipulating the lamp, Tianshang) This really is weird! Why is this lamp failing again? Now it's flaring and darkening. I'll bet there's a ghost manipulating it. I'll trim it once more. (Goes to the eastern side and trims the lamp. Does the action of hurrying back, ghosts act out reversing the filaments. They act out running into each other, Tianshang acts out drawing his sword, speaks) Ahah! Ahah! Ahah! I said there was a ghost. You—ghost, I am the Imperial Surveillance Commissioner, Imperially dispatched from the central court, bearing the Golden

The Injustice to Dou E

Tally and traveling by government horses! You come forward and I'll split you in two with this single blade! Zhang Qian, my son, lucky you are to be asleep. Everyone up, there is a ghost! There is a ghost! Ah, this frightens me to death. (ghost Dou E sings)

(Yin'er lou)
I see him guess time and time again with suspicious mind,  
While I, with weeping sounds, fill him with fright and wonder.  
Ah,  
O Dou Tianshang, my father  
Receive Dou E's deep, deep obeisances.  

(Tianshang) You ghost! You say that Dou Tianshang is your father and that I should receive the bow of you, my daughter Dou E. You are surely mistaken. My daughter was named Duanyun, and became Madam Cai's daughter-in-law at seven. The names are different—how can you be my daughter? (ghost Dou E) Father, when you gave me to Madam Cai, she changed my name to Dou E. (Tianshang) If you're my daughter Duanyun, I'll ask only one thing: are you the one who was punished for poisoning her father-in-law to death? (ghost Dou E) Yes, it was I, your daughter! (Tianshang) Silence! You wretched witch! I tried so much for you that my eyes were blurry and sorrowed so much for you that my hair turned white. But you committed one of the Ten Repugnant Crimes and have been punished with execution. I now hold a high position in the Censorate and Secretariat, in charge of punishments and sentences, inspecting prisons and auditing files throughout the world, investigating crooked officials and corrupt clerks. You are my own daughter but were first to violate one of the Ten Repugnancies! If I couldn't control you, how can I control anyone else? I married you to another family, hoping that you would follow the Three Obediences and Four Virtues—the Three Obediences are to comply with the father when at home, to comply with the husband when married, to comply with the son after the death of your husband, these are the Three Obediences. The Four Virtues: to serve one's parents-in-law, to respect your husband, to harmonize your sisters-in-law, and to bring accord to the neighborhood—these are the Four Virtues. Now, not only do you not have any of the Three Obediences or the Four Virtues, but also you blindly committed one of the Ten Repugnant Crimes. Isn't it odd said, "You must have forethought in affairs lest you be troubled by remorse later?" In our Dou family there have been three generations with no male who has broken the law and five generations with no women who have remarried. Once having been given in marriage to follow your husband, then you should have practiced integrity, a sense of shame, benevolence, and righteousness. But you didn't even think about the Nine Loyalties and Three
Charities. Instead you violated one of the crimes of the Ten Repugnancies. You have destroyed our ancestral name with shame and have dragged my pure name into it. Tell me in detail the true facts now. Don’t lie or make things up. Don’t vary from the truth even the slightest as you relate it. If you do, then I’ll dispatch a document about you to the Shrine of the City God, and assure that you will never assume human form again. I’ll sentence you to the dark mountain to be a hungry ghost forever. (GHOST DOU E) Stop your scolding, father! Cease your anger. Set aside for the moment your awe-provoking tiger-and wolf-like bearing. Listen to your daughter slowly tell it all to you once. At three I lost my mother, and at seven I was separated from my father. You gave me in marriage to Madam Cai as a daughter-in-law and she changed my name to Dou E. When I reached seventeen and was matched in matrimony to my husband, it was my misfortune to lose him, my husband from childhood, that very year. Madam and I have remained chaste widows. There was a certain Peerless Physician in Chu Prefecture who owed Madam twenty taels of white silver—principal and interest. My mother-in-law went to collect that silver, but she was lured outside the city walls where he tried to strangle her. Would he expect that he would run into a certain Donkey Zhang and his father, who saved my mother-in-law? That old Zhang asked, “Madam, who’s at home?” My mother-in-law said, “There’s no one home, just a widowed daughter-in-law, who is called Dou E.” Old Zhang said, “Since you don’t have anyone at home, then I’ll make myself your husband. How about that?” My mother-in-law strongly resisted, and the two of them, father and son, said, “If you don’t comply, then we’ll straighten you!” My mother-in-law was frightened and couldn’t help but go along. In truth, she was frightened into marriage and so she brought the two of them home to live with us. That Donkey Zhang tried to seduce your daughter many times, but I was determined not to assent. One day, my mother-in-law was sick and wanted some mutton tripe soup to eat. After I had fixed it, Donkey Zhang said, “Bring it here and let me taste it.” He said, “Well, it’s all right, but it lacks some salt and vinegar.” He tricked me into going and getting some salt and vinegar and while I was gone he put in poison. He then told me to take it out, but my mother-in-law let old Zhang taste it first. As soon as he tasted it, his seven apertures ran with blood, and Old Zhang was poisoned to death. Then, Donkey Zhang said, “Dou E, you’ve killed my old man. Do you want to settle it publicly or do you want to settle it privately?” I said, “What do you mean settle it publicly or settle it privately?” He said, “If you want to settle it publicly, then I’ll lay plaint at the yamen, and you’ll repay my father’s life with your own.

39 These appear not to be specifically enumerated virtues of a good wife, but are rather generalized numbers indicating the value of salient charity.
(Desheng sings)

Each and every day I hold fast to the Home-gazing Terrace,
My whole soul pained with enmity.
Father! Your sword of empowerment is keen enough to split a hair,
Today you are personally sent by the Sage’s command
To investigate the facts until they are clear.
That bastard disordered ethical human relations and should rightly
be destroyed.
And that creature should be slowly sliced ten thousand times!
Father! You take that confession I made and change it back again!

(Tianzhang weeps, speaks) Ah! My child wrongfully killed! Oh, this pains me to death. I won’t ask you anything else but this: What is the cause of this three years of drought in Chu Prefecture? (Ghost Dou E speaks) I am the cause! (Tianzhang) So, it was because of you all this time. Because of this daughter of mine, I am reminded of an ancient story: In the Han dynasty there was a filial woman who kept firm to her widowhood. Her mother-in-law hanged herself, but her daughter brought accusations that it was the filial woman who had killed her mother-in-law. The Grand Protector of Donghai slew the filial woman. Just because this one woman harbored an injustice, it did not rain for three years. Later, when Sir Yu reviewed the cases the filial woman clasped her case file to her breast and wept in front of the courtroom. Sir Yu rectified the documents and slew an ox to offer sacrifice at the filial woman’s grave. Only then did the heavens allow a great rain to descend. In olden days the Grand Protector of Donghai wrongfully slew a filial woman of worthy actions. And just because of this one woman, it caused a dearth of rain for three years! This is exactly like the current situation! When tomorrow comes, I will be your advocate!

A white haired father is afflicted with pain and grief!
Wrongly slain and gone a young girl in her greenning spring!
Child, it is getting light. You go back. When tomorrow comes, I will set your case plainly right! (Ghost Dou E sings)

(Weizheng)
You take those crooked officials and corrupt clerks and destroy them all!
Imperially bestowed: a golden plaque and the sword of empowerment,
Hairstepping sharp
Can dispel the anxieties of one person,
And root out the calamity of the myriad citizens.

(He acts turning her body, speaks) I’ve forgotten! Father! My mother-in-law is old and there is no one to care for her. (Tianzhang) What a filial and compliant daughter! (Ghost Dou E)

I enjoin you, my father, to move the grave of my mother and care with compassion for my mother-in-law.
Take pity that she is old.
Only after you have taken care of her, open up the case files
And, on my behalf, rectify the criminal charges confessed to by one wrongly slain.

(Exeunt)

(Tianzhang) The day is dawning. Bring those officials and clerks from the Yang Prefectural Office, those who interrogated Dou E, bring them all here to me! (Zhang Quan) I understand. (He forges the officials, clerks, Madam Cai, and Donkey Zhang on to greet him; they bow. Tianzhang) Madam Cai, do you recognize me? (Madam Cai) I do not recognize you, your honor. (Tianzhang) Well, I am Dou Tianzhang. All of you, listen to my decision:

Donkey Zhang conspired to murder his own father and deceive a person of good standing—in the marketplace he shall be clearly executed.

Clerks and officials of Yang Prefecture mismanaged and went contrary to criminal law—they shall be caned a hundred times and never be employed again.

Poor Physician: mixed the poisonous compound—he shall suffer the blade at the Yunyang Marketplace.

Madam Cai will be cared for in my own household.
And Dou E’s sentence shall be changed, purity restored to her name.

To follow through with this, take Donkey Zhang and decapitate him in the public streets: take these public officials and strip them of office, and then hold a great Jiao ceremony of the Waters and Land so that my daughter may transcend this world, cross over, and be reborn in heaven.
Judge Bao is a literary figure that populates all of Chinese performing literature: drama, chuanqi, Ming and Qing vernacular fiction, modern plays, movies, and television series. He is roughly based on a real historical figure, known as Bao Zheng (999–1062), also known as Dragon Design Bao (Bao Longtu), from his position as Academician in the Dragon Design Pavilion (Longtu ge zhi xuan), and as Rescriptor-in-Waiting in the Tiantang Pavilion Bao (Bao Dai zhi). From the biography of Bao Zheng in the official Song History we can glimpse what would later be called "his iron face of impartiality" (ti jin wu):

He was summoned to be provisional Prefect of Kaifeng Superior Prefecture... Bao held court with strength and resolution. Imperial relatives and eunuch officials all pulled their hands into their sleeves because of him, and those who heard of him were all awestruck by him. People compared a smile from Judge Bao to the Yellow River running clear. Even young children and women knew his name, and called him "Repositor-in-Waiting Bao." People of the capital spoke of him thusly, "Where bribes won't reach there is King Yama, Old Bao." According to long custom, those who sued in court did not need to go to the yamen to do so. Bao opened up the main gate, and made sure everyone had to come before him to explain everything about the case. None of his underlings dared cheat. Some eunuchs and powerful families had constructed gardens, the trees of which began to encroach on the Benefit the People River, and for this reason the river became blocked, and it happened that the capital was flooded. So Bao tore them all down.

This short account, written about the same time that courtroom dramas were in their heyday, provides the kernel of the characterization that was to make Judge Bao such a powerful presence in literature. First is his fearless pursuit of

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1. Due to do things they should not.
2. The muddy Yellow River never runs clean.
3. This is the name of the canal that brought goods to the capital.