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CREATIVE PROCESS IN CANTONESE OPERA III: THE ROLE OF PADDING SYLLABLES

Bell Yung

The text of *bong wong*, or aria types, in Cantonese opera has to observe prescribed verse structures. In an actual performance, however, the singer very often sings a greater number of syllables in a line than are prescribed. The extra syllables are called *ch'en tzu*, or padding syllables,¹ and may be either written into the script by the scriptwriter, or added extemporaneously on stage by the singer. This paper² studies the role of padding syllables in the creative process of Cantonese opera. More specifically, it focuses on the following questions:

1. How much flexibility is there in the textual and musical structure of the various aria types in Cantonese opera and in the relation of text to music? In other words, how much flexibility does the singer have during a performance?
2. How does a singer treat padding syllables and how does the treatment reflect his creative process?

In Cantonese opera the music of all operas is drawn from a pre-existent repertory of tunes. There is no "composer" in the Western sense responsible for a particular opera. A scriptwriter selects from the repertory the tunes that he considers appropriate to the dramatic situation and writes the text for them. No musical notation is used; the script simply specifies the tune by name, followed by the poem that is to be sung to this tune. The poem must adhere to the verse structure prescribed by the tune: the number of syllables per line (pattern of line-lengths) and the phrase structure within a line, the pattern of rhyming among the last syllables of each line, and the pattern of linguistic tones of the syllables. The specific verse structures depend on the kind of tune. The category of tunes known as *bong wong*, or aria types, imposes relatively rigid rules on the pattern of line-lengths in the text, but relatively relaxed rules on the pattern of linguistic tones (Yung 1983a). On the other hand, the category known as *siu kuk*, translated as fixed tunes, imposes relatively rigid rules on the pattern of linguistic tones, but relatively relaxed rules on the pattern of line-lengths (Yung 1983b). This paper will consider padding syllables in aria types only.

For aria types, the rules governing the pattern of line-lengths are as follows:

1. The basic unit of the poem is a couplet, with an upper line L1 and a lower line L2.
2. The same number of syllables should be used in each line of a couplet and for all couplets in a section. In the aria types of Cantonese opera, as well as in most of the other Chinese narrative and dramatic genres, the number is either seven or ten.
3. The seven- or ten-syllable lines observe certain internal groupings according to the syntactic structure. The most common ones are 2+2+3 for a seven-syllable line, and 3+3+2+2 (or 3+3+4) for a ten-syllable line. The internal groupings are labeled P1, P2, etc., where P stands for phrase.

An examination of either the written opera script or transcriptions of actual performances shows that, more likely than not, the text of the songs does not conform exactly to the prescribed verse structure as far as the number of syllables per line is concerned. For example, in the aria type called *bong ji maan baan*, the pattern of line-lengths should be ten syllables per line. However, most versions sung today are irregular in that the lines very often differ in length, and have more than ten syllables, sometimes twenty or more.

There are two reasons for assuming a basic pattern of line-lengths for *bong ji maan baan* when there are so many exceptions to the rule. First, all the scriptwriters and performers interviewed are conscious of the existence of the ten-syllable pattern and consider the longer lines a modification of the basic pattern. Second, the texts of *bong ji maan baan* published in the 1930s and 1940s show very few exceptions to the basic patterns of ten-syllable lines. While this does not necessarily reflect what happened during actual performances (since the performers might very likely extemporize on stage as they often do today), it does show that at least a concept of such a basic pattern existed. The extra syllables are the so-called padding syllables, which are found in many genres of Chinese opera and poetry where patterns

of line-lengths are prescribed. In Cantonese opera, the padding syllables may either be written into the script by the scriptwriter, or added extemporaneously by singers on stage during a performance.

One of the major interests of scholars in Chinese poetry has been to distinguish padding syllables (*ch'en tzu*) from the so-called *cheng tzu*, or base syllables, in a line of poetry. As Dale Johnson (1980:29) writes in his study of Yüan Ch'ü (opera that flourished in the Yuan dynasty, 1271 A.D. to 1368 A.D.):

The isolation of base syllables is important since they embody the metric structure of the verse; the key to the anatomy of the verse is its internal structure.

It is also generally accepted that base syllables are "vital" syllables which provide the essence of the meaning of the text. Padding syllables, on the other hand, serve to clarify or elaborate; their presence or absence does not alter the meaning substantially.

Most studies of padding syllables have been on the Yüan Ch'ü, approached from the literary point of view: the identification of padding syllables is based primarily upon the verse structure and the meaning of the text (Johnson 1970). Although some scholars recognize that the study of padding syllables must take into account the music to which the text is sung,³ their studies are based only on written texts and speculation; the actual performance tradition has long been lost. One of the few exceptions is the study of the Shantung Drumsongs (a genre of popular narrative from Shantung Province) by Yu Hui-yung in which he discusses padding syllables based upon considerations of actual performances (Yu 1957). The present paper takes a similar approach in the study of padding syllables in Cantonese opera: the approach that is based upon the consideration of how the text is handled musically in actual performances.

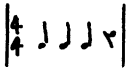
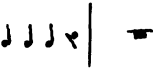
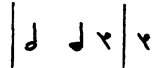
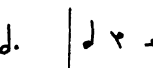
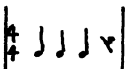
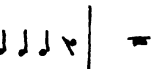

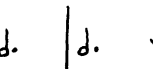
In a previous paper (Yung 1981), I showed that the identity of an aria type depends upon several structural elements of the music, among which is the so-called syllable placement of the tune, that is, a prescribed metrical and rhythmic pattern of the tune according to which the syllables of a line of text are to be sung. For example, for the aria type *bong ji maan baan*, the prescribed verse structure of the text is given in Example 1. The two ten-syllable lines are to be sung according to the syllable placement given in Example 2. Obviously, the syllable placement follows fairly closely the phrase grouping of the text. This close relationship between syllable placement of the tune and the verse structure of the text, which is found in all aria types, forms the basis for the present investigation of padding syllables.

Example 1. Verse structure of *bong ji maan baan*.

	P1	P2	P3	P4
L1	--+	--x	--+	--xR
L2	--+	--x	--x	--+R

L1 = upper line
 L2 = lower line
 P1 = phrase 1 (etc.)
 "--" = one syllable
 , = caesure within a line
 R = rhymed syllable
 + = even tone
 x = oblique tone

Example 2. Syllable placement for *bong ji maan baan*.

	P1	P2	P3	P4
L1				
L2				

The syllable placement of a tune may be considered to be a sequence of temporal slots (Pian 1972) into which the syllables of the text are to be fitted, one for each slot. In the case of *bong ji maan baan*, there are ten temporal slots, into which fit ten syllables. If the text contains the exact number of syllables per line prescribed by the verse structure, the singer's task is relatively easy: the established relationship between syllable placement and verse structure makes the performance of the song a relatively simple procedure, at least so far as the fitting of the syllables into the slots is concerned. When there are more than ten syllables, whether written into the text by the scriptwriter or extemporaneously added by the singer on stage, it is usually the singer's task to find a way to fit them into the ten slots.

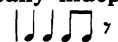
This study proposes criteria for distinguishing padding syllables from base syllables according to the way in which the syllables are fitted into the slots. For the same set of text, different singers, or the same singer on different occasions, may perform it differently, in which case the separation of padding syllables from base syllables might be different. Thus the concept of padding syllables proposed here depends upon individual performances rather than the internal structure and meaning of the printed text. In this approach, the main purpose is not only to determine which are the padding

syllables and which are the base syllables; it is also to investigate the degree of flexibility of textual and melodic structure of the songs and the degree of freedom the singer has. Thus it is an investigation of the creative process of the singer on stage.

Because the syllable placement of an aria type constitutes one of the important structural features that determine, or preserve, the identity of the aria type, it may be assumed to play a special role in the singer's conception, and the listener's perception, of the aria type. An important assumption is that syllables sung within the prescribed temporal slots as defined by a syllable placement may be assumed to be base syllables, and may be assumed to receive special emphasis from the singer. Those sung outside of the slots are less emphasized. How a singer adjusts the syllables to fit the slots expresses, therefore, how he evaluates the syllables involved. Thus, the singer's treatment of the padding syllables reveals his understanding of the text.

This study uses different versions of the aria type *bong ji maan baan* as a paradigm that can be applied to all aria types. Musical examples transcribed from actual performances are used as data. Six kinds of padding syllables are identified.

The first kind is illustrated in Example 3, a transcription of the upper line of *bong ji maan baan* performed by Leing Chi-baak in the opera *Daai Hung Pou* [The Red Robe] (from Fung Heng Record Company, Hong Kong, FHLP-139).⁴ The text consists of fourteen syllables, excluding the meaningless syllables "e" added by the singer (to be discussed in a later section). The actual syllable placement of these fourteen syllables is compared with the prescribed syllable placement in Example 4. The comparison shows two discrepancies: the rhythmic variation in measure 2 and the additional melodic phrase in measure 4. The rhythmic variation in measure 2 is commonly found in *bong ji maan baan* and is not the result of accommodating padding syllables. The additional melodic phrase in measure 4 is, however, added to the original tune in order to accommodate the four extra syllables. This kind of padding syllables, therefore, may be called *added phrase*: they are defined as syllables which are sung to an additional, independent, melodic phrase. The resultant melodic line has an increase in the total number of metrical units.

In *bong ji maan baan*, the added phrase always forms a four-syllable, syntactically independent, unit. The syllable placement of this phrase is always . The additional melody sung to the added phrase always occurs between P2 and P3, after the measure of rests. The added phrase may occur in both L1 and L2 of the couplet.

Added phrases that cause the lengthening of the melodic line are quite common in the narrative genres in Northern China, such as the Shantung Drumsong. They have generally been called *two chü*, or "stacked phrases."

Example 3. One upper line of *bong ji maan baan* with an added phrase.

Example 3 shows two lines of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first line is marked with a '1' and the second with a '3'. The lyrics are in Chinese and English.

Line 1: 嚴 世 藩 統 三 軍
yim e sai e faan tung saam gwun e
Yim Sai-faan leader of all troops

Line 2: 一 品 大 員 豈 容 冒 犯
yat e ban e daai yun hai e yung e mou e faan
first-ranked high official how dare you aggravate him

Example 4. Comparison of (A) syllable placement of Example 3 with (B) prescribed syllable placement, showing added phrase.

Example 4 compares two syllable placements. (A) shows the actual placement, and (B) shows the prescribed placement. The 'added phrase' is indicated by a bracket over the second measure of (A).

A: 4/4 time signature. Measures: 1 (4 notes), 2 (4 notes), 3 (4 notes, bracketed as 'added phrase'), 4 (4 notes), 5 (4 notes), 6 (4 notes).

B: 4/4 time signature. Measures: 1 (4 notes), 2 (4 notes), 3 (4 notes), 4 (4 notes), 5 (4 notes), 6 (4 notes).

In syntactic structure, however, the stacked phrases in those Northern genres are usually an imitation of a portion of the original text (most often a unit of three to five syllables), and there are usually several similarly structured stacked phrases occurring in succession. The resultant melodic line is consequently expanded by two or more rhythmically similar melodic phrases (Yu 1957). In *bong ji maan baan* of Cantonese opera, the added phrase is most often a single, four-syllable phrase, though at times it may be accompanied by other kinds of padding syllables.

In popular narratives of Northern China, such as the Shantung Drum-songs, the stacked phrases are easily distinguished from the rest of the text because each of these phrases usually repeats the syntactic structure of the preceding one, and there are usually two or more such phrases in succession. The singer cannot treat these extra syllables as any other kind of padding syllables but stacked phrases. It is therefore easy to recognize them as such without hearing them performed. In *bong ji maan baan*, however, an added phrase may possibly be treated by a singer as other kinds of padding syllables, or as base syllables. Such matters are, in most cases, left to the discretion of the singer. That is why, in Cantonese opera, one cannot always parse the text of an aria type without actually hearing it performed.

Today the great majority of the versions of *bong ji maan baan* have an added phrase. As a result, the melody for each line of the couplet has seven measures instead of six measures. Instead of calling it a ten-syllable line, it might more appropriately be called a fourteen-syllable line. Nevertheless, the *bong ji maan baan* should probably still be considered as having ten syllables per line of text and with six measures for each line of music, because performers today still consider the longer versions to be variants of the shorter. Furthermore, there is still a significant, though small, number of versions performed today that retain the old pattern without the added phrase.

The second kind of padding syllables will be called phrase leader syllables. As an illustration, Example 5 is the transcription of a lower line of *bong ji maan baan* as sung by Yam Gim-fai in the opera *Daai Hung Pou* [The Red Robe] (from Feng Heng Record Company, Hong Kong, FHLP-139). The syllable placement of the twelve syllables in this line is compared to the prescribed syllable placement in Example 6. The syllables *keui keui*, sung to two sixteenth notes in the third measure, are classified as phrase leader syllables. They are set to an extra melodic fragment preceding the base melodic phrase. (Hence the extra melodic fragment may be called a phrase leader melody.) Since most base melodic phrases begin on a strong beat, the phrase leader melody in most cases naturally begins on a weak beat immediately preceding the strong beat. In effect it is an anacrusis to the base melodic phrase.

Example 5. One lower line of *bong ji maan baan* with phrase leader syllables.

Example 5 shows two lines of musical notation in 4/4 time. The first line contains three measures. The first measure has the syllables '海' (hoi), '剛' (gong), and '半' (fung). The second measure has '小' (siu), '御' (e), and '史' (yu). The third measure has '區區' (keui keui). The second line also contains three measures. The first measure has '五' (ng), '品' (e), and '班' (ban). The second measure has '官' (gun) and 'e'. The third measure has '橫' (haam). The English translations are: 'Hoi Gong-fung', 'minor royal envoy', 'a mere', 'fifth-level', 'official ranking', and 'haam'.

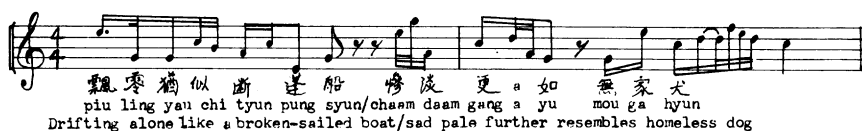
Example 6. Comparison of (A) syllable placement of Example 5 with (B) prescribed syllable placement, showing phrase leader syllables.

Example 6 compares two syllable placements, A and B, in 4/4 time. Both are shown as rhythmic patterns. An arrow points to the third measure of both, indicating the phrase leader syllables. Pattern A shows the syllables in Example 5, while Pattern B shows the prescribed syllable placement. The phrase leader syllables are indicated by a downward arrow pointing to the third measure of both patterns.

From the textual point of view, many of the phrase leader syllables are semantically less important than the base syllables and are grammatically dispensable. In the above example, the term *keui keui*, meaning “mere,” is a modifying expression used to emphasize the lowliness of the rank of the official post, and is less important than the syllables *ng ban*, meaning “fifth rank.”

Occasionally there are cases where certain syllables are semantically fairly important or grammatically not dispensable, but are nevertheless sung by the singer as phrase leader syllables. Example 7, which gives P1 and P2 of a line of *bong ji maan baan*, illustrates such a case. It is sung by Lung Gim-sang in the opera *Dai Nei Fa* [The Royal Beauty] (recorded from a live performance in Hong Kong on January 2, 1975). Each phrase has seven syllables (disregarding, for the moment, the meaningless syllable “a” in Phrase 2), which is four syllables more than the prescribed number; the two phrases also have parallel grammatical structures. The two syllables *piu ling* [drifting alone] in P1 and *chaam daam* [sad pale] in P2 are equally important in their respective phrases. However, the singer treats the latter as phrase leader syllables but not the former. His choice may have been made for a musical reason: to avoid the choppiness of two successive phrases both beginning on the strong, first beat of the measure. By giving the second phrase an anacrusis, the two lines form a better rhythmic continuity. This example shows that phrase leader syllables may result from musical rather than textual considerations. It also illustrates the extent of the freedom given the singer during an actual performance.

Example 7. Two phrases (half a line) of *bong ji maan baan*.




In order to illustrate further the singer's flexibility in handling the text, I shall compare two different performances of the same text by the same singer who handles the text differently and extemporaneously adds different phrase leader syllables for the two performances. Example 8 gives the text of P1 and P2 of a line of *bong ji maan baan* and two performances by the same singer on two occasions. It is sung by Yun Siu-fai in the opera *Hung Kiu Jang Jyu* [The Magic Pearl] (recorded from live performances in Hong Kong, Version A on June 8, 1975, Version B on June 14, 1975).

P1	殺	青	衫	自	愧	不	成	才
	ngo	ohing	saam	ji	a kwai	bat	sing	a choi,
	I,	humblly	dressed,	ashamed,		amount	to nothing	
Written text		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Version A	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Version B	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

[illegible]

ngo ching saam ji a kwai bat sing a choi

Version B



ngo ching spam ji kwai bat sing a choi

Version A



bou yi mei neng paan daan gwai a

Version B



taan yat geui bou yi mei nang paan daan gwai a

In Version A, the singer treats the two syllables *ching saam* of P1 as phrase leader syllables and adds extemporaneously the syllable *ngo* [I] in the beginning of the phrase; in P2, he sings the two syllables *bou yi* [plainly cloaked] as phrase leader syllables. In version B, no part of the original text is treated as phrase leader syllables, but he extemporaneously adds some phrase leader syllables of his own for each phrase (*ngo* [I] and *taan yat geui* [Alas] respectively for the two phrases).

The two renditions reflect the singer's different solutions to the conflict between textual and musical considerations. From the textual point of view,

when the syllables are sung as phrase leader syllables, they, being sung to weak beats as anacrusis, are given relatively less emphasis than if they were sung on a strong beat. From the musical point of view, singing the beginning syllables of a line of text as phrase leader syllables adds an anacrusis to the melodic line, which is a common form of melodic variation in aria types.

Example 8 also illustrates the singer's freedom to add his own phrase leader syllables (and other kinds of padding syllables). In most cases, the purpose of this addition seems to be to clarify the sometimes highly literary text by prefacing it with colloquial expressions. In Example 8, the addition of the syllable *ngo* [I] in the beginning of P1 is a case in point.

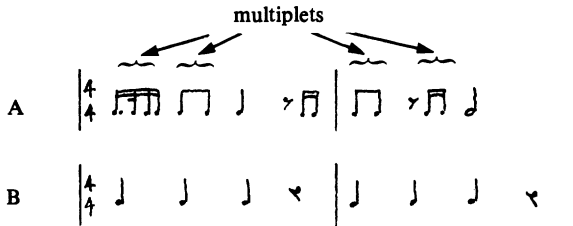
The extemporaneous addition of phrase leader syllables and other kinds of padding syllables depends also upon the dramatic situation and the role type. For example, singers of a comic role or of any other role during a lighter moment of the drama are more likely to improvise in this manner. The practice also depends upon the performing style of individual singers. In recent years this extemporizing has been frowned upon by some performers and audience members as being improper. This may be due to the view of some literary-minded older Chinese and Western-minded younger Chinese that adhering closely to a fixed text is important in a performance.

The phrase leader syllables are in many ways similar to what Dale Johnson calls verse leader *ch'en tzu* in Yüan Ch'ü, and to what Yu Hui-yung calls *chia mao*, literally meaning "adding a hat," in Shangtung Drum-songs. Both writers describe these padding syllables as always preceding the base syllables and as being grammatically superfluous or of lesser importance than the base syllables. In methodology, Johnson's padding syllables are determined only from the written text. Yu, in his discussion of the *chia mao*, has placed importance upon the result of an actual performance. In Cantonese opera, the phrase leader syllables defined above are recognized only when performed or added by a singer.

The third kind of padding syllables involves an internal modification of the syllable placement. When there is no padding syllable, each base syllable may be looked upon as occupying a single temporal slot along the melodic line. In most aria types, a base melodic phrase is usually formed by two or more of these slots plus the rests. Consider *bong ji maan baan* as an example (see Example 2): the first phrase of Line 1 consists of three slots. When there are padding syllables, the singer sometimes accommodates them in the base melodic phrase by squeezing several syllables into the slot originally intended for one syllable. In Example 7, four syllables, *piu ling yau chi*, are squeezed into the first slot (of a quarter note's duration) originally intended for one syllable. The next two syllables, *tyun pung*, occupy the space of the second slot, also intended for only one syllable. Each of the first and second

syllables in the original three-syllable phrase seems to have multiplied into clusters of four and two syllables respectively. The duration of each slot does not change, and the larger metrical structure is not disturbed; the syllables are simply sung to notes of shorter time values. When the padding syllables are treated in this way by the singer, the clustered syllables that occupy one durational slot shall be called “multiplets.” Thus the phrase *piu ling yau chi tyun pung syun* [drifting alone like a broken-sailed boat] from Example 7 may be viewed as a set of two multiplets and a single syllable: the first slot occupied by a four-syllable multiplet *piu ling yau chi* [drifting alone like a], the second slot by a two-syllable multiplet *tyun pung* [broken-sailed], and the third slot by a single syllable *syun* [boat]. Example 9 compares the prescribed syllable placement with that of the actual performance, with the multiplets noted.

Example 9. Comparison of (A) syllable placement of Example 7 with (B) prescribed syllable placement, showing multiplets.



Some of the multiplets can be better understood when one realizes that in the Chinese language, a two-syllable compound such as *tyun pung* is grammatically equivalent to, and therefore mutually exchangeable with, many monosyllabic words, or three- or even four-syllable compounds. Thus the phrase *tyun pung syun* [broken-sailed boat] could have been replaced, for example, by *baak syun* [white boat]. The multiplet *tyun pung* [broken-sailed] effectively serves the function of one syllable. The singer justifiably places it in one slot. For multiplets, the two or more syllables within a slot are all considered to be padding syllables, yet as a whole they serve the role of one single base syllable.

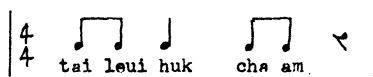
The singer may also treat his text in such a way that the syllables within a multiplet are not closely related to each other grammatically, as in example 10 taken from a performance by Lung Gim-sang in the opera *Dai Neu*

Fa [The Royal Beauty] (recorded from a live performance in Hong Kong on January 2, 1975). The phrase *tai leui huk cha am* [with tears he mourns in the tea hut] is sung as P1 of L2 of *bong ji maan baan*. In textual structure, *tai leui* [tears] forms a two-syllable compound, and *cha am* [tea hut] forms a two-syllable compound. The single syllable *huk* [mourns] stands by itself. Thus this five-syllable phrase is grouped grammatically as 2 + 1 + 2, which is the form expected to be fitted into the durational slots for three syllables. (P1 of L2 of *bong ji maan baan* should have three syllables; see Example 2.) However, the syllable placement taken from the actual performance shows that the actual multiplet structure is 2 + 2 + 1, contradicting the textual structure, which is 2 + 1 + 2. In this rendition, the second multiplet consists of two syllables which are grammatically not closely related. A rendition such as the one given in Example 11 very seldom occurs in a performance for the musical reason that the melodic phrase needs to end on a strong beat. This example illustrates that, in his treatment of padding syllables, the singer sometimes gives the rhythmic consideration of the melody a higher priority than the grammatical sense of the text. In other words, literary criteria will identify certain groupings of multiplets, but musical criteria may override them to produce a different grouping.

Example 10. Syllable placement of one phrase from the The Royal Beauty.



Example 11. A possible syllable placement of the same phrase from Example 10.



So far we have discussed three kinds of padding syllables: added syllables, phrase leader syllables, and multiplets. The singer's treatment of these padding syllables depends upon his consideration of the grammatical structure and the meaning of the text. The melodic structure of the aria type

is inevitably altered to different degrees by these padding syllables. The singer, therefore, must also take musical criteria into consideration. The next three kinds are less significant in the sense that they generally do not alter the melodic features of the aria type.

The fourth kind is called interlude fillers. Some aria types have relatively fixed instrumental interludes between the phrases of the vocal line. Occasionally, such an interlude is fitted with a text rather than being left as a purely instrumental line. (Using Western terminology, one may say that the instrumental interlude has been “troped” with a text.) The rest of the melody in the aria type is not affected. Interlude fillers are generally not used in *bong ji maan baan*, the aria type under consideration, but are used in some other aria types, for example, the *faan sin yi wong*. Example 12 gives an example for one line of *faan sin yi wong* without interlude fillers⁵ to be compared with Example 13 which gives one line of the same aria type with interlude fillers from a performance by Man Chin-seui and Chan Hou-kau in the opera *Neui Yi Heung* [The Beautiful Daughter] (from Fung Hang Records, Hong Kong, FHLP-449).⁶ The interlude fillers differ from the other padding syllables in that they are always specified as such in the script by the scriptwriter.

Example 12. One line of *faan sin yi wong* with instrumental interlude.

總幽齋 過長廊
ging yau jaal gwo cheung long
passing by the quiet study and the long corridor

結伴無人遊 心 自
git bun mou yan yau sam ji
no one keeps me company my roving spirit amuses

遣
hin
itself

Example 13. One line of *faan sin yi wong* with interlude filler (in brackets).

嘆 今 朝 (痴 心 不 許 配 桃 夭) 已 被 閻 王 相
 t'nan gam a jiu a (chi san bate heui fu tou yiu yi bei yim wong seung
 [He] Alas! on this day [She] My infatuation is killed, [He] I've been summoned by

召 (塵 緣 盡 了 雖 是)
 jiu a (chan yun seun liu seui si
 the God of Death my earthly life has ended. [She] Though our

情 緣 盡 了 可 奈 傷 心 愁 未 了 痛 楚 難 支
 ching yun jun liu ho noi nung sam sau mei liu tung cho naan ji
 love has been fated to die, yet the sorrow in my heart lives on. [He] Unbearable pain,

更 似 靈 魂 出 竅
 gang chi ling a wan cheut a hui a
 I feel my soul leaving my body.

The fifth kind is called tail syllables, which are grammatical particles added extemporaneously by the singer to the end of a line. They suggest or emphasize subtle innuendos in the meaning of the text (Cheung 1972:168). (In the Cantonese dialect, grammatical particles are very frequently added to the end of sentences in daily speech.) When tail syllables are used, they are never sung on a strong beat of the melody. The last syllable of P2 in Example 8a is an illustration of a tail syllable. Its function is to emphasize the exclamatory nature of the line. Tail syllables at the end of a line should not be confused with meaningless vocalizations which occur in the middle of a phrase, even though they may sound alike.

The last kind of padding syllables occurs very often but may be considered the least important. These are meaningless vocalizations such as "a," "e," and "i" which the singer uses to intone certain notes of a melisma after a regular syllable. (It may be compared to the extra syllables in Handel's "Every Valley shall be exa-a-a-alted.") Further studies need to be done to understand which vocalizing syllables are used after which text syllables, or whether this is a relevant question. One general rule seems to be that male singers tend to use "a" and "e," while female singers tend to use "i." The practice may depend largely on the personal styles of individual

singers. The great singer Ma Si-jiang was known to add the syllable “a” after almost every regular text syllable. The vocalizations “e” and “a” in Examples 3, 5, 7 and 8 (except the last syllable in Example 8) are all illustrations of this kind of padding syllable.

Example 14 gives a complete line of *bong ji maan baan* in which several kinds of padding syllables discussed in this paper are illustrated: added phrase (1), phrase leader syllables (2), multipliers (3), tail syllables (5), and meaningless vocalizations (6). The source for this example is the same as that for Version A of Example 8.

Example 14. One line of *bong ji maan baan* showing five kinds of padding syllables.

The musical score for Example 14 consists of three lines of music. Each line features a melody line with lyrics written below it. The lyrics are in Chinese characters, with phonetic notations and padding syllables (indicated by numbers 1-6) written below the characters. The padding syllables are: 1 (added phrase), 2 (phrase leader syllables), 3 (multipliers), 5 (tail syllables), and 6 (meaningless vocalizations).

Line 1: 我 (ngo) 靚 (ching) 衫 (saam) 自 (ji) a 愧 (kwai) 不 (bat) 成 (sing) a 才 (choi) 布 (bou) 衣 (yi) 未 (mei) 能 (nang) 學 (paan) 丹 (daan).
 I, humbly dressed, ashamed, amount to nothing plainly-cloaked, I cannot pick the

Line 2: 桂 (gwai) 啊 (a) 在 (joi) 芝 (wan) a 窗 (cheung) 苦 (fu) 讀 (duk) 猶 (yau) 是 (si) 身 (san) a.
 red cassia by the window, studying hard, I am still a

Line 3: 寄 (gai) e 在 (joi) 營 (hung) a 宮 (gung) a.
 struggling student at school

In summary, the method of this study of padding syllables is based upon musical consideration of actual performances. The result shows that many padding syllables serve important dramatic functions by clarifying the meaning of the text. Their musical function, on the other hand, may be as important as their dramatic function, if not more so. An added phrase increases the number of metrical units of the musical line, while phrase leader syllables and multipliers alter the internal structure of the melody. The study illustrates the freedom which the singer has to manipulate the padding syllables, and the resultant musical line, during a performance. Probably most interesting is the fact that a study of padding syllables reveals the inner creative process of the singer: the conflict he faces and the solution he chooses when he is confronted with the considerations of the meaning of the text and musical aesthetic standards.

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NOTES

1. The translation of the Chinese expression *tzu*, which refers to a linguistic unit represented by a single Chinese written character, has caused some confusion. Though often translated as "word," this is not absolutely correct since the English expression "word" refers to a syntactic unit whose equivalent in modern Chinese may correspond to two or more syllables each of which is represented by one *tzu*. Since this paper is concerned mainly with the aural characteristics of the text, *tzu* will be translated as "syllable" instead of "word."

2. This is a revised version of a paper entitled "*Ch'en tzu*" (Padding Syllables) in Cantonese Opera: a Musical Consideration" read at the fourteenth annual meeting of the Conference on Chinese Oral and Performing Literature at Chicago in April 1982.

3. T'ung Fei (1965) specified that the padding syllables cannot be sung on the *pan*, "strong beats," but must fall of the *yen*, "weak beats," within the metrical pattern of a tune. Kojiro Yoshikawa (1948) constantly referred to performance when he discussed padding syllables. For example, he speculated that padding syllables were sung lightly and quickly in relation to base syllables.

4. Some of the musical examples in this paper were sung by male roles, others by female roles. When they were by male roles, the actual pitch was approximately an octave lower than that shown in the transcription. The actual performance pitch and register are irrelevant to this paper and are therefore not consistently indicated. For further notes on transcription symbols, see Yung 1983a.

5. For some aria types, such as *faan sin yi wong* under discussion, several versions of syllable placement are acceptable. Example 12 gives one such version, which is taken from Ch'en 1952:99. The instrumental interludes are shown in small noteheads.

6. The interlude fillers are marked between brackets. Note that the four syllables *chan yun jeun liu* are sung to the end of the vocal melisma of the same phrase in Example 12. Strictly speaking, these four syllables should then be called *melisma* fillers rather than *interlude* fillers.

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Glossary of terms, names and titles

baak syun	白船
bong ji maan baan	梆子慢板
bong wong	梆王(黃)
Chan Hou-kau	陳好逑
ch'en tzu*	襯字
cheng tzu*	正字
chia mao*	加帽
Daai Hung Pou	大紅袍
Dai Nei Fa	帝女花
faan sin yi wong	反線二王(黃)
Hung Kiu Jang Jyu	虹橋贈珠

Leing Chi-baak	靚次伯
Lung Gim-sang	龍劍笙
Ma Si-jang	馬師曾
Man Chin-seui	文千歲
Neui Yi Heung	女兒香
siu kuk	小曲
tuo chu *	垛句
Yam Gim-fai	任劍輝
Yuan Ch'ü*	元曲
Yun Siu-fai	阮兆輝

Note: Terms with asterisk are romanized according to the Peking dialect with the Wade-Giles system; others according to the Cantonese dialect following the so-called Yale system (Huang 1960) with minor simplification.