READING BODIES: AESTHETICS, GENDER, AND FAMILY IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CHINESE NOVEL *GUWANGYAN* (PREPOSTEROUS WORDS)

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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This dissertation focuses on the Mid-Qing novel *Guwangyan* (Preposterous Words, preface dated, 1730s) which is a newly discovered novel with lots of graphic sexual descriptions. *Guwangyan* was composed between the publication of *Jin Ping Mei* (The Plum in the Golden Vase, 1617) and *Honglou meng* (Dream of the Red Chamber, 1791). These two masterpieces represent sexuality and desire by presenting domestic life in polygamous households within a larger social landscape. This dissertation explores the factors that shifted the literary discourse from the pornographic description of sexuality in *Jin Ping Mei*, to the representation of chaste love in *Honglou meng*.

This dissertation can be divided into three parts. Part one: Chapter I and II introduce my main approach to interpret the text and the historical and aesthetic context of this novel. Chapter I introduces a large historical background of the late Ming and early Qing China and argues that the blurry boundaries between genres assigned by the May Fourth scholars do not fully satisfy the reading of *Guwangyan*. My reading scrutinizes the textual body of *Guwangyan* to explore the material body and body politics demonstrated in the fictional world. Chapter II explains the meaning of the title of the text, the author, commentator, and the commentary of *Guwangyan.*

The second part, Chapter III and IV, illustrate a close-reading of the aesthetic body of the text. Chapter III proposes that *Guwangyan* is a well organized novel which has a carefully designed narrative structure and internal connections among chapters. Chapter IV demonstrates the importance of characterization in the novel. I argue that through a non-polarized *yin-yang* dichotomy, the text demonstrates the uncertainty, transformation, and development of the characters and explores their complicated inner world.

The third part, Chapter V and VI, explore masculinity and the family of *Guwangyan*. The novel represents the male friendship and male same-sex relationship and how they can interact with men's role in the public and private spheres. Chapter VI broadens the discussion of the family relationship in *Guwangyan* to establish a significant contrast between a realistic representation of political disasters and an idealistic description of community unity.

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To my beloved husband, Zhiyong Meng, and daughter, Haiyi Meng.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation focuses on a newly discovered *xiaoshuo* novel, *Guwangyan* 姑妄言(Preposterous words), authored by Cao Qujing 曹去晶 in the mid-eighteenth century, and will explore its literary representations of desire, sexuality, gender politics, and dynastic crisis. For a long time, most Chinese readers have regarded those late imperial fictional works with sexual content as in bad taste, concerning aesthetics and moral inappropriateness. Many novels with graphic sexual descriptions were prohibited and destroyed by the government and condemned by Confucian moralists. The May Fourth intellectuals, who significantly influenced modern readers, focused attention on the aesthetic value of novels by removing the sexual descriptions or by emphasizing their reflections of historical social reality. The practices of purging Chinese literature by physically demolishing those novels and filtering out obscene descriptions have distorted our understanding of the literary convention and values of the late imperial period. The Ming-Qing literati, who were the most important producers and consumers of those novels, regarded their works as part of Chinese literary tradition. Novelists and commentators particularly claimed the novels' inheritance from the classical poetic discourse and demonstrated the aesthetic value of the works by connecting them with the Chinese masterpieces of historical narrative, drama, and classic prose. For Ming-Qing literati, the representation of desire, sexuality, and conjugal relationships as authentic parts of human society was an important aspect of the fictional discourse. This dissertation aims to contextualize the reading of *Guwangyan*, a novel modeled on the

masterpiece *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (The Plum in the Golden Vase), within the convention of late imperial literati fiction, to demonstrate how it uses sexual content in ways that are aesthetically innovative as well as to elucidate the author's view on gender and family.

Guwangyan, a novel written in the mid-Qing period, helps us to explore Chinese literary history and eighteenth-century society. *Guwangyan* was composed between the publication of *Jin Ping Mei* (1617) and *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 (Dream of the Red Chamber, 1791). These two masterpieces represent sexuality and desire by presenting domestic life in polygamous households set within a larger social landscape. *Jin Ping Mei* uses graphic sexual descriptions to emphasize the authentic nature of human desire and corporeal pleasure. *Honglou meng* rewrites *Jin Ping Mei* and replaces sex with sentiment. The aesthetic value of these two novels has attracted scholars of various generations, from the time they were produced to more contemporary periods. Studies of these two masterpieces evolved into Goldenology (*Jinxue* 金學) and Redology (*Hongxue* 紅學). However, there has been little critical attention focused on domestic works written during the years between the compositions of these two masterpieces. This dissertation explores the factors that shifted the literary discourse from the pornographic description of sexuality in *Jin Ping Mei* to the representation of chaste love in *Honglou meng*. In this dissertation, my reading will concentrate on *Guwangyan*, which significantly follows the Ming literati's tolerant attitudes towards the representation of body and desire, composed before the Qing government dramatically modified its policies on prostitution and the print industry. The rich literary innovations and the bold representation of the body and body politics in the novel make it a work reflecting Chinese literary history and aesthetic convention.

The final contribution I will make in this study is to explore the inter-textual connection between *Guwangyan* and other fictional and historical narratives of the Ming-Qing era. In the preface of *Guwangyan* the author, Cao Qujing, claims that he is composing (*bian* 编) rather than "writing" this novel. The word *bian* literally means "weaving" and implies that the author consciously connects and adopts materials from other works. This dissertation traces the historical and fictional narratives of other works to demonstrate how Cao Qujing manipulates and tailors those literary materials for his own purpose. My research significantly increases the number of texts that are connected with *Guwangyan*, such as the courtesan narratives of the late Ming, *Shuihu zhuan*, *Jin Ping Mei*, the stories from Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1674-1646) story collection *Sanyan* 三言"Three Words,"[1] and Pu Songlin's 蒲松齡 (1640-1715) *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異 (Liaozhai's Tales of the Strange).[2] My reading will establish the connection between *Guwangyan* and other vernacular and classical narratives to explore how and why Cao Qujing transforms the original narratives and incorporates them into his work.

1.1 Cultural Landscape of Eighteenth-century China

I adopt the concept of eighteenth-century China as described by Susan Naquin, Susan Mann, and Keith McMahon, who frame the period from the end of the Ming

[1] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, ed. *Yushi mingyan* 喻世明言(Stories to Enlighten the World or Illustrious Words to Instruct the World) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1958); *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恒言(Stories to Awaken the World) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe,1956); and *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言(Stories to Caution the World) (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe,1957).

[2] Pu Songling 蒲松齡, *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異 (Shanghai, Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005).

dynasty (1660s) to the middle Qing period (1820s). [3] This long eighteenth century witnessed the collapse of the Ming dynasty, the early establishment of Manchu authority, and the development of the Qing dynasty. When the Manchus took power and gradually stabilized political, social, and ethnic policies, eighteenth-century China experienced a new sequence of economic developments. The population within the Qing dynasty had significantly increased. Commercialization and urbanization produced a more socially and physically mobile society than during the Ming. The Qing government established the most efficient and sophisticated legal system in China's history. Print culture made it possible for the literati to explore career opportunities beyond the bureaucratic system. Literature, theater, and philosophy became more diverse and professionalized. According to Naquin, eighteenth-century China could be regarded as the peak of Chinese pre-modern society or perhaps of the entire world civilization.[4] A lot of research has been devoted to the politics, economics, and social development of the Qing society. In order to contextualize my reading of the literature of that glorious, yet complicated, period, it is necessary to briefly discuss the cultural landscape at that time. My introduction mainly concentrates on three aspects: intellectual discourse, moral conservatism, and literary developments.

Due in part to the development of the printing industry, the late Ming and early Qing periods witnessed a flourishing of intellectual activity. Among educated men,

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[3] Susan Naquin and Evelyn Sakakida Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), Preface xi. Susan Mann, *Precious Records : Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1997), 20. And Keith McMahon, *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists : Sexuality and Male-Female Relations in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 3-4.

[4] Naquin and Rawski, *Chinese Society in the Eighteenth Century*, Preface x.

extreme competition made success in the civil service examinations an increasingly hopeless endeavor. Many literati discovered other passions outside the examination curriculum, such as in publishing, art, or medicine. Publishing centers in Nanjing 南京 and Jianyang 建陽 (Fujian 福建) attracted literati devoted to the editing and publication of fiction, drama, and popular reading materials.[5] Male elites also paid close attention to the connoisseurship of material culture including painting, porcelain, and calligraphy.[6] Evidential scholarships led to a reassessment of Neo-Confucian classics of the Song and paved the way for the rise of Confucian ritualism in the early Qing period.[7] The space developed and explored by literati established a tension between the official discourse of the state and literati discourse.

Although the Qing authorities strengthened governmental control of publications, the voices of the literati were never silenced. The Qing government established legal codes to censor publications. Mainly two kinds of materials were the targets of governmental checks: "licentious fiction and drama" and politically subversive

[5] Cynthia Joanne Brokaw and Kai-wing Chow, *Printing and Book Culture in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 27-29. Lucille Chia, *Printing for Profit : The Commercial Publishers of Jianyang, Fujian (11th-17th Centuries)* (Cambridge, MA: Published by Harvard University Asia Center for Harvard-Yenching Institute : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2002). Cynthia Joanne Brokaw, *Commerce in Culture: The Sibao Book Trade in the Qing and Republican Periods* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2007).

[6] Craig Clunas, *Superfluous Things: Material Culture and Social Status in Early Modern China* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991).

[7] Kai-wing Chow, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China: Ethics, Classics, and Lineage Discourse* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 1-43. Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984), 202-20.

materials.[8] I need to clarify that during the early Qing period (1644-1723), the Manchu court paid more attention to politically sensitive materials in publication, such as the issue of the anti-minority, nostalgia for the fallen Ming, and references to the existence of the court. The situation has been accurately claimed by historians as a literary inquisition.[9] The most violent literary inquisition in the early Qing dynasty was the Ming history case, which led to the death of seventy people. Zhuang Tinglong 莊廷鑨 (d.1655), the son of a wealthy Zhejiang 浙江 merchant, had come into possession of an unpublished draft history of the Ming dynasty written by the late Ming scholar Zhu Guozhen 朱國楨. Zhuang decided to revise the draft and add to it, or rather to hire a number of scholars for the task, with the intention of publishing it under his own name. Zhuang died before the work was finished, but under his father's supervision the team of scholars completed their labors and the book began circulating around Zhejiang in late 1660. The trouble was that Zhuang's history of the Ming continued to use Ming reign titles for the years after 1644 - that is, reign titles of various Southern Ming rulers. In addition, the book used the personal names of Manchu rulers. Both practices were considered seditious by the new dynasty. When some readers of the book reported the contents of the history to the court in 1661, the court decided to deal harshly with the offenders. The purported author, Zhuang Tinglong, was dead and so his father was arrested and thrown into a jail, where he later died. When the case was closed in 1663, the bodies of both father and son were

[8] Shi Changyu 石昌渝,"Qingdai xiaoshuo jinhui shulue," 清代小說禁毀述略, *Shanghai shifan daxue xuebao* (zhexue shehuikexue ban) 上海師範大學學報(哲學社會科學版), vol.39, no.1 (Jan., 2010), 65.

[9] Timothy Brook, "Censorship in Eighteenth-Century China: A View from the Book Trade," *Canadian Journal of History* 23.2 (1988), 177-96, and Lawrence D. Kessler, "Chinese Scholars and the Early Manchu State," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 31 (1971),179-200.

disinterred and mutilated, their families were enslaved by the Manchus and their possessions were confiscated. A similar fate lay in store for all scholars involved in preparing the history, the printer, and even some purchasers. Altogether over seventy men were executed. Two other scholars of note, Wu Yan 吳炎(1624-1663) and Pan Chengzhang 潘檉章 (1626–1663), lost their lives for being listed as assistant compilers.[10]

Compared to the bloody and violent inquisition of the Ming and Southern Ming histories, government censorship of potentially immoral materials in the early/mid Qing period was much milder. On one hand, fewer people were involved and most of them were not executed. Ding Yaokang 丁耀亢 (1599-1669), the author of *Xu Jin Ping Mei* 續金瓶梅 (The Sequel to the Plum in the Golden Vase), was briefly imprisoned in 1665, not because of the sexual content of his novel but because the novel utilized the Song-Jurchen conflict to criticize the Manchu conquest.[11] On the other hand, the government posted a policy of banning obscene novels and burning the woodblocks of the novels around1661. Some novels with sexual descriptions still had opportunities to get published.[12] The Zhejiang official Zhang Jinyan 張縉彥 (1599-1670) was demoted for supporting the publication of Li Yu's李漁 (1610-1680) *Wusheng xi* 無聲戲 (Silent Operas) while Li Yu himself did not get into any trouble. And during the Kanxi reign, Li Yu's *Wusheng xi* was retitled *Liancheng bi* 連城璧 (Priceless Jade) and was republished.

[10] For a detailed discussion of this event see Kessler, "Chinese Scholars and the Early Manchu State," 182-84.

[11] Xiaoqiao Ling, "Re-Reading the Seventeenth Century: Ding Yaokang (1599-1669) and His Writings," Harvard University, 2011. Dissertation, 19-20.

[12] Patrick Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 12.

In 1695, *Jin Ping Mei,* with the comment of Zhang Zhupo 張竹坡 (1670-1698) was still able to get published and circulated broadly. Jonathan Spence's study of the Yongzheng 雍正 Emperor's (1678-1735) book *Dayi juemi lu*大義覺迷錄 (Records of Great Righteousness Resolving Confusion, 1728) demonstrates that even the emperor could not fully control the literati readers.[13] Timothy Brook's studies of book circulation and the print culture industry during the Qing period illustrate that although the emperor and the supporters of the bureaucratic system attempted to control the print system and remove all the politically oriented books, the cheap cost of printing and the significantly commercial print industry made it impossible for the Manchu government to fully control the printing. [14] Well-developed private and commercial printing systems actually crated a huge space for the spread of the literati's individual discourse. It is safe to argue that from the late Ming to the early stages of the Qing, the literati's fictional writings had ample space to flourish in print.

The eighteenth century also witnessed greater attempts by the state and the Confucian elite to mold people's behavior along moral lines. The Qing government campaigned to disseminate moral values in the towns and villages.[15] The courtesan and prostitution business that had flourished in the Ming dynasty was abolished by the Qing government.[16] Particularly during the 1720-30s, the Yongzheng emperor changed the

[13] Jonathan D. Spence, *Treason by the Book* (New York : Viking, 2001).

[14] Brook, "Censorship in Eighteenth-Century China," 180.

[15] Weijing Lu, *True to Her Word: The Faithful Maiden Cult in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), "Introduction," 3-4.

[16] Matthew Harvey Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

legal code and emancipated various social groups. Legal historian Matthew Sommer argues that this proclamation of the Yongzheng emperor is important in understanding the transition of the Qing gender and moral systems. Before the change of the legal system, the debased status groups (*jianmin* 賤民), which included slaves, bondservants, actors, prostitutes, and *yamen* runners, were considered polluted and were not allowed to participate in the civil service examination. Debased individuals, such as female slaves and bondservants, were assumed to be sexually available to their masters. Actresses, prostitutes, and courtesans did not need to be chaste. When the Yongzheng emperor emancipated the debased groups, every woman was given the legal status of commoner. In other words, the masters no longer had sexual privileges and therefore women could follow the norms of marriage and chastity. According to Sommer, the change from "status performance" to "gender performance" enabled any woman to follow the moral requirements of a chaste woman, no matter her social status.[17] The Qing government also continued to promote the cult of chastity for women. Weijing Lu's study demonstrates that after the death of a husband or fiancé, women would either commit suicide or remain loyal to their men. Although the Manchu government discouraged suicide, it still promoted women's chastity and loyalty to men.[18] Local literati officials encouraged females to return to the traditional requirements for a woman. Chen Hongmou's 陳宏謀 (1696-1771) *Jiaonü yigui* 教女遺規 (Enduring Principles for Teaching Daughters) instructed women on how to perform as good daughters, wives, and mothers within the household. Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738－1801) believed that women should use their

[17] Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China*, 1-20.

[18] Lu, *True to Her Word,*12-15.

talents within the household to raise their children and support their husband. [19] The policy of the court and local elite indicated that teaching women orthodox values was an important source of social and cultural capital for scholars and their families during the Qing period.

Vernacular literature and popular theater flourished, meeting the appetite of the general public for entertainment in eighteenth-century China. As a matter of fact, vernacular novels attained new stature in the eighteenth century as a respectable intellectual endeavor and a vehicle for the expression both of political criticism and orthodox values. Following *Jin Ping Mei*, many other vernacular novels written by literati explored the complexity of the household, private space, sentiment, and desire; these novels include *Xu Jing Ping Mei*, *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* 醒世姻緣傳 (Marriage as Retribution, Awakening the World*,* 1720) and *Lin Lan Xiang*林蘭香(Lin, Lan, and Xiang, c.a. 1700s.) "The cult of *qing* 情," which referred to the unprecedented valorization of the life-transcending power of romantic emotions, was consistently powerful in literature. Unlike in seventeenth-century literature, stories representing the cult of *qing* (sentiment, desire, passion, and lust) became focused on the desexualized relationship between men and women.[20] The graphic depictions of sexuality were not as commonplace as they had been during the Ming. Scholar and beauty narratives portray romantic love and marriage between scholars and beauties. Characteristic plot elements include love at first sight between a scholar and a beauty, the villain stirring up trouble resulting in the separation

[19] Mann, *Precious Records: Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century*, 83-92.

[20] Martin W. Huang, "Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of Qing in Ming-Qing Literature," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* No.20, Dec., (1998), 179-80.

of scholar and beauty, as well as the scholar's passing of the civil service examination and his happy union with the beauty.[21] Representative novels of the scholar and beauty format are *Yu Jiao Li* 玉嬌梨 (Yu, Jiao, and Li), *Ping Shan Leng Yan* 平山冷燕 (Ping, Shan, Leng, and Yan, 1658) and *Haoqiu zhuan*好逑傳 (The Fortunate Union). Keith McMahon categorizes the scholar and beauty novels as chaste romance that present men and women in an interchangeable situation. The story of the chaste romance is the opposite of the story of erotic romance.[22] The eighteenth century also witnessed the composition of two other great literati novels, *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 (The Scholars) and *Honglou meng*.

More importantly, the eighteenth century has also been recognized as a period of development of fiction and theater criticism. Several literary canons have been systematically criticized by the literati. Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608-1661) interpreted the *Shuihu zhuan* 水滸傳 (Water Margin) by using critical standards which, up to then, had been limited to poetry and painting. This innovation raised the status of fiction for late imperial readers and made the writing of fiction a respectable activity for educated people. Li Yu never wrote a major commentary on a work of fiction or any major piece of fiction criticism, but his dramatic theory highlighted in several chapters of his *Xianqing ouji* 閑情偶寄 (Random Repository of Idle Thoughts, 1671) with its attention to structure, characterization, and stress on innovation was very influential to fictional criticism. The commentarial edition of *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (The Romance of Three Kingdoms,

[21] Lin Chen 林辰, *Mingmo Qingchu xiaoshuo shulu* 明末清初小說述錄, (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1988), 60.

[22] Keith McMahon, *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists: Sexuality and Male-Female Relations in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 99-100.

preface dated 1679) by Mao Zonggang 毛宗崗(ca 1632–after 1709) and his father Mao Lun毛綸 completed the century-long re-writing and condensing of the text from 240 chapters to 120 chapters. Mao Zonggang made improvements in the writing style, additions to historical documents and revised the chapter's titles.[23] Mao also explored many narrative devices in *Sanguo yanyi*, for instance, how the author portrays the guest as a foil to the main characters (*yibin chenzhu* 以賓襯主) and how an inconsequent or minor passage preceded the significant passage in order to represent the glory of the hero and the heroic behavior.[24] Zhang Zhupo comments that *Jin Ping Mei* has a consistent structure and points out that the elements of the plot are well-organized and connected as a whole. Literati commentators adopted terminology from painting, drama, and architecture to better explore the aesthetics of Chinese fiction and established a systematic approach for fictional criticism.[25]

1.2 From Aesthetics to Genre: the May Fourth Legacy of Reading Late Imperial Novels

Although it is not hard to identify the similarity and inter-textual connections between *Jin Ping Mei* and *Honglou meng* from the perspective of the narrative structure, characterization, theme, and religious implications, these two novels have received significantly different responses and comments within literary history. *Honglou meng*

[23] David L. Rolston, "Introduction," in Rolston, ed., *How to Read the Chinese Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 150-51

[24] Rolston, "How to Read The Romance of the Three Kingdoms", in Rolston, *How to Read the Chinese Novel,* 166-67.

[25] Andrew H.Plaks, "Terminology and Central Concept," in Rolston, *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, 85-91.

was broadly circulated as a masterpiece and many scholars agreed on the value of this novel in literature, history, and social studies. *Jin Ping Mei,* however, received a more controversial response. From the sixteenth century when the manuscript of *Jin Ping Mei* was first circulated among literati readers (ca.1596), to the seventeenth century when it was published (1617), and later when the version with commentary was circulated among a broader range of readers (ca.1695), until the May Fourth revolution in the twentieth century (1912), comments and evaluations about this novel have been complicated, ambivalent, and contradictory. The debate, which involved literary scholars and critics, linked issues of morality, aesthetics, readership, and generic categories. Essentially, late imperial commentators encouraged readers to explore the aesthetic beauty in *Jin Ping Mei*, while modern intellectuals attempted to give a clear generic definition to *Jin Ping Mei* therefore helping the reader to identify the decadence of the "feudalistic society" demonstrated in the novel.[26] Although the May Fourth writers and scholars' generic and social historical reading of *Jin Ping Mei* was the predominant influence upon modern readers and later literary scholars, I think their reading deviated from the traditional reading approach to reading late imperial fiction as exemplified in commentary editions. In order to illustrate my point clearly I present here a brief trajectory of the critics of *Jin Ping Mei*, demonstrating the transformation of the reading method.

With its first circulation in the 1596, *Jin Ping Mei* was deemed a controversial work discussed by literati of various backgrounds. *Jin Ping Mei* was regarded as a representation of literati's resentment and a detailed description of sexuality which was not seriously condemned. One Ming elite, Yuan Hongdao 袁宏道(1568-1601),

[26] I will introduce the detailed comments of May Fourth intellectuals in the following sections.

introduced *Jin Ping Mei* to his friends claiming that it was much better than Mei Sheng's 枚乘 *Qifa* 七發 (Seven Stimuli), which is a *fu* rhetorical poem of the Han Dynasty.[27] Later, the anonymous commentator of *Jin Ping Mei* in the Chongzhen 崇禎 period (hereafter Chongzhen commentator) encourages readers to pay attention to the emotions within the novel. He points out that even the most dangerous and lascivious female protagonist, Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮, has feelings of enjoyment and frustration, and at the same time, desperately hopes to be loved one day. Neither Yuan Hongdao nor the Chongzhen commentator label *Jin Ping Mei* as a pornographic novel; it seems for them the graphic sexual descriptions were regarded as an expression of natural emotion or a literary allegory. [28]

The Qing commentator Zhang Zhupo echoes the Ming literati's reading and emphasizes that *Jin Ping Mei* is not an erotic/pornographic novel (*yinshu* 淫書) but a marvelous novel (*qishu* 奇書). He argues that *Jin Ping Mei* reflects the literary tradition of the *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes) in which several poems represent women's marriage and conjugal life, young ladies' expression of their sentiments and brave desires for their lovers. The main characters in *Jin Ping Mei* can be compared to the similar role types

[27] *Qifa* is a famous rhapsody in which a long talk by a guest cures an ailing prince of the state of Chu. The guest diagnoses the prince's illness as a result of overindulgence and one way to cure it is listening to meaningful words. Yuan Hongdao believes that *Jin Ping Mei,* as a novel, could also cure people's overindulgences and the pursuit of material and corporeal pleasures of the late Ming period.

[28] The discussion of the commentary of the late Ming and Qing period is in Naifei Ding, *Obscene Things: Sexual Politics in Jin Ping Mei* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 118-40.

portrayed in the *Shijing*.[29] If the *Shijing* is a masterpiece collected by Confucius, it should be acceptable for *Jin Ping Mei* to reflect the same subject. Both the "good" and "bad" material in the novel encourages and/or warns readers. In Zhang's opinion, the most important point in commenting on *Jin Ping Mei* is that it is an aesthetically marvelous book. This finely constructed writing (*zhenxian zhenmi* 針線縝密) should not be ignored by later readers. Zhang Zhupo developed the critical approaches in reading Chinese vernacular fiction, aiming for a systematic analysis of *Jin Ping Mei* and helping readers to enjoy the description of daily life in the protagonists' household.

Qing literary theorist Liu Tingji 劉廷璣 (b.1653) adopted Zhang Zhupo's terms and regarded *Jin Ping Mei* as a marvelous book in the *Zaiyuan zazhi* 在園雜誌 (Miscellanea of the Zai Garden). Liu argues that from the aspect of a deep exploration of human sentiment and worldly affairs, no fiction could be compared with the *Jin Ping Mei*. (若深切人情世務，無如《金瓶梅》) [30] *Jin Ping Mei* has a detailed narrative. The characterization is quite vivid and the depictions of each character are distinctive from others within the work. (而文心細 如牛毛繭絲，凡寫一人，始終口吻酷肖到底)[31] The well-organized structure and neatly connected narrative parts of the novel could not be achieved by just a common writer. (結構鋪張，針線填密，一字不漏，又豈尋常筆

[29] Zhang Zhupo, "Didi qishu fei yinshu lu" 第一奇書非淫書論 (The number one marvelous book is not an obscene book) in *Jin Ping Mei ziliao huibian* (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe,1986), 19-20.

[30] Liu Tingji 劉廷璣, *Zaiyuan zazhi* 在園雜誌, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), 84.

[31] Ibid.

墨可到者哉！)[32] *Jin Ping Mei* aims to prevent obscenity and presented sexuality to illustrate the law (*yuyao zhiyin, yiyin shuofa* 欲要止淫，以淫說法).[33] Zhang Zhupo and Liu Tingji share the view that one crucial way of appreciating *Jin Ping Mei* is to explore its literary value, yet neither of them could give a clear categorization of what kind of fiction it is. The main idea in commentaries and essays about late Ming and Qing literature is that *Jin Ping Mei* is not an erotic novel but is a marvelous book. Readers must understand the literary aesthetics of the book in order to fully enjoy it. The phrase "marvelous book" is not a part of the established terminology identifying a literary genre. The phrase is more likely an expression of the feeling of being pleasantly surprised either by the content of the novel or its composition or a combination of both.

However, critical readings of *Jin Ping Mei* from the aspects of literary convention and aesthetic innovation became less influential during the Qing and Republican period when the novel was continuously banned and burned. Most readers in the twentieth century were particularly influenced by May Fourth scholars, who attempted to categorize *Jin Ping Mei* and identify a sub-genre which they placed a number of vernacular novels with similar content. The most important modern writer and literary historian of the May Fourth period, Lu Xun 魯迅(1881-1936), labeled *Jin Ping Mei* as a "novel of sentiment" (*renqing xiaoshuo* 人情小說) in his canonical study of Chinese fiction, *Brief History of Chinese Fiction* (Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilüe 中國小說史略) .[34]

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Lu Xun 魯迅, *Zhongguo xiaoshuo shilue* 中國小說史略 (Beijing: Dongfang chubanshe 1996), 180.

Lu Xun argues that the author of *Jin Ping Mei* was extremely familiar with the social affairs of the late Ming dynasty. He believes that *Jin Ping Mei* is a good example of *shiqing shu* 世情書 (study of wordly sentiment) which portrays social affairs in a sophisticated way. The male protagonist in *Jin Ping Mei*, Ximen Qing, who belongs to the local gentry class, not only connects with both wealthy and government officials, but is also connected to degree holders. By writing this, the author of *Jin Ping Mei* criticizes people of various social levels. In Lu Xun's view, the novel is valuable because its sophisticated narrative presents a complex society. The description of sexuality is not the main focus of the novel and should not be the central concern of reader's attention.

Lu Xun's contemporary writer and scholar Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰 (pen name: Mao Dun 茅盾, 1896-1981) claimed that *Jin Ping Mei* is a "novel about sexual desire" (*xingyu xiaoshuo* 性欲小說) which has little aesthetic value. Shen Yanbing uses social factors to explain why novelists depicted sexuality in fiction, by arguing that ancient Chinese society had limited sexual education and then the writers had no idea how to express sexuality in a healthy way. In the Ming dynasty, high level officials and the royal court were obsessed with the art of the bedchamber or *fangzhongshu* 房中術. Writing novels with sexual content was a reflection of the social trend.[35] Another famous writer and literary historian, Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 (1898-1958), describes *Jin Ping Mei* as a novel with limited sexual description. He claims that *Jin Ping Mei* is a great "realistic novel" (*xinshi zhuxi xiaoshuo* 現實主義小說) which honestly depicts the sickness of

[35] Shen Yanbing 沈雁冰, "Zhongguo wenxuenei de xingyu miaoxie 中國文學內的性欲描写," in Zhou Juntao 周鈞韜 ed., *Jin Ping Mei ziliao xubian* 金瓶梅資料續編 1919-1949 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1991), 20-30.

Chinese society and presents a ridiculously decadent civilization. Zheng Zhenduo believes that even if we removed all the sexual descriptions from the novel it could still be a great story depicting characters who represent Ming society accurately. [36] These three leading May Fourth writers and literary scholars offered three categorizations for *Jin Ping Mei* and closely compared the novel to the social context in which it had been composed. They urged readers to ignore this kind of novel or instead to pay attention to the descriptions of social life, rather than focus on its sexual content. The May Fourth scholars believed that the main reason for producing this kind of novel was to criticize and expose the decadence of late Ming society.

The views of the May Fourth scholars, especially Lu Xun's argument about Chinese novels, were influential. Later scholars who studied *Jin Ping Mei* and other works depicting sexuality followed his generic categorization. The bibliographer of Chinese fiction, Sun Kaidi 孫楷第 (1898-1986), expanded Lu Xun's category of Ming-Qing vernacular fiction. Sun categorized *Jin Ping Mei* as "a novel of sentiment" (*renqing xiaoshuo* 人情小說), fiction with less sexual description as scholar and beauty fiction, and other fiction with a relatively low quality of aesthetics as "obscene and dirty fiction" (*weixie xiaoshuo* 煨褻小說).[37] The word *weixie* comes from the *xie* referring to undergarrments. This term has strong moral connotations. Sun's category of *weixie xiaoshuo* did not last for a long time; most fiction scholars and publishers did not adopt the word *weixie* to refer to fiction with descriptions of sexuality, but novels labeled

[36] Zheng Zhenduo 鄭振鐸 "Tan *Jing Ping Mei cihua* 談金瓶梅詞話," in Zhou Juntao 周鈞韜, ed., *Jin Ping Mei ziliao xubian* 1919-1949,74-90.

[37] Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, *Zhongguo tongsu xiaoshuo shumu* 中國通俗小說書目(Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1982).

within this category garnered attention. In Xiao Xiangkai's 蕭相愷 *Zhenben jinhui xiaoshuo daguan* 珍本禁毀小說大觀 (Chinese treasure fiction collection), he uses the term "erotic fiction" (*Yanqing xiaoshuo* 艷情小說) to refer to the group of novels in Sun Kaidi's *weixie* category.[38] The word *yanqing* is used to refer to classical Chinese poems which have depictions of sexuality. Compared to *weixie*, the label *yanqing* has a less strident moral judgmental tone and more specifically reflects cultural heritage. Therefore *yanqing xiaoshuo* was more broadly used by scholars and publishers to refer to fiction with sexual content.[39] Generally, a novel containing a portrayal of sexual behavior was categorized by modern scholars into one of three groups. Novels with few or no explicit sexual descriptions were categorized as "scholar and beauty" fictions (*caizi jiaren xiaoshuo* 才子佳人小說). Novels with depictions of sexuality that included the portrayal of social and historical events were categorized as "novel of sentiment" or "social affairs novels" (*renqing/shiqing xiaoshuo* 人情/世情小說). Novels which have more graphic depictions of sexuality than *Jin Ping Mei* were categorized as erotic/ pornographic works (*yanqing xiaohsuo* 艷情小說). The overshadowing influence of the May Fourth scholars influenced later researchers to focus on sexual content and social representation to categorize fiction.

The modern process of categorizing *xiaoshuo* fiction by genre is arbitrary and unstable. First of all, there was no clear demarcation of the fictional genres that were based on the sexual descriptions of the Ming-Qing period. *Jin Ping Mei* broadly adopts

[38] Xiao Xiangkai 蕭相愷, *Zhenben jinhui xiaoshuo daguan* 珍本禁毀小說大觀 (Zhengzhou:Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1992).

[39] Shi Changyu 石昌渝, Zhongguo xiaoshuo yuanliu lun 中國小說源流論 (Shenghuo, dushu, xinzhi sanlian shudian, 1994), 372-73.

materials from other narratives, such as *Shuihu zhuan*, vernacular short stories, and *The Song History* (*Shongshi* 宋史).[40] Sun Kaidi precisely proclaims in the first sentence of his bibliography of the Chinese vernacular novel that there were no generic concepts during the Ming-Qing period. Since fiction was not regarded the same as prose and poetry, there was no need to name a sub-genre within fiction.[41] When modern scholars categorized the novel based on the content, they actually misinterpreted the intentions of the late imperial writers. Secondly, although the scholar and beauty novels show relatively conservative ethics and eliminate descriptions of premarital sex, they nevertheless portray marital sex and the male protagonist's sex with women other than the female protagonist. Even the most representative novel of the "scholar and beauty" genre, *Honglou meng*, was charged with obscenity and frivolousness by the Qing literati readers.[42] Moreover, the degree and scale of sexual description is quite subjective and individualistic. It is hard to establish a relatively objective standard to formulate a common agreement. The eighteenth century was the period in which long novels incorporated many varied materials into the narrative, yet the ideology of the novel turned morally conservative. *Yesou puyan*, for instance, is a novel that particularly emphasizes Confucian orthodoxy and aims to demonstrate the encyclopedic knowledge of the author. The novel portrays a Confucian superhero who could control his body

[40] Patrick Hanan, "*Jin Ping Mei* Tanyuan《金瓶梅》探源, " *Hannan Zhongguo xiaoshuo lunji* (Beijing daxue chubanshe, 2008) 223-64. The original English article, "Sources of the *Chin Ping Mei*," was published in *Asia Major* (10.2, 1963, 23-67)

[41] Sun Kaidi 孫楷第, *Zhongguo tongsu xiaoshuo shumu* 中國通俗小說書目(Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe 1982).

[42] Andrew H.Plaks, "Terminology and Central Concepts," in Rolston, *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, 115.

while seduced by women. In his travels around China, many women are impressed by his talent and appearance and want to have sex with him. He restrains his desire and only has sex with his legitimate wives. This novel contains several graphic depictions of the sexy body of the male protagonist and the seducing women.[43] Yet the novel was labeled as a "talent and knowledge novel" (*caixue xiaoshuo* 才學小說) and the descriptions of sexuality work for the expedience of the male protagonist.[44]

All of this is a result of the fact that there are so many complicated and arguable issues that existed in the generic readings of the late imperial novels. In this dissertation, I propose that the reading of *Guwangyan* should be freed from the restraints of genre categorization. The author's sophisticated structure makes the novel similar to its model work, *Jin Ping Mei*, a marvelous composition. Rather than categorizing the novel under the label of erotics/pornography, a human sentimental novel, or chaste romance, my research contextualizes the novel within the broader history of the development of Chinese vernacular fiction and classical tales.

[43] The studies of *Yesou puyan* can be read in: Keith McMahon, *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists: Sexuality and Male-Female Relations in Eighteenth-Century Chinese Fiction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 150-75; Maram Epstein, *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Published by Harvard University Asia Center and Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2001), 199-248; and Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, Harvard East Asian Monographs, 202 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2001), 236-70.

[44] Huang, "Qing versus Yu: The Polarization of Desire in *Yesou puyan* and *Guwangyan*," *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, 238-40.

1.3 Interpreting the Literary Representations of Sexuality, Gender, and Politics in *Guwangyan*

This dissertation will contextualize the reading of *Guwangyan* within the conventions of Chinese literary and cultural history. I propose to use the concept of *body* to illustrate my interpretation of the text. The concept of body I adopted includes three sub-divisions: the aesthetic body, the corporeal body, and body politics. The aesthetic body refers to the text as an organic unit that can be explored through the aspects of a narrative structure, narrative devices, characterization, and theme. Regarding the text as a body was clearly illustrated by Li Yu in his discussion of drama composition. In Li Yu's writings, one common analogy for creativity is that of the Creator giving form to a human body (*zaowu fuxing* 造物賦形). When discussing the structuring of a play, Li Yu describes in detail how the Creator (*zaowu* 造物) creates a human body and compares that process with the way in which an author composes a *chuanqi* 傳奇drama. He says,

> As for "structuring," this refers to the time before one composes the melodies and is just beginning to choose the rhyme and put down his brush on paper. It is like the Creator giving form to a human body: before the fetus has taken complete shape, it first plans the whole form, so that this drop of blood will develop into the five organs and hundred bones. If it had no such overall scheme at the beginning, then the human body would have innumerable marks of disjunctures and junctures, and the flow of blood and vital force would be blocked. … Therefore, the maker of *chuanqi* should not rush to write before he is ready. He must first fold his arms during preparation, then he can write fast later. Only when one has a fantastic story to tell can he write a remarkable piece of work. There is no such thing as one not setting the subject right and still

being able to write something which reflects his sophisticated thinking and spreads the beautiful art of language.

至於結構二字,則在引商刻羽之先,拈韻抽毫拈韻抽毫：拈韻,選定韻部；抽毫,動筆寫作之始。如造物之賦形,當其精血初凝,胞胎未就,先為制定全形,使點血而具五官百骸之勢。倘先無成局,而由頂及踵,逐段滋生,則人之一身,當有無數斷續之痕,而血氣為之中阻矣。…… 故作傳奇者,不宜卒急拈毫,袖手於前,始能疾書於後。有奇事,方有奇文,未有命題不佳,而能出其錦心,揚為繡口者也。[45]

Here, the model Li Yu sets for literary creation is the formation of a human body. To him, these two creative activities belong to the same category and set forth the same pattern. Li Yu suggests that the two kinds of creation both involve careful, premeditated planning and holistic organization, a structuring process. By paralleling the creation of the human body and literary works, Li Yu actually puts the Creator and the playwright in the same category—the category of creative agent—meaning that the Creator is analogous to a playwright in terms of having disposing power and control over the creative activity. Li Yu's analogy demonstrates that in the Ming-Qing period, it was theoretically acceptable to regard a literary text as a body created by the author.

The second concept of body is related to the corporeal and material body demonstrated within the text and cultural context. In the Ming-Qing period with the flourishing of the printing culture, there were various interpretations of body from the perspective of Chinese medicine, religion, philosophy, and literature. It is impossible to explain the corporeal body in *Guwangyan* from a single aspect. I suggest that the material

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[45] Li Yu 李漁 *Xianqing ouji* 閑情偶寄, "Ciqu bu" 詞曲部, in *Li Yu quanji* 李漁全集, (Taibei: Chengwen chuban youxian gongsi, 1970), Vol.5, 1937-38. English translation is from Ying Wang's "Two Authorial Rhetorics of Li Yu's (1611-1680) Works: Inversion and Auto-communication", Dissertation, University of Toronto (1997), 40.

body in *Guwangyan* is fluid, transformable, and cosmic. The fluid body system primarily means unstable gender identity of the characters in *Guwangyan*. As Charlotte Furth's study of Chinese *fuke* 婦科(medicine for women) from the Song to Ming dynasties, the discourse of Chinese medicine articulated a generative body, a universal human rather than sexed body, in which men and women complemented one another in a shifting balance, so that gender difference was really a matter of degree and not necessarily a fixed condition. *Yin* and *yang*, and blood and *qi*, were equally vital to creation, and both male and female participated in the creative powers of heaven and earth. This generative body was fundamentally androgynous and suggests a timeless complementarity and equivalent value between the sexes.[46] Similar to the medicial discourse of body, *Guwangyan* portrays several characters that have an ambiguous gendered body, including a natural eunuch, a monk performing as a nun, and the androgynous wife. My reading will analyze the personality, desire, and family struggles of these characters to illustrate how the novel represents the fluid boundaries between sexes. In *Guwangyan* the material body is also transformable. Several main characters have their private organs, their hearts, and eyes improved or changed, which leads to an improvement in personality. There is a karmic chain between the characters' body, morality, and personality. The characters' morally good behaviors sometimes will reward them with bodily transformations which lead to personality changes so they finally end with a good life. The cosmic part of the body in *Guwangyan* is related in particular to a Daoist master and his sexual partner, a Daoist nun, who are portrayed in the novel as sexual immortals. These two Daoist practitioners are not involved in endless illicit affairs or conjugal relations in the main

[46] Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin : Gender in China's Medical History, 960-1665* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 216-223.

narrative. They have sexual power superior to those of the other characters and know how to maintain health and longevity through sexual practice. Within their relationship, the Daoist master always plays the role as teacher and expert to his female partner. These two sexual experts represent a stable and cosmic body system which confirms the power of male authority within the bedchamber. The two experts' bodies are not affected by the dynastic crisis and karmic retribution of the fictional word, yet symbolize the concept of *yin-yang* hierarchy and harmony of the cosmos. In other words, I propose that although the novel portrays sexual and gender chaos within a politically turbulent fictional world, the cosmological *yin-yang* hierarchy is maintained between sexes in the bedchambers, which the author believes can stabilize domestic life.

The third aspect is the concept of body politics. During the time that the Ming-Qing periods witnessed a dynastic change, the conventional philosophic idea of self, household, and state experienced a serious challenge and a (re)modification. The vast amount of vernacular fiction representing the family and social crisis provided an inspiring aspect to be explored: the idea of politics, loyalty, and empire in the literati world. In other words, my interpretation of *Guwangyan* combines the aesthetic/textual body, anthropological/material body, and dynastic/ political body to establish communication with the late imperial narrative theory, modern literary structuralism, and gender theory. Since the concept of body in pre-modern Chinese culture has its own relationship with self, society, and nature, it can be a productive view to scrutinize *Guwangyan* from this perspective.

1.4 Focus of this Study: the Aesthetics, Masculinity, and the Imaginary Family

My study focuses on the novel and the commentary of *Guwangyan*, but my main concern is to present new ways of addressing certain questions about vernacular fiction that are relevant to questions of literary criticism, gender performance, and the imaginary family. *Guwangyan* reflects a literary transitional stage where fiction departs from the long and powerful shadow of historical narrative, author's agency, and manipulation of narrative devices that became more and more important to literati critics of late imperial fiction. Furthermore, since the genre concept within vernacular fiction was not yet fully established, *Guwangyan* attempts to exhibit a hybrid of the narrative structure of short stories and long novels and the thematic representation of erotic stories and fiction of chaste romance.

In Chinese narrative history, one important defelopment during the Ming-Qing period was the emergence of fictional narrative, which was distinct from historical narrative. Before the flourishing of vernacular fiction at that time, Chinese theories of the narrative were centered largely on the model of historiography. One of the symbols of the maturity of fiction during the late Ming era was that novelists began to focus more on aesthetic design, especially in terms of characters, and not merely on plot. Fiction writers had less interest in the faithful, straightforward recording of events and individuals than in depicting invented or fabricated characters. Hsiao-peng Lu claims that Ming-Qing period fiction demonstrated the maturity of the Chinese novel that was growing away from the constraints of historical narratives, thus establishing its own aesthetic criticism.[47] Cao Qujing adopts the same style of literary fiction that was heralded by *Jin*

[47] Hsiao-peng Lu, *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 142-43.

Ping Mei and claims clearly that reading a novel should not be about overly emphasizing the narrative's historical accuracy. The importance of authorial manipulation in narrative device was one of the main concerns of the commentator of *Guwangyan*, Lin Dunweng 林鈍翁, who follows the critial conventions, established by Jin Shengtan, Zhang Zhupo, and Li Yu, of exploring the literary characteristics in the novel. I will explore questions relevant to the literary inheritance and innovations in *Guwangyan*. The crucial question is how to decode the textual layers of the novel. How does the author present the rhetoric which was intertwined amid real/illusion, truth/untruth, how does the novel creatively represent the art of *qi* (奇 strangeness) in the fictional narrative, and how the does tension of the narrative switch between the plot and characterization? Moreover, *Guwangyan*'s narrative structure is different from other long novels reflecting domestic relationships, such as *Jin Ping Mei*, *Xu Jin Ping Mei* and *Xingshi yinyuanzhuan*. Beyond the main plot, the narrative continuously incorporates short stories and smaller episodes of minor characters into the story. The main structure, then, mixes short stories into an organized long novel. Therefore, the study of *Guwangyan* can help us explore questions like how does this mixed/hybrid narrative structure contribute to the entire theme of the novel? And how is this structure manifested differently in another eighteenth century novel *Rulin waishi*? Lastly, *Guwangyan* displays characteristics of later erotic romances and chaste romances, but rather than clarifying their demarcation, the novel demonstrates the power of combining both chaste and erotic descriptions and the transformation that results. To summarize, *Guwangyan* is an important novel in understanding how Chinese fiction gradually became independent from the typical historical narrative but was not yet developed enough as a formal literary genre that modern readers would feel familiar with.

Within the field of Chinese studies, serious examination of men as gendered beings is just beginning. Recent scholarship has also noted a growing interest in exploring modes of masculinity in the imaginative space of the Ming-Qing period. In Kam Louie's study of Chinese masculinity from premodern to contemporary culture, he argues that Chinese masculinity mainly covers two perspectives, *wen* 文 and *wu* 武. The former refers to culture and literary powers and the latter refers to military and physical powers. Literati, for instance, can demonstrate wisdom or intelligence through writing.[48] Martin Huang's *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China* explores the representation of the feminine "other" in the negotiating process of literati's gender identity in the Ming-Qing period. Female characters in late imperial period literary works can be regarded as mirror reflections of male characters or as the projections of male authors. Huang's gender "transvertism" in masculinity illustrates how male writers present themselves as "neglected but still faithful to wives or concubines" to vindicate their Confucian virtues or to express their frustrations about their value as virtuous men, which would be better appreciated by other men in superior positions.[49] Geng Song's *Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* focuses on the representation of *caizi* 才子(usually translated as "talented scholar") in traditional fiction and drama.[50] Masculinity and male-to-male relationships have become a focus of both gender and cultural studies in past decades. These studies have focused on the subject matter of male

[48] Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China* (Cambridge; Oakleigh, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[49] Martin W. Huang, *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006),1-9

[50] Geng Song, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004).

friendship, the continuity and transformation of masculinity within various genres and time periods, and the desire and sentiment within male same-sex relationships. Many scholars agree that in pre-modern China, men and women mostly existed within the structure of sexual segregation. Men had their own male community, in which they established a male identity through the evaluations of other men.[51] *Guwangyan* broadly demonstrates the male-male relationship within the early-to-mid Qing period cultural background. In Giovanni Vitiello's study of masculinity of this particular novel, he claims that *Guwangyan* demonstrates a hybrid male heroic image and the social criteria of homoerotic practice.[52] Following Vitiello's reading, my research will focus on the subjects of male friendship, the male same-sex relationship, and the literary representation of the male body within heterosexual marriage. Within this novel, Cao Qujing attempts to demonstrate how a man should be a friend to the literati as well as how to handle a same sex relationship in both the public and private spheres.

Following *Jin Ping Mei*, there appeared several vernacular novels that explore the balance of ethics and desire within the family context. The Ming-Qing transitional period made literati lose a certainty of the self, household, and the state. Several novels, including *Jin Ping Mei*, *Xu Jing Ping Mei*, and *Honglou meng* reflect the crises of family and the state simultaneously. *Guwangyan*, however, explores another way of representing family that would not be destroyed by the dynastic crash, but on the contrary, could be a refuge for the literati's pursuit of social duty and family stability. This idea is relevant to

[51] Geng Song claims that in pre-modern China "the male-male relationship played a more important role in the construction of masculinity than the male-female relationship did." Song, *The Fragile Scholar,* 157.

[52] Giovanni Vitiello, *The Libertine's Friend: Homosexuality and Masculinity in Late Imperial China* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2011),132-153.

the Daoist concepts of political withdrawal and achieving a *yin-yang* balance within the family. More importantly, *Guwangyan* demonstrates a larger picture of society that includes political struggle, military disaster, and dynastic breakdown, which significantly broaden the framework of the novel. The imaginary family in *Guwangyan* is not purely a microcosmic representation of the macrocosmic society, but a reflection of the literati's utopian pursuit of ideological freedom.

1.5 The Main Plot of *Guwangyan*

During the Wanli 萬曆 reign (1573-1628) in the Ming dynasty, an idler named Dao Ting 到聽, courtesy name Tu Shuo 途說, lives in Nanjing 南京. Dao Ting has no parents or brothers. His daily business is collecting and spreading news and gossip. One day, Dao Ting gets drunk, lying at the foot of the stone horse in the side hall of the ancient City God Temple. He wakes up at midnight and sees a bright candle in the hall of the temple, not sure whether he is dreaming or not. On the central chair a Ghost King with imperial robe and crown is sitting, hearing a case. The king is judging the previous unresolved cases from the Han to Ming dynasty which have not been resolved by the king of Yama. He sentences the rewarding or punishment of various people in their reincarnated lives based on their current sins, from the Emperor Ai of the Han dynasty 汉哀帝 (206 BC-222 AD) to the Ming official Yan Song 嚴嵩(1480-1567). Finally the Ghost King announces the punishment of five ghosts who are reborn as the main characters in the story proper of the novel: Qian Gui 錢貴, Zhong Qing 鍾情 , Huan E 宦萼, Tong Zida 童自大 and Jia Wenwu 賈文物. Four of these men were associated with Qian Gui in their previous lives. One is the ghost of a woman named Bai Jinzhong 白金

重 lives. She had fallen in love with an ugly young man named Huang Jinse 黃金色 from a rich family. However, her parents oppose the marriage. Consequently, Huang dies of lovesickness. Bai Jinzhong feels that she has to die because she needs to take some responsibility for Huang's death. Then three young scholars die of lovesickness for Bai Jingzhong after she refuses to marry any of them. The Ghost King sentences Bai Jingzhong to be reborn as a blind courtesan named Qian Gui. Huang is sentenced to be reborn as a poor scholar Zhong Qing, and the three young scholars will be reborn as three rich men without any talent. Dao Ting is lying on the steps of the temple and sees the entire sentencing process clearly. The next morning, he goes out of the temple and tells everybody in detail what he saw at night. Nobody believes his words and everyone thinks his talk is strange.

In Shangyuan 上元 County, Yingtian fu 應天府(Nanjing), there lives a family prostitute, named Qian. Mr. Qian has a wife, Ms. Hao 郝氏 and a daughter, Qian Gui. When Qian Gui was ten years old she was extremely beautiful but unexpectedly contracted a disease and lost her sight. Ms. Hao notices that her daughter, by her thirteenth year, has become a pretty girl and asks her to work as a blind courtesan. Ms. Hao has an extramarital lover, Zhu Sikuan, nicknamed Sai Aocao. Ms. Hao is very lascivious, preferring her lover to her husband. She asks Zhu to find a rich client for her daughter. A wealthy man living in Nanjing, Tie Hua 鐵化, runs a store selling woven mats. Tie Hua's wife, Ms. Huo 火氏, is also gorgeous and licentious. Tie Hua is bored of facing his wife every day. Hence, he is hanging out on the street to gamble or shase prostitutes, leaving his wife alone at home without sex. Zhu Sikuan introduces Tie Hua to become the first client of Qian Gui. Tie Hua is attracted by Qian Gui's beauty, so he not

only prepares a banquet and jewelry for Miss Qian, but also spends two hundred teals to deflower her. Although Qian Gui loses her virginity, she does not want to be a prostitute. She wants to marry a good man for the rest of her life. Gradually Tian Hua complains that Qian Gui is not sexually attractive and does not visit her as frequently as before. Qian Gui begs her parents to buy her a maid, Xian Tao 仙桃, who was being sold by Tong Zida's family. Xian Tao's father, Dai Qian 戴遷, lost all his property due to gambling and sold his daughter to Tong's family. Dai Qian goes to Beijing and visits Xian Tao's uncle, vowing not to gamble anymore as he straightens out his life. Qian Gui regards Xian Tao as her sister and they become intimate friends. Because of her blind eyes, Qian Gui renames Xian Tao, Dai Mu 代目(substitute eyes).

Tong Zida, also named "Tong Million," is one of the wealthiest landlords in downtown Nanjing. His wife is Ms. Tie 鐵氏, the sister of Tie Hua. Ms. Tie is corpulent, hideous, fierce, and jealous, which scares Tong Zida appreciably. One day, when one maid is impressed by the siliness of Tong and gives him a smile, Ms. Tie suspects they are having an affair and beats Tong Zida severely and sells this maid (Xian Tao) to Qian Gui. Although Tong Zida is a landlord, having such a shrewish wife, he feels haunted every day. However, Ms. Tie reads his pornographic books. She is not irritated but enjoys these books and wants Tong Zida to please her in their bedchamber. Ms. Tie feels satisfied by Tong Zida's efforts and sometimes allows him to have sex with two of their maids. Later, Tong encounters a monk who teaches him the sexual skills of absorption (*caizhan* 采戰). Tong Zida absorbs the *yin* essence of a lascivious woman, Cui Minger 催命兒, to promote his *yang* essence, which results in Cui's death. A well-practiced fox spirit attempts to take Tong's *yang* essence. However, Tong absorbs the entire essence of

the fox spirit which makes him obtain longevity by reducing the long-time practice of this fox spirit.

Zhong Qing (courtesy name Lisheng 麗生) is a scholar from a family focused on Confucian ideas over many generations. When he was a little boy, he mastered the Confucian canon. However, his elder brother, Zhong Quan 鍾悛, is not a filial son and likes eating, drinking, prostitution, and gambling. After their parents die, Zhong Quan abandons his ten-year-old brother and takes all the wealth of the family. He moves to another village with his wife, Ms. E 鄂氏 and Zhong Qing is adopted and raised by his grandfather, Xian De 鹹德. Zhong Qing has a classmate, Mei Gen 梅根, who comes from a well-off family who often financially supports Zhong Qing. One day in spring, Mei Gen invites Zhong Qing to visit the blind courtesan, Qian Gui, in the Qinhuai 秦淮 pleasure quarter of Nanjing. Zhong and Qian fall in love with each other at first meeting. With the help of Mei Gen, they consummate their romantic sentiment and pledge marriage.

Huan E is the son of Huan Shi 宦實, who holds a high official position in Beijing 北京 and is the adopted son of Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢(1568-1627). Huan's family has both monetary and political power over local civilians. However, Huan E is a simpleton who needs the teaching and practice from his nanny to learn about sexual affairs. Huan E has a wife from the Hou family. Ms. Hou 候氏 is ugly and shrewish. Her violence in the house is so threatening that Huan E is too scared to stay at home. He always stays with his servant Wu He 邬合 and consorts outside of his house. Wu He is a natural eunuch, but unfortunately has a lascivious wife, Ms. Ying 贏氏. Although Ms.Ying has an affair with a monk Wu chooses to forgive her betrayal and saves his wife from the bully and

controlling of the monk. Wu He's father-in-law is an actor who ingratiates himself with Ruan Dacheng 阮大铖 (1587-1646) through his wife's sexual feats with Ruan. Wu He's mother-in-law is named Ms. Yin 陰氏 who is also a lascivious woman, having plenty of extramarital affairs.

Jia Wenwu is a *jinshi* 進士 degree holder who is a son of a member in the Hanlin Academy. His stupidity and ignorance is close to that of Tong and Huan. Jia has no formal education but pretends to be intelligent by speaking literary jargon. Jia marries Ms. Fu 富氏 , a daughter of a local man who has a fortune of millions. Jia's degrees of *juren* 举人 and *jinshi* were purchased by his father-in-law. Ms. Fu is also a lascivious and shrewish woman who manipulates Jia as she likes via beatings and curses. When they married, Ms. Fu was in her twenties while Jia Wenwu was only thirteen years old. Jia was weak and could not fulfill the sexual desire of Ms. Fu. After ten years, Jia Wenwu obtains some aphrodisiac from a Daoist master to fulfill Ms. Fu's sexual desire, after which Jia's family becomes peaceful.

The three fellows, Tong Zida, Huan E and Jia Wenwu, share the same rotten taste. Brought together by Wu He, they become sworn brothers, who indulge in gluttony and pleasure-seeking in an extremely nauseating fashion. When they hear of a gorgeous blind courtesan nearby, they visit her together but were chastised by Qian Gui in her brothel. After Qian Gui and Zhong Qing make a commitment to their future marriage, Qian Gui keeps her loyalty to Zhong. After Zhong Qing passes the civil service examination and visits Qian Gui, they stay together for a time and have a happy chat. At that moment, Tong Zida, Huan E and Jia Wenwu visit Qian's brothel, get extremely jealous, and call their servants to beat Zhong Qing. Ms. Hao and Dai Mu want to escape the chaotic

situation. The servants of the three wealthy fellows catch Zhong Qing and Qian Gui and plan to bring them home to torture. At this crucial moment, Huan Shi sends a sealed message to his son from the capital. Huan E opens the envelope and his face turns pale with fright since the letter was written as the Chongzhen emperor 崇祯 (1611-1644) takes the throne after the Tianqi emperor 天啓 (1605-1627) passed away. Wei Zhongxian is discharged from his position and sent to Fengyang 鳳陽 but commits suicide before he arrives in Fengyang. Wei's corpse has been mutilated as a penalty. The Chongzhen emperor searches for followers of Wei Zhongxian and seriously punishes them. Huan Shi asks his son to stay at home and be cautious in order to survive. Jia Wenwu and Tong Zida also read the letter and are shocked. Their anger disappearing like melting snow, they leave Zhong Qing and Qian Gui alone and immediately return home with their servants.

Zhong Qing obtains the *juren* degree, marries Qian Gui, and takes Dai Mu as his concubine. Zhong Qing and Qian Gui visit the City God Temple to fulfill a promise to the god. That night, they have a dream in which the city god tells them of their romantic relationship in a previous life, grants two sons to them in their current life, and blesses them with a long marriage. The city god then bestows two eyeballs to Qian Gui to restore her sight. The following year, Zhong Qing sits for the imperial examination in the capital, rescuing his depraved elder brother's widow and her son on the way. Zhong obtains the degree of *jinshi*, as the runner-up in the final imperial examination, and is chosen as an observer in the Board of Punishments and is then promoted as a legal official in Zhejiang province. At that time, Huan Shi is in jail because of his relationship with Wei Zhongxian. Zhong Qing is an upright official who believes that although Huan Shi is affiliated with

Wei's party, Huan did not commit any serious sins, such as killing or harming people, and therefore does not deserve to die. Zhong Qing then submits petition to the Chongzhen emperor to save Huan Shi and Huan is granted a final sentence commanding the "removal of his official rank and the inherited benefits and sending him back to his hometown." Huan E feels extremely embarrassed by Zhong Qing's support. (Zhong Qing later was discharged from his position due to his unfavorable suggestion to the emperor.)

Tong Zida, Huan E, and Jia Wenwu have the same dream with their respective wives, Ms. Tie, Ms. Hou, and Ms. Fu. In the dream they are told by the city god that the three women are reincarnated from the fox, monkey, and tiger spirits. Although they live as human beings they still have animal hearts. Since the three wives did not do seriously evil things they get their hearts changed from the animal hearts to human hearts. The jealous tendons and devil intestines are also removed from the three women, and they are converted into good wives. Tong Zida distributes his food to rescue the people affected by famine, Huan E avoids illicit sex and helps the poor with his money, and Jia Wenwu devotes his wealth to killing evil people and protecting the city of Nanjing. The three families all practice good behavior into the future and they have plenty of descendents. When Zhong Qing returns to Nanjing, he adopts his nephew, Xiao Gouzi 小狗子, treating him like his own son. His wife and concubine deliver two sons for him. Although Zhong Qing has a harmonious family and enjoys longevity, he chooses to lead a Daoist reclusive life in the mountains of Zhejiang province.

1.6 The Outline of This Dissertation

The main body of my dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter II introduces basic knowledge about the text, such as the title, biological information of the author and the commentator, and an overview of the commentary of *Guwangyan*. Chapter III demonstrates how the narrative structure of *Guwangyan* indicates the novel is a well-organized work. I will introduce not only the larger framework of the novel, but also the internal connections of the narrative sections. Chapter IV concentrates on the characterizations in the novel. I propose that *Guwangyan* can be regarded as a character-centered narrative which focuses more on the complications and depth of the characters rather than on sequences of events or incidents. This chapter explores how the author designs the characters in terms of two concepts: dreams and *yin-yang* symbolism. The novel provides a balance in presenting the broader aspects of the characters from various levels of society and the depths of some main characters' behaviors and inner natures. Cao Qujing presents the ambiguity, fluidity, and unpredictability of each character's desire, body, sexuality and sentiment. Chapter V introduces the theme of masculinities and various gendered motifs in *Guwangyan*. I will analyze how the novel presents male friendship, homosexuality, and masculinity. *Guwangyan* demonstrates how the complex relationship between kinship and friendship in male-male relations also provides a literary way of channeling homoerotic desire into heterosexual marriage. Chapter VI focuses on the contrast between a realistic presentation of political disasters and an idealistic description of family and community reunion. When the political crisis becomes more and more threatening to the stability of many families in this fictional writing of the Ming Empire, the author attempts to demonstrate how the Daoist reclusive

way of life and the Confucian gentry concept of community can be possible influences for maintaining family households.

CHAPTER II

THE TITLE, AUTHOR, COMMENTATOR, AND COMMENTARY OF *GUWANGYAN*

This chapter concentrates on the information and discourse directly relevant to the novel *Guwangyan.* I will introduce the meaning of the title, *Guwangyan*. Though the title literally means "Words of Nonsense", it actually has a profound meaning and long historical connotation within Chinese literature. The main focus of the chapter is to interpret this title in an intellectual context within the Ming-Qing period. Furthermore, this chapter attempts to introduce the lives of Cao Qujing and Lin Dunweng, the author and commentator of *Guwangyan,* based on current scholarship. Both lived close to each other geographically and temporally. Their writings included in the preface, general comments and the marginal parts of the novel offer a larger picture of the literati's lives and their intellectual communications. More importantly, I will discuss Lin Dunweng's commentary in terms of what he inherited from previous Chinese fictional critics and what he developed through his own aesthetic scrutiny. Lastly, I will briefly introduce the textual history of *Guwangyan* within the context of its global circulation.

2.1 The Title of *Guwangyan*

First of all, it is important to explain the title of the novel, which can help readers establish their interpretation of this novel. The title *Guwangyan* 姑妄言, literally means 'talk for talking's sake'. In Chinese tradition this term has a profoundly rich meaning. The phrase transmits two ideas: on one hand, the author attempts to imply that he is telling an unrealistic, illusive and fabricated story, which includes ghosts, goddess, dreams, karma

and supernatural powers. On the other hand, even though the fabricated story seems absurd, it can also represent the true meaning of the world. If the reader reads the novel in the right way, he can find sense in the seemingly "nonsensical words." The aesthetics of presenting both aspects of "nonsense words" (*wangyan* 妄言), the unreal and the absurd, are not unique to *Guwangyan*. I will introduce later that it can be one of the more important ideas in many literary works.

The title can be regarded as a shortened version of the Chinese proverb, *guwang yan zhi* 姑妄言之, which means, "I am just talking". Originally the proverb came from a dialogue between Chang Wuzi 長梧子 and Qu Quezi 瞿鵲子 in "The Adjustment of Controversies" (*Qiwulun* 齊物論) in the Daoist classic *Zhuangzi* (莊子, 3rd century BC).

> Qu Quezi asked Chang Wuzi, saying, "I heard Confucius speaks such language as the following: 'The sagely man does not occupy himself with worldly affairs. He does not put himself in the way of what is profitable nor try to avoid what is hurtful; he has no pleasure in seeking anything from any one; he does not care to be found in any established way; he speaks without speaking, he does not speak when he speaks; thus finding his enjoyment outside the dust and dirt of the world.' Confucius considered all this to be a shoreless flow of mere words; I consider it to describe the course of the mysterious way. What do you, sir, think of it?"
>
> Chang Wuzi replied, "The hearing of such words would have perplexed even Huang Di; how should Confucius be competent to understand them? And you, moreover, are too hasty in forming your estimate of their meaning. You see the egg and immediately look for the cock that is to be hatched. You see the bow and

immediately look for the dove that is to be brought down. I will try to explain the thing to you in a rough way; do you in the same way listen to me."[53]

瞿鵲子問乎長梧子曰："吾聞諸夫子：聖人不從事於務，不就利，不違害，不喜求，不緣道，無謂有謂，有謂無謂，而遊乎塵垢之外。夫子以為孟浪之言，而我以為妙道之行也。吾子以為奚若？"
長梧子曰："是皇帝之所聽熒也，而丘也何足以知之！且女亦大早計，見卵而求時夜，見彈而求鴞炙。予嘗為女妄言之，女以妄聽之。"[54]

In this dialogue, at first Qu Quezi is confused by the way the sage lives. He believes that the sage does not care to learn about worldly affairs and enjoys a detachment from the secular world. Confucius does not agree. When Qu Quezi asks Chang Wuzi how to understand how a sage lives, Chang Wuzi attempts to explain it in a basic way. He points out that to understand how a sage lives requires time and it is impossible to comprehend it in a short period. Even Confucius does not fully understand how a sage lives. Chang Wuzi also gives a long lecture of how delusive and uncertain life is. Chang Wuzi points out that this lifestyle is so uncertain that he can only provide one possible way to interpret a sage's living. His interpretation of a sagely man's life is just one possible explanation.

The idea of *guwang yanzi* in *Zhuangzi* reflects the uncertainty of life and one possibility of explaining life is maintained in *Guwangyan*. Moreover, the literary implication of "absurd words" is adjusted and modified within the Ming-Qing period's fictional discourse. In the late imperial era, both the reading and writing of the *xiaoshuo* novel were considered very low in aesthetic appreciation. The Confucian elite believed that novels, especially vernacular fiction, were inferior to both classical prose and poetry.

[53] Zhuangzi, *Chuang Tzu : Genius of the Absurd* trans. James Legge, ed. Clae Waltham (New York: Ace Books, 1971), 57.

[54] Chen Guying 陳鼓應, *Zhuangzi Jinzhu Jinyi* 莊子今注今譯 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 1983), 87.

Cao Qujing believes that the crucial critique of a novel is established through what perspective the reader has while reading. He presents the complicated idea of *wang* in the "auhtor's- preface" of *Guwangyan*.

> Why do I name this book *wang* (false, aberrant, and nonsensical) instead of *zhen* 真 (real)? As far as I can see, nowadays the scholars are *wang*, the nouveaux riches are *wang*, the snobs are *wang*, and the parvenus are *wang*. Why? Since I see their drunkenness through my sober eyes. As for those people, they regard me as *wang* when they hear me speaking or see me drinking, reading or engaging in whatever activities. Why? Because they see my impoverishment through their snobbish eyes. I consider the others *wang* and they regard me as *wang*.
>
> 夫予之此書，不名曰真而名曰妄者，何哉？以予視之，今之衣冠中人妄，富貴中人妄，勢利中人妄，豪華中人妄，雖一舉一動之間而未嘗不妄，何也？以予之醒視被之昏故耳。至於他人，聞予一言曰妄，見予一事曰妄；予飲酒而人曰妄，余讀書而人亦曰妄，何也？以彼之富視予之貧故耳。我既以人為妄，而人又以我為妄。[55]

In Cao Qujing's point of view, pursuing a life of chasing social success, promotions or financial gain can be nonsensical. As an author, Cao Qujing claims that his novel aims to awaken people who are obsessed with daily social gain. Simultaneously, Cao Qujing also admits that he is poor himself and spends most of his energy on the writing of this novel. From a wealthy person's point of view, his work might be regarded as nonsensical. Therefore, the author believes that the concept of "absurd/nonsense" depends on the reader's point of view. At some point, everything can be regarded as absurd from any given perspective.

[55] Cao Qujing 曹去晶, *Guwangyan* 姑妄言 (Taibei: Taiwan daying baike gufen youxian gongsi, 1997), ch.1, 53. English translations are mine.

Another important idea relevant to the "absurd word" is an aesthetic representation of the illusive, fabricated, unreal and/or imagined stories. The commentator, Lin Dunweng, claims that the novel was titled *Guwangyan* since it talks about stories of ghosts and gods. Cao Qujing explains that the word *wang* (妄 fake and fabricated) is opposite to the idea of *zhen* (真 true and real) in his narrative. The main content of *Guwangyan* includes many stories about dreams, fox spirits and supernatural powers. Using the term "absurd words" when referring to a story about ghosts and the supernatural world was quite common in the Ming-Qing period. *Liaozhai zhiyi* (聊齋誌異 Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio), for instance, is a well-known short story collection that tells tales about animals, ghosts and supernatural creatures. The Qing commentator, Wang Shizhen 王士禎 (1634-1701) wrote a poem to honor *Liaozhai zhiyi*. The poem points out "just casually talk and casually listen, the rain under the bean arbor and melon vine frame is like threads. It seems that [the author] dislikes talking about the human world, [he] likes to hear ghosts sing poems in an autumn cemetery." (姑妄言之姑聽之，豆棚瓜架雨如絲。料應厭作人間語，愛聽秋墳鬼唱詩) [56] The first sentence of the poem emphasizes the casual and less realistic tone of the work. The second couplet of the poem explicitly reflects that the stories are mainly about ghosts and graves, which are opposite to stories of the human world. In 1800, the Qing scholar-official Ji Yun 紀昀 (1724-1805) published five collections of supernatural tales under the collective title *Yuewei caotang biji* (閱微草堂筆記 Jottings from the grass hut for examining minutiae).

[56] Wang Shizhen 王士禎, *Liaozhai zhiyi pingzhu* 聊齋志異評註 (Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1917) Vol.1, 6.

In this collection, there is a chapter called “Guwang ting zhi” (姑妄聽之 For the purpose of hearing). [57] Ji Yun claims that the chapter title comes from Zhuangzi’s idea of talk for talking’s sake, and he uses ghost stories to reflect his interpretation of the real world.[58] In other words, literati authors frequently used “absurd words” to refer to a story that presents a world of dreams, ghosts and supernatural creatures to reflect human society.

In summary, the title *guwangyan* emphasizes one possible way of interpreting the world through seemingly unrealistic and absurd stories. As a writer, Cao Qujing was aware that he was not taking a realistic approach to writing, by making an interaction between real versus unreal and truth versus lies in his work. Readers should try to find the real from illusion and find truth from a seemingly absurd description. This literary exploration is echoed by Cao Xueqin in his novel, *Honglou meng*. The first chapter of *Honglou meng* informs the reader of the authorial intent to compose a story full of a mixture of real and false, illusion and reality. The novel contains plenty of absurd and fantastic words (*huangtang yan* 荒唐言).

2.2 The Biographic Background of the Author and the Commentator of *Guwangyan*

There exists only limited documentation of any biographic information of the author Cao Qujing and the commentator Lin Dunweng. The preface of the novel simply indicates that when the novel was composed in the 1730s, both Cao Qujing and Lin Dunweng were in their senior years. They probably lived around the late 1600s to the

[57] Ji Yun 纪昀, *Yuewei caotang biji* 閱微草堂筆記 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe , 1980).

[58] Lai Fangling 賴芳伶, ed. *Yuewei caotang biji yanjiu* 閱微草堂筆記研究, (Taipei: Guoli Taiwan daxue chuban weiyuanhui : Guoli Taiwan daxue wenxueyuan, 1982), 8.

1740s and throughout most of their lives they were close friends. They lived in the Jiangnan 江南 area (lower Yangzi River) for a long time, particularly in the cities of Nanjing 南京 and Suzhou 蘇州, yet their original hometown was in Northeast China. I will introduce more current studies about the author and the commentator and the mystery of their life circles.

The preface of *Guwangyan* notes that the author is Cao Qujing of San Han 三韓 in the Lonely Awakened Garden (*Duxing yuan* 獨醒園). San Han, is an alternative name for the Liaodong Peninsula (遼東半島) in the Liaoning Province of northeastern China.[59] Gu Yanwu's 顧炎武 (1613-1683) *Rizilu* (日知錄 The Record of Knowledge Gained Day by Day) introduces San Han as an area of a foreign country and explains that "currently people called Liaodong peninsula, San Han. The reason for this is that during the Tianqi reign (1605-1624) when the Ming state lost Liaoyang 遼陽 to the Manchus, and existing political documents claimed the people of Liaodong peninsula to be San Han people, implying they were outsiders of the [Ming] empire.[60] Currently [in the Qing dynasty], the people of the Liaodong peninsula still call themselves San Han people, as they regarded themselves as outsiders of China." (今人乃謂遼東為三韓, ……原其故, 本於天啟初失遼陽, 以後章奏之文遂有謂遼人為三韓者, 外之也。今遼人乃以之自稱, 夫亦自外也

[59] The location, San Han, refers to the three locals in the Southern Korean Peninsula, Ma Han, Chen Han and Yi Han, which also refers to Korea in modern times. That explains why some scholars thought *Guwangyan* was a novel written by a Korean in Chinese.

[60] In the 17th century, the Manchu people rose up against the Ming dynasty of China. Liaoyang was one of the first Ming cities to fall and Nurhaci, the new Emperor of the Later Jin dynasty, made his capital there naming the city Dongjing in 1621. See Frederick W. Mote, and Denis Twitchett, ed., *Cambridge History of China, Volume 7, The Ming Dynasty, 1368–1644*, (Cambridge Eng.; New York: Cambridge University Press,1988), 600-02.

已。)[61] *Guwangyan* was composed in the early half of the 18th century when San Han had become part of the Qing Empire. Cao Qujing's hometown was in the Northeast section of China, on the Liaodong peninsula. From the content of *Guwangyan,* it seems likely that Cao Qujing had lived in Nanjing for most of his life. The novel directly portrays the city of Nanjing, its culture and costumes and its neighboring cities. However it is not quite clear how long Cao lived in the Jiangnan region and whether he moved back to Northeast China in his senior years.

In the "General Comments" (*zongping* 總評) of the *Guwangyan*, the commentator Lin Dunweng 林钝翁 claims, "I and Cao Qujing, although we have different family names, are actually as close as one unit. We have lived together since we were infants, during our middle-age years and beyond. We have not separated from each other even for a moment of breathing, like the shadow which always follows a form. We are such close friends that we live together and die together. (予與曹子去晶，雖曰異姓，實同一體。自繈褓至壯迄老，如影之隨形，無呼吸之間相離。生則同生，死則同死之友也。)[62] At the end of the "General Comments" Lin claims that he came from Old Yingzhou (Gu Yingzhou 古營州). Old Yingzhou is alternative name for the Liaodong peninsula. Since Lin Dunweng emphasizes that he and Cao Qujing never separated from one another, some scholars argue that they might be the same person.[63] Unfortunately, for

[61] Gu Yanwu 顧炎武, *Yuanchaoben Gu Tinglin Rizhilu* 原抄本顧亭林日知錄, (Taibei: Wenshizhe chubanshe, 1979), vol.29, 846-47.

[62] Cao, *Guwangyan*, *zongping*, 75.

[63] Chen Liao 陳遼, "Qishu *Guwangyan* jiqi zuozhe Cao Qujing奇書《姑妄言》及其作者曹去晶," *Nanjing ligong daxue xuebao* (shehui kexue ban) 南京理工大學學報 (社會科學版),Vol. 12, No. 5 (1999): 26-29. And Fu Zengxiang 傅憎享, "Xueqin zhishu qujing *Guwangyan* 雪芹脂叔去

lack of evidence no conclusive decision can be made. The expression of the closeness they shared throughout their lives could simply be an exaggerated metaphor for a close relationship. The date given for when they finish their writing is not convincing enough to prove that these two are the one person hides behind two names. And also in the commentary Lin explains that sometimes he cannot understand why the story was told in such a way.[64] Lin Dunweng's comments demonstrate clearly his familiarity with the Nanjing and Jiangnan local cultures. Therefore, it seems safe to argue that Cao Qujing and Lin Dunweng were close friends, both their families originally came from the same place in the Northeast part of China and they lived in the Jiangnan region for a long time.

The scholar Wang Changyou has written a speculative biography of Lin Dunweng primarily based on Lin's commentary to *Guwangyan*. Wang claims that Lin Dunweng could be a person who grew up in Nanjing and stayed there throughout his middle years, but moved back to the northern part of China in his senior years. This conclusion was based on some of Lin's commentary that reveals a detailed knowledge of Jiangnan customs and local dialects. It looks as if Lin attempted to introduce a basic knowledge of the Jiangnan culture to northern readers, which meant Lin believed that the novel's potential readers would be living in the North since the southern readers did not require such detailed information. Since the novel was not published during the Qing period, one possible reason for the expectation that northern readers would access the book could be that the book was brought to or finalized in the Northern part of China. Wang believes

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晶姑妄言,"Baoding shifan zhuankexuexiao xuebao, 保定師範專科學校學報Vol.17, No.3 (July 2004), 40-44. Xu, Gang Gary. "Ethics of Form: Qing and Narrative Excess in *Guwangyan*, " in Dewei Wang and Wei Shang *ed., Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation : From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center : Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2005), 239.

[64] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.11, 1538.

that Lin Dunweng probably lived in northern China when he wrote his commentary. Wang also provides another point to support the movements of Lin Dunweng. Even though *Guwangyan* is well written and entertaining, the novel could not have been published in Nanjing or surrounding Jiangnan cities, the center of the print industry. Wang Changyou believes that the manuscript was brought to Northern China where the commercial print industry was not as developed as the South. It could not have been published in a morally conservative, less commercial area. Based on the cultural differences portrayed in the commentary and the uneven development of printing culture in late imperial China, Wang Changyou believes one possibility was that Lin may have lived in Nanjing during his early and middle years but wrote the commentary on *Guwangyan* in Northern China in his senior years.[65] Unfortunately, a final confirmation of Wang's argument concerning Lin Dunweng's biographical information still needs other historical evidence.

2.3 The Overview of the Commentary on *Guwangyan*

In this section, I will introduce Lin Dunweng's commentary on *Guwangyan,* highlighting his contribution to literary interpretation and composition. I am hoping to offer a clearer picture of Lin's commentary to show how was he inspired by previous literary criticism and included his personal aesthetic contributions. As David Rolston notes, "for several centuries prior to this one, the Chinese read their fiction in commentary editions." "Fiction commentaries began to appear in appreciable numbers in the late Ming," and "commentary editions of famous novels become so popular that

[65] Wang Changyou 王長友, "Lin Dunweng shengping kao 林鈍翁生平考," *Ming Qing xiaoshuo yanjiu* 明清小說研究, 62.4 (2001), 204-213.

earlier editions without commentary or only rudimentary commentary went out of circulation and became rare books."[66] I will explain some critical terminology that was popular during the Ming-Qing period, but might be difficult to understand for modern readers. Furthermore, Lin Dunweng's comments also demonstrate his playful tone in reflecting the social and political crises at this time. Lin inserts an abundance of jokes about the social and political phenomena that were not directly relevant to the narrative interpretation, but enrich the reading process for literati readers.

In Andrew Plaks' study of traditional Chinese commentaries of Jin Shengtan, Mao Zonggang, Zhang Zhupo and Zhiyan zhai 脂硯齋, he divides the materials of these commentaries of vernacular novels into five categories -- "informational, impressionistic, comparative, compositional and interpretive, -- although, of course, no such distinctions existed in the original writings." [67] It is not difficult to discover that all five types of content appear within the commentary of *Guwangyan*. Informational comments identify particular names, dates, historical events and cultural background relevant to the novel. Lin Dunweng introduces the background of historical figures[68] and Jiangnan culture to the readers (ch.9, 17, 19, 20). Impressionistic comments are the commentator's subjective reaction and relative short remarks of the text, such as " Interesting" (*qu* 趣) "Marvelous" (*qi* 奇)" or "Beautiful" (*haokan* 好看). Lin Dunweng has an abundance of appreciative remarks for *Guwangyan* in his marginal comments. Comparative comments refer to a

[66] David L. Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary : Reading and Writing between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 2-4.

[67] Andrew H.Plaks, "Terminology and Central Concepts," *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, ed. David L.Rolston (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 75.

[68] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.1, 16.

comparison that the critics drew between the text and other writings within Chinese literary history. Lin compares *Guwangyan* with other novel such as *Jin Ping Mei* [69] or dramas (ch.11, 18, 22). Besides these relatively simple three categories, the two most significant types of commentaries for the Ming-Qing fictional critics were interpretive and compositional comments. I will first focus on these two aspects to show explain how Lin Dunweng encourages and guides potential readings. Then I will introduce one type of comment, playful social criticism, practiced by Lin Dunweng as a supplement to Plaks' categorization.

2.3.1 The Interpretative Commentary

The interpretive commentary refers generally to the profound interpretation of the entire work. Lin Dunweng points out two aspects to be aware of when reading the novel: the didactic purpose of reading and the dialectics of the real and unreal. Lin believes that *Guwangyan* provides an ample supply of karmic retribution stories which show it is the author's job to offer moral lessons to his readers to warn the serious readers of the morally problematic events. Lin Dunweng also comments on the dialectics of the real and unreal or true and false (*zhen* 真, *jia* 假) in *Guwangyan*. Lin explains how to read the introductory scene of the story that initiates the main plot of the novel. He also explains that in the reading process it is more important to understand why and how the author manipulates the hybrid of the real or unreal narrative than to try and identify the distinction between these two narrative elements. The preliminary comments of chapter 1 demonstrate the main approach of Lin Dunweng's literary interpretation.

[69] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.8, 918.

To talk about gods and ghosts is the main reason why the novel is entitled *Guwangyan*. Only by doing this will the novel have a clear origin. Others would say that there are more than one hundred characters in the novel, and only ten characters were introduced in the episode about reincarnation. Why didn't the author label other characters as either good or evil? Would that make the novel more convincing? I believe that if the author did that [labeling the characters' morality], he would not be composing a novel, but instead producing a giant list of ghost names. Some people would also ask why I avoided using the scene in the court of Hell to start off the novel. I think that if I did not use the episode introducing the ten people, then later when introducing other characters, the novel would become a fabricated piece of writing without a realistic foundation. It is necessary to understand the author's intention when writing [the novel] in order to understand the pain in his heart. The people who heard this story on the street were everywhere. When the saint collected children's songs, he didn't check the authenticity of each sentence. It is fascinating that people believed it was true when they heard there were many fish in the Mochou Lake 莫愁湖. People, likewise, thought it was fabricated when they heard the story of a ghost in the City God Temple (Chenghuang miao 城隍廟). The story of the fish in Mochou Lake was fabricated and the story of a ghost in the City God Temple was true. Any or all things that we hear can be real or unreal, fabricated or true. I cannot determine true or false based on the person who told the story, but we can get some knowledge from it [the dynamic of true or false].

說神說鬼，正是本書命名《姑妄言》之意。然如此，方見得來路分明。或謂一部書中不下百人，而托生者寥寥數十而已，其余或善或惡，何不皆一一

> 註明，更覺可據？予曰：若如所言，不是著書，竟是作一本大點鬼簿矣。或又謂：既如所雲，何不竟不用此一段神鬼的話？予笑曰：若不引此數十人出處，後來憑 空生出多人，又是一篇無影的杜撰了。要識作者之意，方見其苦心。 道聽途說之人，天下皆是。聖人采童謠，亦未必句句皆有實驗。妙在到聽說莫愁湖之魚，卻是假，人信以為真；說城隍廟之鬼，明是真，而人反謂之假。世上過 耳之言，真而假，假而真，不可但因其人而定真假也。見此可長一番學問。[70]

To better understand the significance of this long paragraph, I need to introduce the contents of chapter 1 in *Guwangyan*. The main character in chapter 1 is an idler, by the name of Dao Ting 到聽, who likes to tell stories to the people around him. In this section, he tells two stories, one being a rumor that there are many fish in Mochou Lake, and the other a story coming from his own dream about the God of Hell who has the power to punish or reward historical figures in their reincarnated lives. People believed his first story immediately and went to the lake but found no fish there. Concerning Dao Ting's second story, the audience laughed at this dream-like story and made fun of him. However, Lin Dunweng claims that the fish story was fabricated, while the ghost story was real. People were not able to identify which story was fabricated. At first glance, it is hard to be convinced by Lin's comment since it is more reasonable to believe in the possibility of fish in a lake than a court in Hell. However, I argue that the major point emphasized by Lin Dunweng is how to interpret the real meaning of content beyond the surface logic of the narrative. In other words even though the fish story is easily believed, the truth implied by the court in Hell tale deserves more exploration. The truth here is not linked to a real event but has an implicit or hidden meaning linked to the scene through which the author presents his ideas of sentiment, morality and karmic retribution. As Lin Dunweng points out people are easily fooled by the surface of reality and misinterpret the

[70] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.1, 97.

deeper intentions of the author. One real way of improving the audience's understanding is to be aware of the blurry division between truth and lies, reality and illusion, and the impossibility of making a clear distinction in a fictional work.

The main principle behind interpreting the dialectics of fiction and reality becomes more specific in Lin Dunweng's comments comparing *Guwangyan* and *Jin Ping Mei*. Lin emphasizes that the composition of a novel does not need to follow the real sequence of an historical event.

> *Jin Ping Mei* is an ancestor of *xiaoshuo* fiction. Some unenlightened readers claim that the novel is just an account book detailing the business of Ximen Qing's family. They complain that the dates and times in *Jin Ping Mei* do not match historical reality and some stories deviate from actual events. They claim that the [unmatched] narratives are not only incorrect, but amusing. I would like to comment that if a reader has no vision, then we should not discuss the readings with him. *Guwangyan* tells the family story of Ruan Dacheng. Historically Ruan collaborated with Wei Zhongxiang's faction for just seven years. Yet, in the novel Ruan has a concubine named Jiaojiao, and he witnesses her life over a span of twenty years until her death. These two time spans have a significant difference. The purpose of writing in this way is not only to humiliate Ruan Dacheng, but also to express the people's resentment. If the author did not write like this, the novel could not exhaust the evil side of this character. The novelist writes down his text according to what the people talk about events. But when writing a novel is it necessary to follow Sima Qian's model of the "Book of History" and write up

the events in a year by year, month by month, and day by dad fashion? If the reader is that ignorant, the book's outcome will be unfortunate.

《金瓶梅》一書可稱小說之祖，有等一竅不通之輩，謂是西門慶家一本大賬簿。又指摘內中有年月不合，事有相左者為謬，誠為可笑。真所謂目中無珠者，何足與言 看書也如此書中說阮大鋮家事，大鋮逢迎逆珰，僅七年耳。今自彼得嬌嬌起，至後嬌嬌死，將二十年，屈指所差多矣。此不過欲極辱大鋮，以雪眾忿。不如此寫， 不足以盡其惡。……但作小說者，不過因人言事，隨筆成文，豈定要學太史公作《史記》用年月表耶？大凡書遇此等不通人持看，亦書之一厄。[71]

This comment presents a clear distinction between historical narrative and fiction. Lin Dunweng believes that the writing of fiction should allow authorial freedom in the manipulation of the historical reality. The organization of the fictional plot should work for the aesthetic purpose of demonstrating the author's preference in presenting the characters. The readers who cannot distinguish history from fiction do not deserve a literary communication. The main idea of this comment echoes Lin Dunweng's interpretation of the fiction in chapter 1 of *Guwangyan*. Lin Dunweng proposes two important pre-conditions in writing, one is that historical truth and faulse can be mixed up in fiction, and the other is that the time of the narrative can be different from chronological time.

2.3.2 The Compositional Commentary

Besides the interpretative comments of the novel, late imperial literary critics also paid particular attention to how the novel was composed. They explored the detailed materials of the narrative structure, narrative devices and the art of the characterization. Andrew Plaks introduces the idea that the late imperial critics "[whose writings] worked

[71] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.8, 918.

in more than one field of aesthetics—fiction, poetry, painting, and drama, so that their critical writings show a high degree of cross-fertilization between the separate art forms."[72] Lin Dunweng's comments follow critical conventions and demonstrate a familiarity with drama and consideration based on moral balance. I will introduce his aesthetic contributions to the fictional composition from three aspects: the adaptation of drama critics on the narrative structure, the narrative device of the contrastive reflection, and the art of the characterization.

In Lin Dunweng's commentary to *Guwangyan*, he adopts several critical terms from the practice of drama criticism, especially in late imperial *chuanqi* 傳奇 dramas, when commenting about the structure of *Guwangyan*. Lin Dunweng pays special attention to the beginning of the novel, as previously mentioned, he interprets the Court in Hell from the aspect of legitimating the author's creative imagination. Lin also identifies the literary innovation in the beginning part of *Guwangyan* by adopting a technique from *chuanqi* drama. In the commentary preceding chapter 1, Lin Dunweng writes:

> Although this chapter contains the main content of the novel, it seems to be the appendix of the novel. It resembles the first chapter of a *chuanqi* drama which features the *fu mo* 副末 character (a middle-aged man with low social status, a supporting role) coming onto the stage. Although the first chapter is not directly relevant to its central content, it is still necessary. This chapter introduces the role of Dao Ting who is a supporting character within the whole drama. Dao Ting has no parents or brothers. The main character of *Guwangyan*, Zhong Qing, also has

[72] Plaks, "Terminology and Central Concepts," 122.

> no parents. These two orphans correspond to each other with similar family backgrounds, even though one becomes an idler and the other becomes an upright gentleman. The novel is showing how difficult it is to become an outstanding person like Zhong Qing. Dao Ting enjoys hearing new stories, and speaking about meaningless news. This kind of idler exists all over the world.
>
> 此一回書雖系正文，猶文之余文也，如傳奇之副末開場一出。雖與正文無涉，然系必不可少者，看者須知。此開卷說到聽，謂他上無父母，中鮮兄弟者，何意後來引出鐘生，也是無父母鮮兄弟來，遠遠相對。這一個便流落做了閑漢，那一個便成了正人君子，愈見鐘生 之不可及也。又謂到聽惟以聽新聞、說白話為事。近日此輩人幾遍於天下矣。[73]

In this paragraph, Lin Dunweng notes a narrative device that introduces the main plot through a minor character, a low status middle age man. To theatrical critics, the device is called "the minor role who launches the performance" (*fumo dengchang* 副末登場) which was typical for the *chuanqi* dramas during the Ming-Qing period. Lin Dunweng adopts the term to refer to the beginning episode of *Guwangyan,* which allows the idler, Dao Ting, to introduce the main characters and the plot for the entire novel. Lin explains that the supporting male character is able to establish contrast and complexity at the beginning of the narrative. On one hand, the idler has a similar childhood conditions as the male protagonist, Zhong Qing, even though they have different lives with different outcomes. Their contrastive lives validate the virtue of the male protagonist, Zhong Qing. On the other hand, Dao Ting is fond of broadcasting news and stories which make him a perfect role to initiate the narrative. Plenty of stories relevant to contemporary society can be woven into the idler's talk. Furthermore, Lin Dunweng points out that the voice of the supporting role does not appear only once in the beginning of the novel. Dao Ting also

[73] Cao, *Guwangyan,* ch.1, 100.

reappears at the end. In chapter 24 of *Guwangyan* Dao Ting passes away and other persons have several children in the time period. Through this lineage, the people who live later than Dao Ting can attest to the truth of his talk about the Hell's Court. Therefore the story told by Dao Ting is proved to be authentic, and the structure of the entire novel causes full circle through the appearance of this minor role in the final scene.

The dramatic device of launching a story through a supporting role and using that role to connect the different narrative strands together is also developed in *Rou putuan* 肉蒲團 (The Carnal Prayer Mat). Li Yu, the famous novelist and dramatist of the early Qing period, likes to use theatrical concepts in the composition and reading of fiction. Li Yu's erotic novella, *Rou putuan*, also uses a minor role to introduce both the male protagonist and the entire narrative. In chapter 2 of *Rou putuan* one comment praises the "*fumo dengchang"* technique by pointing out "this is the variation of the fiction and it is where the author avoids the traditional narrative pattern." (此從來小說之變體，乃作者闢盡窠臼處)[74] The comment says it is too clichéd to start a narrative with the story of the male lead, and likewise, it will inspire a reader's curiosity and suspicion (*yigu* 疑孤) of the story of the minor role. The device makes the storyline harder to predict (*zhuomo buding* 捉摸不定) by framing it through the introduction of a minor character.[75] Li Yu's sophisticated use of this device not only introduces the theme, but serves as a device to unify the structure of the entire narrative.

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[74] Li Yu, *Rou Putuan* 肉蒲團, in *Siwuxie huibao* 思無邪匯寶 (Taibei: Faguo guojia kexue yanjiu zhongxin and Taiwan daying baike gufen youxian gongsi, 1994), vol.15, 162. English translation is from Li Yu and Patrick Hanan, *The Carnal Prayer Mat* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1996),31-32.

[75] Li and Hanan, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, 31-32.

Lin Dunweng's attempts to establish a comparative parallel between the structure of *Guwangyan* and the drama performance peak in chapter 11 of *Guwangyan*, halfway through the entire 24-chapter novel. Lin comments that this middle chapter seems like a "refreshing" (*xin* 新) scene within a theatrical performance. Lin points out "action half way through the performance, such as jumping, fighting, playing instruments or singing will refresh the attention of the audiences' eyes and ears." (如演戲至半本時，雜以跌打彈唱做一間斷，使眼目略新一新)[76] Although these "refreshing" scenes are not directly relevant to the main plot, the interruption activates interest and when the actors reenter, the audience follows the performance ahead with greater anticipation. Chapter 11, in *Guwangyan,* tells an anecdote about one character who travels in Southwestern China. The traveling character and his anecdote have no direct relationship to the main plot. However, Lin Dunweng feels that this episode piques the readers' interest. Lin Dunweng is familiar with the adaptation of dramatic techniques to fiction writing. His comments regarding the beginning and middle parts of the novel demonstrate his understanding of the narrative structure of the novel and the application of the practice through theatrical performance which in turn applaud the author's innovation.

Not only is Lin Dunweng inspired by the critics of drama, his comments also reflect established fiction criticism in the Ming Qing periods. Lin Dunweng frequently uses the word "*zhengbi*" (正筆 direct writing), "*xianbi*" (閑筆 casual writing), "*fu* " (伏 implicit writing), "*zhaoying*" (照應 corresponding reflection), to refer to the techniques used in *Guwangyan*. In this section, I will introduce one narrative device systematically explored by Lin Dunweng. In Chinese this narrative technique is called "*chen*" (襯

[76] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.11, 1264-65.

reflect), "*zhengchen*" (正襯 direct reflection) and "*fanchen*" (反襯 contrastive reflection). In Andrew Plaks' interpretation, the concept of "*chen*" refers to a technique of "describ[ing] the manner in which one narrative unit or figure is both supported and highlighted by the appearance of another unit of analogous or contrasting configuration. "[77] Generally "*zhengchen*" refers to the analogous units, for instance the parallel portrayal of a lady and her maid or a male master and his servant within a household. A lady and her maid and a master and his servant share similar personalities, virtues and weaknesses. In *Guwangyan*, the female protagonist Qian Gui 錢貴 and her maid are one example of "*zhengchen*". They have similar personalities and both maintain loyalty to the same scholar. They are portrayed more like two aspects of a virtuous woman rather than as two different characters. Lin Dunweng particularly emphasizes the device of "*fanchen*", the contrastive reflection used in *Guwangyan*. In the novel, several episodes contain lascivious scenes and characters paired against the chaste scenes or characters. Lin believes that the novelist, by placing these two opposite or contrasting units together, is attempting to demonstrate the power of virtue and chastity. Lin Dunweng believes that through the contrastive representation of good and evil in the novel, readers are better able to access the importance of the good virtues in an event or character in a more subtle way.

Lin Dunweng's particular interest in the contrastive reflection technique follows the tradition of Chinese fictional criticism. The critics of late imperial fiction were extremely interested in the techniques of setting up the coordinates by framing figures and scenes through parallel concepts. Mao Zhanggang, for instance, prefers to use paired

[77] Plaks, "Terminology and Central Concepts," 108.

terms, *shi* 實 and *xu* 虛, to refer to truth and fabrication in *Sanguo yanyi*. Zhang Zhupo uses the terms *leng* 冷 and *re* 熱 to refer to cold scenes vs. hot scenes in Ximeng Qing's household in *Jin Ping Mei*. Lin Dungweng is particularly fond of the contrastive representation of lasciviousness (*yin* 淫) and chastity (*zhen* 貞) in *Guwangyan.* In chapter 8 Lin Dunweng claims,

> This entire chapter tells sexual stories, except for Yang Lian who remonstrates against Wei Zhongxian. Yan Lian's behavior seems loyal and upright when we compare his action to the lascivious and evil characters. All of the obscene words cannot pollute the memorial of Yang Lian, on the contrary, they demonstrate the value of his accusation. Evil people and evil events have their own value [in fictional narrative].
>
> 這一回內通篇都是淫色之事，從中有楊公劾魏忠賢一疏，被這些淫惡的人一襯，更覺忠義凜然。許多淫褻之語，不但不玷楊公之疏，反足以更顯其辭，壞人壞事亦有可用之處.[78]

Chapter 8 relates the incestuous relationships and illegal affairs of Wei Zhongxian and government officials following him. Lin Dunweng points out that although the entire bureaucratic system was manipulated and controlled by Wei Zhongxian, and almost every official was threatened by Wei's power, the decent official, Yang Lian, bravely submitted his accusation of Wei to the emperor. While Wei Zhongxian and his followers focus on obtaining private benefits from a corrupt system, Yang Lian attempts to work for the people of the state without exercising his own personal desires. The contrastive behavior of Wei Zhongxian and Yang Lian highlights Yang's loyalty and honesty to the

[78] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.8, 916.

empire. Chapter 8 of *Guwangyan* represents the "*zhen*" (fidelity) of an upright official by contrastively reflecting the lascivious stories of other corrupt officials.

The contrastive parallels of lasciviousness and chastity also appear in chapter 14 of *Guwangyan*, the episode about a lascivious women called Qijie 奇姐 who is killed by a chaste lady named Zhengu 貞姑.[79] Lin writes in a pre-chapter commentary to chapter 14 that by intertwining an extremely lascivious story with the tale of a chaste woman, this chapter demonstrates the destructions between chastity and lasciviousness much more vividly. (寫奇姐奇淫，內夾寫一貞姑之貞。貞者更顯其貞，淫者愈覺其淫) [80] In the interlineal commentary of chapter 14, Lin consciously claims that Zhengu is a contrastive reflection of Qijie, therefore in order to demonstrate the incompatibility of lewdness and chastity, Qijie dies by the hand of Zhengu. (寫一貞姑，為奇姐作一反襯。貞淫不並立，故奇姐死於她手也)[81] Lin emphasizes that by manipulating the contrast of the characters' names, personalities and lives, Cao Qujing demonstrates the importance of virtue. For Lin, the pure power of morality and chastity is one of the main motivations for Cao Qujing to write this novel.

2.3.3 Commentaries on Characterization

One common focus found in Ming-Qing period fictional criticism is the attention paid to characterization, making it as important as the plot.[82] Lin Dunweng also

[79] I will introduce the detailed story of Qijie and Zhengu in Chapter IV of this dissertation.

[80] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.14, 1621-22.

[81] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.14, 1731.

[82] Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary*, 192.

demonstrates this technique by pointing out that Cao Qujing carefully designs his characters' names to express insights into their personalities. Many of the main characters' names in *Guwangyan* have implicit meanings.The female protagonist's name, Qian Gui, means "valuing money" and reflects her previous life as a woman who loves money more than the talent of a man. The male protagonist's name, Zhong Qing, means "devoted to love" and implies his loyalty towards his lover. Even a very minor character who appears just briefly has a well thought out name. In chapter 6 of *Guwangyan*, Lin Dunweng reminds readers to pay attention to the name of a maid, Chuisi 垂絲 "falling line". When the maid is asked by her mistress, a concubine, to send a love letter to a boy, the concubine attempts to seduce the boy into an illicit affair. In this case, the maid, Chuisi becomes as a fishing line who tries to hook the boy. The names of the five main characters are also meaningful. Several male characters who have oversized male organs have names related to their body, such as Yang Da 楊大 (homonym for 陽大, "big phallus") and Zhu Sikuan 竹思寬(puns on wanting for a larger space). Lin Dunweng comments that Cao Qujing uses metaphorical associations in the naming of his characters so many times that readers should be aware of this important technique.[83]

In addition to glossing the name of characters, Lin Dunweng also explores the figural repetition and individuality in *Guwangyan*'s characterization. Lin claims although the novel sometimes presents several characters as one type, such as lascivious women or silly men, each character is portrayed as a distinctive individual. In chapter 6 of *Guwangyan*, Lin Dunweng argues, "there are plenty of women who have illicit affairs in this novel, but none of them is doubling another character."(一部書偷漢之婦人不少，

[83] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.6, 688.

並無一相重者)[84] Chapter 6 tells the stories of two lascivious women who have illicit affairs in different situations. One portrayal is about a girl who was seduced by her senior classmates and another is about a teenage girl who has sex with her boyfriend. Although these two girls do not stay within moral boundaries and can be labeled as lascivious women, Lin Dunweng believes that because of their different personalities and experiences, they are written as two distinctive, individual characters. These two characters are duplicated, but not repetitive, and neither is redundant. The pre-chapter commentary of chapter 10 of *Guwangyan* claims,

> Huan E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida, are the same type of person but they have different dispositions. Each character has unique gestures and language and is not like any other. Huan E's foolishness comes from being very unrestrained, Jia Wenwu's foolishness comes from being very hypocritical, and Tong Zida is just foolish.
>
> 宦、賈、童三人雖為同類，然氣質各別。一個人是一個身段，一番談吐，毫無相似。宦萼之呆也狂，賈文物之呆也假，童自大之呆也，則真呆矣.[85]

These comments are similar to Zhang Zhupo's comments on the characters in *Jin Ping Mei*. In his *Jin Ping Mei dufa* (金瓶梅讀法, How to Read the *Jin Ping Mei*) Zhang uses the term "duplication without repetition" (*fan er bu fan* 犯而不犯) to introduce this technique.

> One of the marvelous things about the *Jing Ping Mei* is the expert use of the device of duplication [*fanbi* 犯筆] without being repetitive [*fan* 犯]. For example,

[84] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.6, 675.

[85] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.10, 1141.

> the author depicts Ying Pojue and then goes on to depict Xie Xida, but throughout the work Ying Bojue remains Ying Bojue and Xie Xida remains Xie Xida. Each of them retains a distinct identity and mode of conversation so that there is never the slightest confusion between them. He depicts a Pan Jinlian and then goes on to depict a Li Ping'er. This could be described as repetitive, yet from first to last, whether they are together or apart, there is never the slightest confusion between them in their words or acts….All of these are examples of the marvelous way in which the author purposely duplicates characters [*te te fan shou* 特特犯手] and yet succeeds individualizing each character so that they remain distinct.[86]
>
> 《金瓶梅》妙在善於用犯筆而不犯也。如寫一伯爵，更寫一希大，然畢竟伯爵是伯爵，希大是希大，各人的身份，各人的談吐，一絲不紊。寫一金蓮，更 寫一瓶兒，可謂犯矣，然又始終聚散，其言語舉動，又各各不亂一絲。諸如此類，皆妙在特特犯手，卻又各各一款絕不相同也。（《读法》四十五）

Lin Dunweng and Zhang Zhupo agree that the novelist may intentionally portray characters with similar styles but still must keep his/her characteristics distinct.

2.3.4 Jokes and Political Criticism in Lin Dunweng's Commentary

As we have seen, Lin Dunweng's commentary on *Guwangyan*, establishes a connection between *Guwangyan* and previous novels and drama and fictional criticism. Lin's knowledge of Chinese literary conventions can significantly help a modern reader to interpret *Guwangyan* from a pre-modern aesthetic perspective. There are parts of his commentary that reflect the commentator's satire, criticism, mockery of society and politics. This type of commentary is not discussed by Andrew Plaks and does not frequently appear in Ming-Qing period fiction. I briefly introduce it here as a supplement

[86] Rolston, *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, 225-26.

to Plak's categorization of the Chinese fictional commentary system. I also provide a hypothesis as to the reading circle of this novel. There are two distinct groups of commentaries in *Guwangyan* relevant to this type, one being humor involving satire about desire, sexuality and the body. The other group is made up of harsh criticism about the ruler and the ministers of late Ming society. Lin Dunweng clearly claims that the Ming Tianqi emperor 天啟 (r.1621-27) and the Southern Ming Hongguang emperor 弘光 (r.1644-1645) are not really qualified to be rulers. In the pre-chapter commentary of chapter 8, Lin Dunweng claims that the Tianqi emperor is ultimately responsible for most of the disasters and evil caused by Wei Zhongxian, (皆天啟之過) [87] since Wei came from a lower class family and became the most important minister of the empire practicing evils without constraint. Almost all of the bureaucratic officials were adopted sons of eunuch Wei. (及舉朝之幹兒廝養)[88] As Lin writes the Tianqi emperor was responsible since he did not choose upright, loyal officials. (天啟不任忠賢)[89] In chapter 23, Lin Dunweng comments that the only emperor whoever had sex with a donkey is the Hongguang emperor because he could not control his desires. (千古以來之帝王，以驢為媾者，只他獨異) [90] It was quite rare for previous commentators to add humor or political satire into their commentaries. If the commentator had any plan for publication, these two different groups of remarks seem inappropriate, since humor about the body, especially when the body is that of the emperor, is too straightforward and political

[87] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.8, 915.

[88] Ibid.

[89] Ibid.

[90] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.23, 2898.

commentary is too subversive. My hypothesis here is that Lin Dunweng suggested reading this novel as a form of entertainment. He and his literati friends took pleasure in reading and exploring the fictional aesthetics and the political commentary. It seems likely that Cao Qujing wrote *Guwangyan* for a relatively small, elite circle, since it is intellectually acceptable and enjoyable within this realm to explore descriptions of the body, desires, and politics without self censorship of political or moral restraint.

2.4 The Disappearance and International Circulation of *Guwangyan*

The preface to *Guwangyan* is dated 1730, but there is no evidence of its early circulation in manuscript form. It was not until the early 1990s that a typeset version of *Guwangyan* was published in Taiwan. Russian sinologist Boris L'vovich Riftin was one of the scholars who discovered the complete manuscript in the Lenin Library in Leningrad (now the Russian National Library in St. Petersburg).[91]

Since then, *Guwangyan* has circulated around the world. In the 1840s, the manuscript of *Guwangyan* was collected by the Russian astronomer K.I.Skachkov (1821-1883) who graduated in 1844 from the Richelieu College in Odessa, Russia, majoring in physics and mathematics. Skachkov also stuided astronomy and agriculture at school. In 1848, he was sent to Beijing by the Russian government to build the astronomy observatory in a Catholic Church. Having broad interests in book collection, Skachkov bought and received as gifts various books about astronomy, geography, history,

[91] Boris L'vovich Riftin 李福清, "*Guwangyan* xiaoshuo chaoben zhi faxian《姑妄言》小說抄本之發現," *in Guwangyan* 姑妄言, ed. Chen Qinghao陳慶浩 and Wang Qiugui 王秋桂 (Taibei: Taiwan daying baike gufen youxian gongsi, 1997), vol. 45, 3053-57. The ten volumes of *Guwangyan* are numbers 36-45 in the 39-volume series *Siwuxie huibao* 思無邪匯寶 (there are no numbers 25-30 in the series).

literature, religion and so on. In 1859 he returned to Russia with the Chinese books he has collected. In 1878, a wealthy Russian merchant purchased all of the Skachkov's collection of Chinese books and donated them to the library of the Rumjantsev Museum which later became part of the Russian National Library. In 1964, Russian sinologist Boris L'vovich Riftin found the entire manuscript of *Guwangyan* in the Russian National Library and in 1966 wrote an article introducing his discovery of *Guwangyan* and other Chinese books.[92] The abridged version of *Guwangyan* in two chapters that surfaced in 1941 and was published by the Shanghai Eugenics Society (*Shanghai yousheng xuehui*, 上海優生學會) in a limited edition.[93] In 1942, Shanghai Zhonghua Book Company (Shanghai Zhonghua Shuju, 上海中華書局) published almost the same two of *Guwangyan.*[94] The novel was first published in its entirety in 1997.

Within a short time after *Guwangyan* was published in 1997, Western and Chinese scholars realized its academic value. Taiwanese scholar Chen Yiyuan 陳益源 presented a detailed bibliographic study concerning the "adopted material" of this novel in 1999. Chen points out that several *lienü* 烈女 stories in *Guwangyan* (ch.3, 7 and 11) were taken from *Liuxi waizhuan* 留溪外傳 (Unofficial biographies by Chen Liuxi) compiled by

[92] For a brief discussion of the textual history of the novel and the manuscript copy in Russia, see "*Guwangyan* chuban shuoming," 姑妄言出版說明 in *Guwangyan*, vol.36, 15-33. And Zhu Ping 朱萍, "*Guwangyan* de faxian yu yanjiu shuping 《姑妄言》的發現與研究述評," *Jianghuai Luntan* 江淮論壇 6 (2002). Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative,* 251-52.

[93]The detailed information of this modern version of *Guwangyan* is in Wang Changyou 王長友, "Guanyu Zhou Yueran yu *Guwangyan* canchaoben he cankanben 關於周越然與 《姑妄言》殘抄本和殘刊本," *Wenxian*, no.2 (2000), 113-31, 114-15.

[94] Huang Lin 黃霖 introduces these two published chatpers in his *Zhongguo gudai xiaoshuo baike quanshu* 中國古代小說百科全書 (Zhongguo dabaikquanshu chubanshe), 1993, 107.

Chen Ding 陳鼎(1650-?) of Jiangyin 江陰. Cao Qujing adopted travelogues from thousands of words including Lu Ciyun's陸次雲 (1636-after 1720, magistrate of Jiangyin county during the 1680s) *Tongxi Qianzhi* 峒溪纖志 (Detailed records of the valleys inhabited by the Tong [minority people of Guizhou]) and Xu Zuanzeng's 許纘曾(1627-1700) *Dianxing jicheng* 滇行紀程 (Records of a trip to Yunnan).[95] Current research also demonstrates several historical interpretations of the text. Fan Tongshuo's thesis studies the three emperors, Tianqi, Chongzhen and Hongguang and three officials, Wei Zhongxian, Ma Shiyin, and Ruan Dacheng in *Guwangyan*. [96] The story of those emperors and officials also appear in historical narratives such as *Mingshi* (明史 Ming History, 1645-1652),[97] *Shuikuishu houji*石匱書後集 (The Sequal of Book of the Stone Case, 1664),[98] *Mingji beilue* 明季北略 (An Outline of the Late Ming), [99] *Mingji nanlue* 明季南略 (Outline Record of the Late Ming in the South), [100] Fan's study demonstrates the similarities and differences between these historical figures appears in *Guwangyan* and other historical books.

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[95] Chen yiyuan 陳益源, "*Guwangyan* sucai laiyuan chukao 姑妄言素材來源初考," and "*Guwangyan* sucai laiyuan erkao 姑妄言素材來源二考," in *Gudai xiaoshuo shulun* 古代小說述論 (Beijing: Xianzhuang shuju, 1999), 127-137.

[96] Fan Tingshuo 範庭碩 , "Guwangyan Ming mo hunjun yu jianchen renwu zhi xingxiang fenxi 《姑妄言》明末昏君與奸臣人物之形象分析," Guoli Chenggong daxue shuoshi lunwen,(2014).

[97] Zhang Tingyu 張廷玉, ed., *Mingshi* 明史, (Beijing: Zhonghua shju,1974).

[98] Zhang Dai 张岱, *Shikuishu houji* 石匮书后集, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2008).

[99] Ji Liuqi 計六奇 ed., *Mingji beilue* 明季北略, (Taibei : Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1968).

[100] Ji Liuqi 計六奇 ed., *Mingji neilue* 明季南略, (Taibei : Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1979).

In 1997, Yenna Wu's book on *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* introduced *Guwangyan* to English audiences.[101] Wu also points out the connection between this novel and *Xingshi*. Martin Huang's comparative reading of *Guwangyan* and *Yesou puyan* argues that *Guwangyan* pays similar attention to the cult of *qing* as do other literati novels and dramas. Huang argues that the novel "polarizes sexual relationships into the two distinct categories of faithful love (*qing*) and promiscuous lust (*yu*)."[102] The story of Zhong Qing and Qian Gui uses a typical scholar and beauty trope which emphasizes the desexualized romantic sentiment. Huang believes that Zhong Qing's loyalty towards Qian Gui parallels his political loyalty towards the falling Ming empire. Huang also claims that *Guwangyan* contains two separate realms, one is the chaste romance and the other is the highly erotic narrative. [103] Gary Xu analyzes *Guwangyan* from the perspective of generic convention of Chinese literatures and regards the novel as a parody of three fictional motifs: "the erotic *qing* of pornographic fiction, the purified *qing* of scholar-beauty romance, and the henpecking of comic fiction."[104] Xu points out that *Guwangyan* reflects the blurry distinction between the romance passion and sexual desire in the mid-Qing fictional narrative. The novel's excessive description of sexuality is a pungent and pointed mockery of the censorship in the Qing era. My following analysis of *Guwangyan* will introduce more detail of these current researches and establish critical communication with them.

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[101] Yenna Wu, *Ameliorative Satire and the Seventeenth-Century Chinese Novel, Xingshi Yinyuan Zhuan-Marriage as Retribution, Awakening the World*, Chinese Studies, V. 9 (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1999),290-91. Wu translates the title of the novel as *Casual Yarns*.

[102] Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative*, 255.

[103] Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative*, 236-70.

[104] Xu, "Ethics of Form: Qing and Narrative Excess in *Guwangyan*," 239.

CHAPTER III

THE AUTHORIAL MANIPULATION OF THE STRUCTURE IN *GUWANGYAN:* KARMIC RETRIBUTION, *YIN-YANG* SYMBOLISM, AND NUMEROLOGY

During the Ming-Qing period, narrative structure was an important concern to the novelist, commentator, and literary theorist. The structural framing of fiction represents the author's consideration of morality, the human body and cosmological powers. *Guwangyan* is a novel containing twenty-four chapters and portrays more than one hundred characters and many political events during the late Ming dynasty through the establishment of the Southern Ming court. It is necessary to explore how the story is represented by the author and what kind of moral message was conveyed throughout the novel. *Guwangyan* is a well-organized and lengthy novel, largely framed by karmic retribution ideology and *yin-yang* symbolism. The novel is also internally constructed by *yin-yang* numerology that conveys the author's implicit attitudes towards morality, gender interaction and family relationships. I propose that based on the power dynamics between the family unit and society displayed in the narrative, *Guwangyan* can be divided into three parts: chapters 1-10, 11-21 and 22-24. The first part depicts distinct aspects of a turbulent society: the female protagonist lives in a brothel; the three main families have shrewish wives, and many late Ming officials choose lustful, indulgent lives. The second part shows the progression that takes place to reestablish the *yin-yang* balance within the three families. The husbands transform from bad to good people who use their money and sexual capabilities in a more morally appropriate way. The final section broadly illustrates the disastrous outcomes at the level of the individual, military leaders, and the emperor, and the dynasty itself. In these last chapters the tone of the

narrative becomes more politicaly tragic than in the previous two parts. Throughout the entire novel the author presents the idea that a harmonious family can be an alternative haven for people when living in a decadent society.

In this chapter, I will construct a case that shows that even though the sexual description of the novel seems pornographic, the author holds conservative attitudes towards sexuality by interweaving karmic retribution and *yin-yang* symbolism as parts of the structural frame. While there are many lascivious characters and obscene scenarios in the novel, the author attempts to cast male authority as properly operating inside sexual relationships. In the latter part of the novel, several male characters reveal a more moral dynamic when they regain control of their bodies, uphold personal sexual capability, and maintain their family's stability. From a structural perspective, the narrative of the novel attempts to emphasize the *yang* (both ethical and gendered) elements of sexuality within the family relationship. More importantly, the novel is internally structured by a *yin-yang* numerology that uses both complementarity and contrasts between masculine and feminine. I will explore the narrative structure of *Guwangyan*, arguing that this novel is much more complex than its current representation as a work of scurrilous pornography.

3.1 Narrative Structure of the Chinese Novel during the Ming-Qing Transitioinal Period

Since narrative structure is a crucial interpretative aspect for both Ming-Qing literary critics and contemporary scholars, first of all I will provide a brief overview of the scholarly works concerning the structural aesthetics of Ming-Qing fictions including *Guwangyan*. As conscientious writers, the outstanding novelists during the Ming and Qing periods usually had a well-designed, bigger picture of their writing goals. The short

story collections and the novels in the Ming-Qing period demonstrate a sophisticated, authorial control of structure. Both the narrative and commentary capture the reader's attention, creating anticipation of the larger framework of the piece and the internal connection between chapters within the novel. Zhang Zhupo for instance, in his comments on *Jin Ping Mei*, points out that "writing a novel is like building a house. [The novelist] needs to connect the girders, pillars, tenons and mortise coherently without one seam. Reading others' literary works should be like the deconstruction of the house by scattering each tenon belonging to different girders and pillars, in front of my eyes." (做文如蓋造房屋，要使梁柱筍眼，都合得無一縫可見；而讀人的文字，卻要如拆房屋，使某梁某柱的筍，皆一一散開在我眼中也). [105] Zhang Zhupo believes that one important aspect of reading a novel is to explore how the novelist manipulates the narrative structure. Li Yu also claims that the most crucial tool in writing a dramatic piece is the structure. He points out some specific techniques on how to compose the frame and design the internal structure of the drama such as: "Establish a Core Idea (*li zhunao* 立主腦)," "Fine Stitching (*mi zhenxian* 密針線)", and "Lessen Plot Lines (*jian touxu* 減頭緒)." [106] Li Yu believes that there is a logical connection between drama and fiction composition, and his fiction writings demonstrate an emphasis on structure of the

[105]This claim comes from the pre-chapter comment of the second chapter in *Jin Ping Mei*, see Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng 蘭陵笑笑生 and Zhang Zhupo 張竹坡, *Zhang Zhupo piping Jin Ping Mei* 張竹坡批評金瓶梅, edited by Wang Rumei 王汝梅, Li Zhaoxun 李昭恂,Yu Fengshu 於鳳樹, (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1991), 40.

[106] Li Yu 李漁, *Li Liweng Quhua* 李笠翁曲話 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1959), 7-12. This book is a modern reprint of "Ciqu bu" 詞曲部 (The part on lyric and music) and "Yanxi bu" 演習部 (The part on performance and training) of *Xianqing ouji* 閑情偶寄(Casual Expressions) authored by Li Yu. *Xianqing ouji* was published in 1671. Among its eight volumes, two are devoted to drama and theater, which are "Ciqu bu" and "Yanxi bu". In these two parts Li Yu illustrated his ideas of drama composition and theatre performance.

text. In his short story collection *Shi'er lou* 十二樓 (Twelve Towers), Li Yu adopts the image of the tower in each story to introduce the plot or portray the character, and simultaneously the entire collection is connected by the symbolic image of the tower. The late Qing scholar, Zhang Xinzhi 張新之 (1828-1850) comments on *Honglou meng* from an orthodox Confucian point of view, calling the readers' attention to the overall structure of *Honglou meng* and the symbolic *yin-yang* numerology within the novel.[107]

Based on these commentators' observations and conventional literary theorists' arguments, contemporary scholars have offered some important arguments on the aesthetic design of the structure of the novels. In 1977, Shuen-fu Lin pointed out that *Rulin waishi*, which at one time was regarded by May Fourth Chinese intellectuals as a loosely-connected collection of short stories, has a coherent structure. Lin claims that since May Fourth critics were eager to prove the superiority of western civilization in comparison to the Chinese Confucian ritualized world-view, they did not find that ritual served as an integrative principle in the structure of *Rulin waishi.*[108] Shang Wei's study of *Rulin waishi,* which follows Lin's study, identifies chapter 37 as a unique, pivotal point within *Rulin waishi*. Since chapter 37 presents a positive, ritualistic or an ideal image of literati, much of the rest of the narrative illustrates a critical and ironic portrayal of a hypocritical literati group.[109] Andrew Plaks closely analyzes the structure of 100-chapter

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[107] Xinzhi Zhang, "How to Read the *Dream of the Red Chamber*," trans. Andrew H.Plaks, *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, eds. David L. Rolston and Shuen-fu Lin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 335-40.

[108] Shuen-fu Lin, "Ritual and Narrative Structure in Ju-Lin Wai-Shih," *Chinese Narrative : Critical and Theoretical Essays*, eds. Andrew H. Plaks, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 244-65.

[109] Wei Shang, *Rulin Waishi and Cultural Transformation in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

novels, such as *Jin Ping Mei* and *Xiyouji* 西遊記 (Journey to the West, ca.mid16th century). He argues that these novels are considered self-conscious writings because they demonstrate a deliberately designed structure: their overall structure is symmetrical peaking around chapter 50; they can be divided into 10-chapter units, which Plaks labels decades; each individual *hui* chapter can be divided into two balanced halves; the chapter numbers, particularly those ending in "nine," also bear a symbolic significance for the novels; and the elements of hot and cold work as a self-conscious structuring device.[110] Maram Epstein uses *yin-yang* symbolism to analyze the internal structure of several Qing novels. As she demonstrates, many Ming-Qing fictional texts play not only with *yin-yang* imagery, but also *yin-yang* numerology. Six and nine respectively represent *yin* and *yang* at their peak power according to *Yijing* 易經 (Book of Changes) and appear as the numerals for the most significant chapters and characters' names.[111]

Recently, several papers discussing *Guwangyan*'s narrative structure have been published in China and Taiwan. They agree that *Guwangyan* is a transitional work that inherits the narrative conventions of *Jin Ping Mei* and alternatively anticipates the aesthetic trend of later works such as *Rulin waishi* and *Honglou meng.*[112] Yang Ping and

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[110] For details, see Andrew Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 72-85, 202-19.

[111] Maram Epstein, *Competing Discourses : Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center , 2001).

[112] Wang Yongjian 王永健, "*Guwangyan* yishu tese chutan《姑妄言》藝術特色初探," *Fuzhou shizhuan xuebao* (Shehui kexue ban) 福州師專學報(社會科學版), 22.1 (Feb.2002); Huang Tingfu 黃廷富, "*Guwangyan* yanjiu 《姑妄言》研究," Beijing Shifan daxue boshi xuewei lunwen 北京師範大學博士學位論文, (2007); Zhang Jingyi 張靜儀, "*Guwangyan* renwu xingxiang ji zuozhe chuangzuo xintai zhi yanjiu 《姑妄言》人物形象及作者創作心態之研究," Natonal Univeristy of Tainan shuoshi xuewei lunwen 國立臺南大學碩士學位論文 (2008).

Li Yujuan's analysis of the narrative art in *Jin Ping Mei* and *Guwangyan* argues that both novels portray the lives of several main characters as a thread that connects the entire narrative. *Jin Ping Mei* depicts the life of the protagonist, Ximen Qing, and female characters such as Pan Jinlian, Pang Chunmei, and Li Ping'er. In *Guwangyan* the entire life stories of Zhong Qing and his sworn brothers, Huang E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu are written about throughout the novel. From *Jin Ping Mei* and *Guwangyan* readers can have a clear picture of the main characters' original families, their marriages and/or reclusive lives.[113] *Guwangyan* also demonstrates the conspicuous similarities in structure when compared to *Rulin waishi,* a canonical work written about two decades after *Guwangyan*. *Guwangyan* and *Rulin waishi* both make use of sub-plots woven in the larger narrative frame, such as an anecdote about one particular character or travel story that is introduced by the main character and seems to have no direct relationship with the main plot. For this reason, Wang Changyou regards *Guwangyan* as an "in-between" collection of short stories and a well-organized long novel.[114] Wang's argument provides an inspiring aspect to compare *Rulin waishi* and *Guwangyan*. It is clear that in addition to the main plot of *Guwangyan*, several short stories are woven into the novel. Yet, the inner structural connections of these two long novels are different. *Rulin waishi* does not use one hero or several main characters to connect the entire narrative. One character is the protagenist of several chapters, for instance, the main character of chapters 17-20 of

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[113] Yang Ping 楊萍 and Li Yujuan 李玉娟, "Lun *Guwangyan* dui *Jin Ping Mei* xushi yishu de jicheng yu fazhan 論《姑妄言》對《金瓶梅》敘事藝術的繼承與發展," *Changchun shifan xueyuan xuebao* (Renwen shehui kexueban) 長春師範學院學報(人文社會科學版), vol. 29 issue.5 (Sep.2010).

[114] Wang Changyou 王長友, "*Guwangyan* de jiegou yishu chuangxin 《姑妄言》的結構藝術創新, " *Xue Hai* 學海, (1996), 6.

Rulin waishi is Kuang Chaoren 匡超人 who connects several characters. From chapter 31 to 34, the main character is Du Shaoqing 杜少卿 who also appears in chapter 44, 45 and 46 to connect various scholars in Nanjing. Kuang Chaoren and Du Shaoqing have no direct communicaton and connection though.[115] *Guwangyan*, however, tells the stories related to the main characters of Zhong Qing, Huan E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu. Although some episodes are not directly related to them, the main characters are the important witnesses or narrators of the events. The structure of *Guwangyan* focuses on the lives of the main characters and the interaction of their families. I propose that in comparison with *Rulin waishi*, *Guwangyan* concentrates more on the large frame of the novel, and the sub-plots within the narrative cannot be separated from the main narrative. In his discussion of the position of *Guwangyan* within the history of Chinese vernacular novels, Wang Yongjian claims that even though no clear evidence demonstrates that Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹(1715-1763), the author of *Honglou meng*, had read the manuscript of *Guwangyan*, *Honglou meng* and *Guwangyan* share various similarities. Wang claims that both novels use the concept of a dream to frame the entire narrative and both depict religious experts such as a Buddhist monk and Daoist master, to articulate the message about desire and sentiment.[116] Yet, after reading these two novels, readers will find that dreams in *Honglou meng* and *Guwangyan* play different roles. Dreams in *Honglou meng*

[115] Du Zhijun 杜誌軍 and Yi Ming 易名, "Shizhuan wenxue de yingxiang yu qingjie moshi de tupo—*Rulin waishi* de jiegou chuangxin jiqi yiyi 史傳文學的影響與情節模式的突破-《儒林外史》的結構創新及其意義," *Hebei xuekan* 河北學刊, no.006 (1993),72-75. Fan Shanguo 樊善國, "*Rulin waishi* de jiegou tedian 《儒林外史》的結構特點," *Beijing shifan daxue xuebao* (Shehui kexue ban) 北京師範大學學報 (社會科學版), no.5 (1983), 59-65.

[116] Wang Yongjian 王永健, "Luelun *Guwangyan* zai Ming Qing zhanghui xiaoshuoshi shang de diwei he yingxiang 略論《姑妄言》在明清章回小說史上的地位和影響," *Minjiang xueyuan xuebao* 閩江學院學報 24.3 (Jun.2003), 1-3.

reflect an illustrative world which is projected in the Grant View Garden of the Jia family. Both the dream and the Grand View Garden symbolize a fantasized world that allows the girls in *Honglou meng* to enjoy spiritual love.[117] This imagined world is opposite to the real world which is filled with corruption and secular desire. G*uwangyan* adopts the motif of dream to reflect the karmic retribution system which emphasizes the power of morality, cosmic power and sentiment.

Concerning the larger narrative frame of *Guwangyan* I propose that the novel also contains two worlds. One is related to the four main families that obtain *yin-yang* balance in their household and can help the people around them survive the dynastic change; the other is late Ming society, which falls to a complete chaos. Cao Qujing lived in the early Qing period, and he was aware of the emperor's sexual excesses which in combination with the corrupt officials lead to the fall of Ming. He still seems try to depict a utopian community in which the main families can enjoy balanced relationships and functioning Confucian morality. The following analysis will provide an illustration of the narrative structure of *Guwangyan* from three aspects: the larger narrative frame, the transitional chapters, and the internal connection between the chapters.

3.2 Karma and Moral Logic in *Guwangyan*

Karmic retribution (*yin'guo baoying* 因果報應) was a predominantly popular ideology in the social moral system and literary composition during the Ming-Qing period. Not only were morality books (*shanshu* 善書) broadly circulated within society, the discourse of karmic retribution was simultaneously being popularized in vernacular

[117] Yu Yingshi 余英時, "*Honglou meng de liangge shijie* 紅樓夢的兩個世界, " in *Honglou meng de liangge shijie* (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexue chubanshe, 2002), 35-59.

fictions. The novelist adopts karmic retribution as the narrative strategy to frame this literary work and presents a personal, moral concern in the narrative. I claim that in *Guwangyan,* Cao Qujing uses a karmic frame to initiate his narrative and make the lengthy novel structurally compact.

Three long novels in circulation prior to *Guwangyan*, *Jin Ping Mei* (c.16th century), *Xu Jin Ping Mei* 續金瓶梅 (A Sequel to *Jin Ping Mei*, 1660) and *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* 醒世姻緣傳 (Marriage Fate to Arouse the World, 1721), all use karmic retribution as a plot device, yet each has different moral implications. The ramification of the karmic trope and the individualistic moral message transferred by the three novels will help us contextualize the reading of *Guwangyan*'s karmic frame. As a one-hundred-chapter novel, *Jin Ping Mei* introduces the sexual exploration and material enjoyment of the male protagonist in the majority of the eighty chapters. The narrative is obsessed with the description of beautiful bodies, luxurious food and clothing. It is only in the last twenty chapters of the novel that the protagonist's death is played out, along with the desperate scattering of his several wives and the loss of his only son, emphasizing a sense of contrition. To some extent, *Jin Ping Mei* illustrates that the pursuit of personal desires and libertine culture was more important than self cultivation in the late Ming culture.[118] The early Qing novel, *Xu Jin Ping Mei,* adopts karmic retribution to initiate the narrative. The author, Ding Yaokang 丁耀亢(1599-1669) claims that he wrote the novel to help readers understand the ideas in morality books. He mentions in the preface of *Xu Jing Ping Mei* that "to follow current emperor's insight and wisdom, while enforcing the

[118] For a detailed discussion of karmic retribution in *Jin Ping Mei*, see Cuncun Wu, and Mark Stevenson, "Karmic Retribution and Moral Didactism in Erotic Fiction from the Late Ming and Early Qing," *Ming Qing Studies*, (2011): 471-90.

Taishang ganying pian, [I] use *A Sequel to Jin Ping Mei* as a footnote for it [*Taishang*]" (遵今上聖明頒行《太上感應篇》，以《續金瓶梅》為之註腳).[119] *Xu Jin Ping Mei* not only depicts the good and evil behaviors of the reincarnated Ximen Qing and his wives, but also uses quotations from the popular Daoist morality book, *Taishang ganyingpian*. Simultaneously, *Xu Jin Ping Mei* demonstrates the tragic lives of the Han people as they were massacred, raped and robbed by the Jurchens. Ding Yaokang uses the battle between the Northern Song and the Jurchens to represent the fight between the Ming and Manchu armies. The violence employed by the Jurchen military troops is an implicit condemnation of the Manchu occupation of China. The karmic retribution device employed in *Xu Jin Ping Mei* can be compared to a self-protective mask which covers the author's serious depictions of the national trauma within the Qing society.[120] Another significant example of karmic causality used in a long novel is *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, which portrays two reincarnations of one family. In first incarnation of the male protagonist, he commits various misdeeds such as murdering a fox-spirit, mistreatment of his wife, adultery and unfiliality. Then he is reincarnated into a henpecked man who is tortured by his shrewish wife. In *Xingshi*, the reader is repeatedly told that the virulent hatred towards her husband of female protagonist, Xue Sujie's In other words, Xue Sujie

[119] The Preface of *Xu Jin Ping Mei* in DingYaokang 丁耀亢, *Xu Jin Ping Mei* 續金瓶梅 (Yanji: Yanbian renmin chubanshe, 2001), 3. *Taishang Ganying Pian* was one of the most widely-read Daoist scriptures of the Chinese people in Ming Qing periods. It offers the reader a moral code, a method of cultivating health and fulfilling spiritual needs while maintaining a conventional social and professional life. The English translation of *Taishang Ganying Pian*, see Yingzhang Li and Wong Eva, *Lao-Tzu's Treatise on the Response of the Tao : Tai-Shang Kan-Ying Pien* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1994).

[120] Siao-Chen Hu, "In the Name of Correctness: Ding Yaokang's *Xu Jin Ping Mei* as a Reading of *Jin Ping Mei*," in *Snakes' Legs : Sequels, Continuations, Rewritings, and Chinese Fiction*, ed. Martin W. Huang (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2004), 75-97.

is portrayed, not as an evil character, but as a karmic tool that cannot fully control her behavior. This karmic retribution tends to diminish each character's moral responsibility and the character ultimately becomes the tool of karmic punishment. Martin Huang argues that although the novel enthusiastically embraces the concept of karmic retribution, it also exposes some problematic aspects of this idea of moral justice. It is hard to distinguish Xue Sujie's wickedness as the result of an order from Heaven or her personal choice: "In this karmic process, a particular evil always assumes the retributive function of punishing another evildoer and consequently the process negates any legitimate moral basis for judging such action".[121]

These three novels transfer a moral message through a karmic frame and, at the same time, call the reader's attention to another aspect of the narrative or the destabilizing of the didactic purpose of the novel. The karmic frame of *Guwangyan* reflects Cao Qujing's interpretation of morality, sentiment and political chaos. *Guwangyan* uses the Court of Hell scene in the City God Temple in chapters 1, 16, 17 and 24 to present the karmic retribution ideology. In chapter 1, the Ghost King pronounces a judgment of various characters' previous lives and the possibilities of their future lives in the Court of Hell. The Ghost King's announcement is comprised of both the balance between and an evaluation of the character's 罪 (guilt, sin, crime) and *qing* 情 (sentiment, desire, lust). This scene introduces several political figures from the period of the Han dynasty to the Ming dynasty, such as Dong Xian 董賢 (23 BC– 1 BC), Cao Zhi 曹植 (192-232), Wu Sansi 武三思 (?-707), Consort Yang (Yang Guifei) 楊貴妃 (719-756) and others. In order to better understand the concept of *zui,* I introduce three cases

[121] Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, 155.

taken from this scenario to explain the principle justice that is practiced by the Ghost King.

The first case concerns the crime of lasciviousness (*yin* 淫). If an historical figure committed this crime, he/she would be reincarnated as a licentious character destined to die during sex. The reincarnation of the consort Yang Yuhuan of the Tang dynasty is a representative case. Yang Yuhuan was the favorite consort of Tang emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (685-762) during his later years. However, Yang used to be the wife of the Prince of Shou 壽王, who was the son of Xuanzong. The Ghost King announces that she "had affairs with both the father and son and therefore she should not be considered part of the human race." (與他父子聚姦，已非人類)[122] "When a woman allows both father and son to enter her door, she is branded extremely shameless." (一個婦人，竟叫他父子同門，也就無恥之極矣.)[123] Based on what she did, the Ghost King concludes that she should be "reincarnated as an animal." (墮畜道)[124] Yang Yuhuan defends herself that she could not reject the emperor's plan of making her his concubine. "When I was a young married woman, I and Prince Shou were a golden couple. But the Emperor Xuanzhong was an old man with wrinkled skin. When he took me as his consort, I did not dare to say something against it while I felt really angry." (我一個青春少婦，與壽王正是佳偶，明王一個雞皮老翁，將我占去，所謂不敢言而敢怒者是也。)[125] The Ghost King

[122] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.1, 115.

[123] Ibid.

[124] Ibid.

[125] Ibid.

considers her specific situation and concludes that Yang should be reincarnated as a nun. "If you can learn the Buddhist canons and abandon your lascivious heart, you will have a good death. If you continue practice lasciviousness without constraint, you will die during an act of sex." (妳能潜心释典，革去淫心，尚得好死。若仍纵淫不戒，就使妳淫樂而亡。)[126] In chapter 18 of *Guwangyan*, a lascivious woman named Cui Minger 崔命兒 who had been reincarnated from Yang Yuhuan, is introduced. Cui is able to draw *yang* essence from her sexual partners. While having sex with Tong Zida, Cui's *yin* essence is unexpectedly absorbed by Tong which results in Cui Ming'er death seven days later. *Guwangyan* does not portray a significant difference in the lives of Yang Yuhuan and Cui Ming'er, who both lived as lascivious women and died because of it. It seems that the characters who commit the crime of lewdness have little opportunity to modify themselves and are assigned a similarly guilty future life.

The second aspect of *zui* is related to political chaos (*luan* 亂). The political figures that are responsible for a dynastic crisis, in turn, deserve chaotic domestic lives in return. The Ghost King announces that the Yongle 永樂 emperor (1360-1424) had taken the crown from his own nephew, the Jianwen 建文 emperor (1377-?), and had also committed multi-dimensional crimes. The Jianwen emperor is the grandson of the first emperor of Ming, the Hongwu 洪武 emperor (1328-1398). Shortly after the Hongwu emperor died, the Yongle emperor took the power from the Jianwen emperor, which translated into disrespect to his dead father. The Yongle emperor removed his brother's title and almost killed his sister-in-law, which means he is not a good brother. The Jianwen emperor was an emperor and the Yongle emperor did not follow his role as a

[126] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.1, 116.

minister, therefore the Yongle emperor was deemed disloyal. The Ghost King then announces that the Yongle emperor would be reincarnated into Li Zicheng 李自成. The narrator tells that Li Zicheng is a violent person and disliked learning when he was a little boy. When he grows up he has a tiny penis which makes him extremely picky in choosing a wife. In a peasant rebellion, he kills many townspeople and rapes several women. All the loyal Ming officials and generals want to put an end to his violence.[127] Lin Dunweng comments in chapter 23 that one of the individuals responsible for expelling the people to facilitate the Qing (*wei da Qing qumin zhe* 為大清驅民者) is Li Zicheng.[128] The case of the Yongle emperor/Li Zicheng reflects that the characters that are responsible for the political disasters will live and die in a chaotic family and state.

The last perspective of *zui* is related to desire/sex (se 色). If a character committed a crime that was not socially destructive and was caused by sentiment, the penalty was lessoned. The representative case includes three main characters: Huang E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu. They were three scholars with a wealth of knowledge, but little money. They were discarded by a woman and died from a desperate longing for their lover. They claimed that their sentiment was very difficult to fulfill (*qingshi nangan* 情實難甘).[129] The Ghost King announces that since the three scholars did not appreciate their talent or their knowledge so should be punished for so easily abandoning their lives. They would be both ignorant and stubborn in their reincarnated lives. In addition, they are assigned three lascivious, ugly, harsh and shrewish wives in punishment for their pursuit of

[127] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.21-23.

[128] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.23, 2790.

[129] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.1, 142.

women (*haose qingsheng* 好色輕生).[130] The King also demands that the three scholars should behave themselves and refrain from any sinful acts in their current lives. The King's announcement creates a huge uncertainty in regards to the morality and personality of these three characters. Reincarnated as both stupid and wealthy, the way the men handle their relationships with their ugly and shrewish wives becomes the central thread of the entire narrative. In chapter 17, the Ghost King reappears announcing that although Huang E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu still make mistakes in their present lives, they have demonstrated change within their personalities, therefore are eligible for some rewards. Their shrewish wives had also changed into good women. Although these characters involved in a complex narrative about *qing* play a less important role in history than the political figure, such as Li Zicheng, the novel provides a subtle, but vivid portrayal of the characters and their feelings. The text represents the message that an individual's karmic fate can be reversed, changed by his or her behavior, and devotion to *qing* can be recognized and rewarded even when the devotion does not strictly follow the Confucian moral principles.[131]

The karmic frame of *Guwangyan* demonstrates the author's profound consideration of the relationship between *zui* and *qing*. The karmic framing presents general, moral rules that help to establish boundaries within society and within the family, and the character that breaks these rules must be penalized. Simultaneously, the karmic

[130] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.1, 144.

[131] In Andrew Plaks' analysis about *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, he mentions that , one way to interpret the Karmic retribution frame in Ming-Qing fiction is the attention to human desire (*renyu* 人欲) rather than the heaven causality (*tianli* 天理). *Guwangyan*'s narrative proves that in the author's exploration of desire and sentiment, the harmony of conjugal life is as important as heavenly truth. See, Andrew H. Plaks, "After the Fall: Hsing-Shih Yin-Yüan Chuan and the Seventeenth-Century Chinese Novel," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 45.2 (1985), 543-80.

frame emphasizes the importance of *qing* which can counterbalance behavior deviating from orthodox Confucian principles. It is not hard to identify that of the three aspects of transgression: lasciviousness, political chaos, and desire, the first two are unforgivable and the people who commit these crimes are usually destined to repeat their previous lives. Crimes related to desire/sex however are forgivable and the Ghost King allows characters that die due to desire, be granted an opportunity to change their lives and personalities. Consequently, one of the main focuses of *Guwangyan* is to demonstrate how the interaction of desire and sentiment is interwoven into a character's development.

3.3 *Yin-yang* Symbolism in the Structure of *Guwangyan*

In this section I will demonstrate based on the concepts of karmic retribution how the author uses *yin-yang* symbolism as a structural device. *Yin-yang* theories originated from the *Yijing* and present a cosmology of complementary forces including all aspects of life. For example, the *yang* force is represented through the heavens, the sun, the male, fire and brightness, and the *yin* force is represented through the earth, the moon, the female, water and darkness. The forces of *yin* and *yang* are opposite but complementary to each other and can fluidly transform into each other. In the Daoist reading of the *Yijing,* the theories of *yin* and *yang* are merely descriptions of the nature of things in the world.[132] Beginning in the Han dynasty, Confucianism had become the dominant school of philosophy and Confucian scholars had applied new interpretations to the *yin-yang* theories laid out in the *Yijing.* Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179-104 BCE), the most influential Confucian scholar during the Han dynasty, created a system of moral values

[132] For details, see Zeng Fanchao 曾凡朝, *Yi Jing* 易经 (Wuhan: Chongwen shuju, 2008).

related to *yin-yang* forces, in which *yang* stands for the good (*shan* 善) and *yin* stands for the evil (*e* 恶).[133] *Yin-yang* symbolism is an influential idea in various Ming-Qing texts of vernacular fiction. Both writers and commentators regarded *yin* as the feminine, negative, heterodoxy power and *yang* as the masculine, positive, orthodox power and used the complementary forces in composing and interpreting the vernacular novels. Cao Qujing was aware of the *yin-yang* cosmology and used *yin-yang* symbolism to structure this novel.

The 24-chapters of *Guwangyan* can be roughly divided into three parts based on the rise and fall of *yin* and *yang* powers within this work. Chapters 1-10 represent the accumulation of *yin* energy in the fictional world, chapters 11-21 reflect the reestablishment of the *yang* authority within the households of the main families and their communities, chapters 22-24 reflect the novel's representation of an ideal *yin-yang* balanced space in contrast to the fall of the Ming dynasty. This framework is loosely based on the value system that *yin* represents evil and *yang* represents good. Lascivious women, violent shrews, male same-sex practices, treasonous eunuchs and libertine gatherings represent the *yin* force. The rise of a positive *yang* force comes into play during the transformation of the shrew and in local male gentry fights against the social disasters in the late Ming dynasty. Slightly different from *Jin Ping Mei*, which also adopts *yin-yang* symbolism to reflect the fictional world, portrays a mirroring relationship between family and state. The defeat of Ximen Qing's household allegorically reflects

[133] For details, see "Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒" in *Chunqiu fanlu zhuzi suoyin* 春秋繁露逐字索引, ed. Liu Dianjue 劉殿爵 (Taibei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1994).

the decadence of the state.[134] *Guwangyan* demonstrates a split in the relationship between family and state in the fictional world. There is a contrast between the *yin-yang* harmony of the family and the political chaos of the Ming state. In other words, it seems that the author believes that a balance of *yin* and *yang* can transform a person from evil to good and likewise can build a mutually supportive community helping local people to survive a dynastic crisis. Yet, this *yin-yang* balanced family does not always lead to a stabilized state.

From chapter 1 to 10, *Guwangyan* is mainly focused on the introduction of five main characters, Zhong Qing, Qian Gui, Huan E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu. The introductory pattern is comprised of stories of characters and includes an outline of a meeting between two or more main characters several chapters later. For instance, chapter 2 introduces the tale of Qian Gui's family and her courtesan life before meeting Zhong Qing. Chapter 4 introduces Zhong Qing's family and his first meeting with Qian Gui in a brothel. Chapter 5 introduces the education and social backgrounds of Huan E and Tong Zida. These three main male characters: Huang E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida become sworn brothers in chapter 9, and in chapter 10 they first meet Qian Gui in a brothel as her clients. As a result, the first part of *Guwangyan* introduces the readers to the parents, education, and social classes of the main characters and their wives.

[134] As Katherine Carlitz and Andrew Plaks have observed, the household of Ximen Qing, the male protagonist in *Jin Ping Mei*, embodies negative examples of the principles of managing family and state as outlined in the Confucian classic the *Da Xue* 大學 (The Great Learning); family and state are homologous in *Jin Ping Mei*, as they are in *Da Xue*, and thus can be mutually implicated in the dissolution of the Confucian principles governing human relations. Katherine Carlitz, *The Rhetoric of Chin Ping Mei* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 28-44, and Andrew Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 157-59, 164-67.

Additionally, the first part of the novel demonstrates a turbulent world with many negative *yin* forces. Merchants and officials are frightened by their shrewish wives. Poor and pretty, young boys provides sexual services to the wealthy, upper level people in society. The local government is busy with its pleasing of a powerful eunuch, Wei Zhongxian. The traditional concept of *yang*, which was related to orthodox morality, gender hierarchy in the family, and the scholars' duty to administrate the state, have been challenged and subverted. The three wives of Huan E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu are shrews. Since they could not get sexual satisfaction from their husbands, they curse and beat their husbands. In Keith McMahon's study about shrews, he points out that during the Ming-Qing era, the power of the shrew was thought to explain a wide variety of consequences, the most basic being the weakening of the man and male privilege in general.[135] Jealous wives are also one of the most popular images of women, who can fully display the destructive power of women and the failure of men's self-cultivation. Pan Jinlian in *Jin Ping Mei* is a typical shrew, who exemplifies all the terms used to describe shrews, *pofu* 潑婦 (scattering women), *hanfu* 悍婦 (violent women), *yinfu* 淫婦 (licencitious women) and *dufu* 妒婦 (jealous women).[136] She is so jealous that she is bad-tempered and never fails to scold and curse her rivals, Ximen Qing's other wives and sexual partners; at the same time, she is the lewdest woman in the novel. She is sexually insatiable and plays every trick to enjoy sex. Xue Sujie in *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* is another example of an uncontrollable shrew with destructive energy, in terms of neo-

[135] McMahon, *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists*, 55.

[136] McMahon, *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists,* 55-57.

Confucian values. [137] In chapter 3 of *Guwangyan*, the novel presents five families with shrewish wives, Tong Zida, his two cousins, the county magistrate and another official. When Tong Zida is no longer able to endure the physical abuse of his wife, he asks his relatives for help. Much to his surprise and dismay, he discovers that all the males he approaches are even more henpecked than he. Even the magistrate is no exception. At the beginning of this chapter the commentator points out that the *yin-yang* imbalance is the reason for the predominance of shrews. Lin Dunweng writes, "So many men are scared of their wives; it is due to the way the feminine (*yin*) is developing and the way the masculine (*yang*) is declining. The power of women leaders is increasing every day, and weak men have to consciously succumb to them." (不過謂陰道漸長，陽道漸消，女帥之威風日熾，弱男子甘拜下風。) [138] *Guwangyan* presents the image of jealous wives as an expression of *yin* energy that is broadly threatening the male *yang* power.

The negative *yin* force in the first part of *Guwangyan* is not just related to the female characters, it also is reflected via the male characters. The three main characters, Huan E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu, have no intentions of becoming loyal officials and are obsessed with food, women, and material enjoyment. Huan E is a son of a high official yet has no intention to vie for any government position. Since he is scared of his shrewish wife, most of the time he prefers to stay outside and spend his time bullying his neighbors, intimidating kind people, playing with the actors/actress, or visiting a brothel. (或欺淩裏巷，或唬嚇善良，或嬉戲梨園，或遨遊妓館。)[139] Tong Zida is a wealthy

[137] Epstein, *Competing Discourses*, 125-26.

[138] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.3, 318.

[139] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.5, 555.

landlord who likes money. Even when his friends visit him he treats them to cheap food. Jia Wenwu is a bogus scholar with no interest in reading and learning. He married a wealthy girl whose father bought a *junren* degree for him. Jia Wenwu gives plenty of luxurious gifts to eunuch Wei Zhongxian and claims himself to be Wei's adopted grandson. (拜了門下做孫兒)[140] Wei Zhongxian helped him obtain a *jinshi* degree. Jia becomes a degree holder with no academic knowledge or literary talent.

The three main characters in the first part of *Guwangyan* do not follow orthodox Confucianism which is an essential requirement for men. They are dominated by their shrewish wives at home and have no intention of taking on any social duties as adults. After several aimless but happy gatherings, Huan, Tong, and Jia suggest that they mimic the famous fraternity ceremony involving Liu Bei 劉備, Guan Yu 關羽 and Zhang Fei 張飛 in the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, to become sworn brothers. They set up a table in Huan E's garden and ask a scholar to write a ceremony for them where they agree to be brothers. The essential purpose of the bond is for each to take turns treating the others to food and brothel visits. In addition to the negative *yin* energy created by the choices of the main characters, the first part of *Guwangyan* also presents two phenomena that are directly related to the decline of *yang*; the first being the flourishing of male same-sex relationships (*nanse* 男色), particularly men who are interested in gaining a financial benefit by performing anal sex. The second is the powerful influence of eunuchs in the society.[141] Stories in the first part of *Guwangyan* take place in the late Wanli and Tianqi reigns (1573-1627) when society still enjoyed relative peace. Male characters do not

[140] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.8, 949.

[141] The detailed stories of the male prostitution and the eunuch will be discussed in the next section of this chapter.

demonstrate any concern or anxiety over upcoming social disasters. They travel around the pleasure quarters in Nanjing and try to take advantage of the bureaucratic corruption. The female characters are portrayed as courtesans, shrews or licentious women who frequently transgress orthodox gender boundaries. The late Ming society is portrayed as an upside down world where men and women demonstrate negative *yin* power within their own families and society.

The second part of *Guwangyan*, chapters 11-21, depicts a transformation of the main characters from negative *yin* forces to positive *yang* forces. Zhong Qing obtains an official position via a civil service examination. Huan E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida find ways to strengthen their individual sexual power and claim their authority within the family. In part one of *Guwangyan,* Qian Gui, a blind courtesan, needed to please her clients to make money. Zhong Qing is a poor student. Both of them are in weak situations, lacking social status. In part two of *Guwangyan*, Zhong Qing acquires an official position and marries Qian Gui who regains her sight. A similar change happens to Huan E, Tong Zida and Jia Wenwu. With the help of an aphrodisiac, Huan E is finally able to satisfy his wife's sexual desires. Jia Wenwu and Tong Zida get help from a Daoist master and a Buddhist monk to enlarge their male organs. Consequently, all the wives begin to feel sexually satisfied within their conjugal relationships. Likewise in this particular section, Wei Zhongxian is executed by the Chongzhen emperor. Huan, Tong and Jia know that without the strong support of Wei Zhongxian, they have to behave themselves in accordance with standard doctrine. A confirmation of the characters' transformation happens in chapter 17 when "the Ghost King removes the jealous sinew of [the shrews], modifies their evil intestines, and transforms their animal hearts into human hearts."（抽

了它的妒筋，換了它的惡腸，俱已化成人心。）[142] The three wives become nice and generous. Their husbands lose interest in prostitution and bullying others. The violent family struggles from the first part of the novel are replaced by mutual support between husband and wife in the second part. Chapters 17-21 portray many good things that happen involving the main characters, completely opposite to their behaviors in the beginning of *Guwangyan*. Positive male *yang* energy is established in the families of the four main characters. Although Huan, Tong and Jia do not have official positions in the government, they use money to help the local people who are struggling with poverty and famine. They also help to financially support the Ming military troops to fight against the Li Zicheng rebellion. It is apparent that a harmonious conjugal relationship plays a positive role in transforming a male character, which in turn influences him to generously contribute to the local stability.

In the second part of *Guwangyan*, Cao Qujing adjusts his use of the *yin-yang* symbalism. Usually, in Ming-Qing fictions, *yang* refers to the good emperor, upright officials, and heterosexual marriage. *Yin* refers to corrupt officials and homosexual relationships. This state, household and self-cultivation of an individual are homologous with one other. However, in *Guwangyan*, there is no microcosmic and macrocosmic analogy between the household and state. The second part of the novel portrays the final period of the Ming Empire, including the Congzhen reign (1627-1644) and the Southern Ming court (1644 -1662). The state is predominantly controlled by political *yin* energy, indicated by the Li Zicheng rebellion, the lasciviousness of the Hongguang emperor, and numerous corrupt officials. *Guwangyan* portrays a utopian *yang* community established

[142] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.17, 2031.

by male protagonists within a turbulent society. The main families enjoy harmony among themselves and mutual friendship, and support the local people. Although this community is not able to save the crumbling state, these families represent a positive *yang* energy that counteracts the extremely corrupt *yin* political energy in the state.

The last part of *Guwangyan,* chapters 22-24, significantly expands the geographic view of the novel beyond the family life of the five main characters and the city of Nanjing. The novel portrays the death of the Chongzhen emperor, the violent massacres brought on by the Li Zicheng rebellion, the plight of the Hongguang emperor and Zhong Qing's reclusive life in Zhejiang mountainous area. The novel abruptly ends during the fall of the Southern Ming court, without mentioning Manchu rule. The final image in the novel is that of the descendants of the four families enjoying mutual support from one another and living peaceful lives for many years to come.

3.4 *Yin-yang* Numerology and the Internal Structure of *Guwangyan*

Yin-yang symbolism not only shapes the overall design of the structure, but also applies to the use of numerology. *Guwangyan* seems to follow *Jin Ping Mei* in its use of *yin-yang* numerology. In *Jin Ping Mei* the most negative *yin* people are two women, Wang Liu'er (Wang the Sixth) and Pan Jinlian (referred to as Pan the Sixth in the novel), on whom Zhang Zhupo comments, "Six is a *yin* number, Pan Liu'er and Wang Liu'er are combined to be a double *yin* number, therefore *yang* completely wanes. How can [Ximen] escape from death?" (六者，陰數也。潘六兒與王六兒合成重陰之數，陽已全盡，安

得不死？)[143] Zhang Zhupo comments that chapter numbers containing 6 usually represent *yin*. Interestingly, the six-related chapters in *Guwangyan* also feature symbolic *yin* figures. In contrast, the nine-related chapters, the utmost *yang* number, all focus on the male characters.

Guwangyan pays particularly attention to the *yin* energy. The 6 related chapters, 6, 12, 16 and 24, not only tell the story about the characters with *yin* forces but also reflect the restoration of the *yin* energy within the household. Chapters 6 and 7 focuse on male *yin* energy: male prostitutes and eunuchs. These two chapters are set in Suzhou 蘇州 and Nanjing, to which several primary characters travel or migrate. The narrator introduces that in the Kunshan 昆山 county of Suzhou, many pretty boys do not go to the academy to study Confucian knowledge; on the contrary, they go to drama school to learn how to become actors. Rather than obtaining official positions through the civil service examinations, those pretty boys obtain money through sexual service to officials, merchants, and wealthy men in society. Both the commentator and narrator of the novel criticize the trend that men are not ashamed of being penetrated. The comments at the beginning of chapter 6 claim that:

> Alas! Although the way of male *same-sex* relations has been around for a long time, it has never flourished as it does today. Those male lovers make up almost half the world. Not only are they not shamed, on the contrary, they are proud of it. If everybody experienced trouble with Nie Biaobao [a violent penetrator with huge penis], these catamites would hear about it and would run off in fear. Then this decadent fashion would be cleaned up.

[143] Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng 蘭陵笑笑生, *Gaohe tang piping diyi qishu Jin Ping Mei* 皐鶴堂批評第一奇書金瓶梅(Changchun: Jilin daxue chubanshe, 1994), 522.

> 嗚呼，男風一道，雖所由來者久矣，然未有盛於今日者也。此輩幾幾半天下，不但恬不知恥，猶欣欣以為榮焉。得人人皆有聶變豹之孽，且使此輩聞而畏避，庶可洗盡此頹風。[144]

Chapter 6 is related to the plot about a catamite's family. Ying Yang 贏陽 who was once an actor and prostitute in his younger years, before becoming the husband of Ms. Yin 陰氏. Since Ying Yang could not make enough money to support the family, Ms. Yin actually learns to be an actress and secretly prostitutes herself to earn money. The couple reverses the traditional outside and inside distinctions between men and women. Ying Yang's daughter is lascivious and got pregnant as a teenager. The family marries her to a natural eunuch who was born without a penis. This chapter presents many *yin* examples. The names of the two ladies, Ms. Ying and Ms. Yin, directly represented the *yin* theme of this chapter. The two male characters are unable to establish a "normal" family. The father is unable to financially support the family; the son-in-law cannot sexually satisfy his wife.

Chapter 7 presents the dominant power of the eunuch Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢 during the Tianqi period (1621-1627). *Guwangyan* introduces Wei as a poor man who entered into the court by self-castration. After he obtained the trust of the Tianqi emperor, many government officials attempted to become his adopted sons. The narrator mentions several times that both high and low level officials want to be adopted by the eunuch Wei.[145] In order to promote Wei's reputation, local governments are urged to establish a temple to him.[146] During the Ming-Qing period, establishing a temple to a living person

[144] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.6, 675.

[145] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.5, 544.

[146] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.7, 822.

was a huge praise for this person's achievement. In other words, this chapter presents a chaotic bureaucratic system which fawns over a eunuch who climbs up the social ladder by sacrificing his physical masculinity.

Chapters 11 and 12 mark the beginning of the second part of this novel, making this the transition when the main characters' lives start to change. In chapter 12 (two times six), Zhong Qing and Qian Gui have a dream in which Zhong obtains a degree and saves Qian from her life of prostitution. It is interesting to note that the reason Zhong Qing obtains the degree is not only due to his academic achievement, but is also because of his implicit achievement (*yingong* 陰功), in chapter 9, when he rejects two females' offers of devoting themselves to him.[147] Zhong Qing saves a woman from committing suicide yet rejects her proposal of having sex in appreciation for what he did. He also refuses another woman's offer of sex and instead introduces her to his male friend, Mei Gen. Since Zhong Qing remains loyal to Qian Gui and also maintains the boundaries between genders, he gets a karmic reward and is granted an opportunity to enter the political system. In chapter 12, Huan E and his friends realize that they have lost their political support and now have to exhibit better control of themselves. Even though the corruption of the bureaucratic system still exists in the late Ming period of *Guwangyan,* this chapter provides readers with a turning point where all the male characters' lives begin to change.

Chapter 16 and the beginning part of chapter 17 confirm this transformation of the main characters. Zhong Qing obtains a *jinshi* degree and becomes an honest, legal official. Qian Gui gets her sight back and becomes Zhong's wife. Huan E and Tong Zida

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[147] The detailed analysis of chapter 9 of *Guwangyan* will be introduced in *yang*-chapters.

strengthen their sexual power, eliciting respect from their wives, which reinstates their authority in the household. The three wives go on to manage their homes in a model way, but also financially support their husbands who are helping the military in the local fight against the Li Zicheng rebellion. The previous shrews become virtuous wives and establish close connections with each other. With the establishment of harmonious heterosexual families in the novel, three wives switch from the negative *yin* energy to positive *yin* forces.

The third part of *Guwangyan* reflects the creation of a utopian space in which the male and female characters are able to survive during the Southern Ming period. In chapter 24 (four times six), the novel continues an episode from chapter 6, in chapter 24 the reader discovers the final outcome of the couple, Ying Yang and Ms.Yin. Ying Yang has an opportunity to become an official. Since he has been nice to his employer he receives the reward of having a harmonious family. His wife leaves prostitution and helps him find a concubine who bears two sons for him. This *yin-yang* couple finally returns to their conventional role within a heterosexual marriage relationship. Moreover, chapter 24 goes on to tell about the heterosexual marriages of the other main characters. Zhong Qing lives reclusively in the Zhejiang mountains, yet his two adult sons continue the family tradition of studying Confucianism. Zhong's elder son marries the daughter of Mei Gen, and his younger son marries the daughter of Huan E, while Zhong's sons and grandsons continue for several more generations. Qian Gui and Dai Mu both enjoy long lives.

These 6-realted chapters, 6, 12, 16 and 24, depict the restoration of the *yin-yang* balance in a household. A catamite has the opportunity to become an official and live as a

good husband and father. The blind courtesan obtains her sight and becomes an official's wife. The three shrews turn into virtuous wives. All four families establish harmonious heterosexual marriages. Negative *yin* energy has been controlled and replaced by positive *yin* energy.

Correspondingly, the 9-related chapters, 9, 18 and 19, present the establishment of the *yang* energy including several factors focusing on masculinity and moral righteousness. These three chapters portray the establishment of the male community, the insistence of a virtuous man maintaining the ritual boundary between two genders, man's sexual superiority to women, and the charity established by the gentry within the social crisis. Chapter 9 introduces the world outside of the household. The main plot in the early part of this chapter involves Huan E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu escaping their wives' bullying to enjoy their own experiences. The latter part of chapter 9 presents the heroic behavior of Zhong Qing who rescues a lady from a suicide attempt while maintaining the moral boundaries between them. On one July night, Zhong Qing is caught in a heavy rain on his way home. When he is standing under a bean arbor to escape the rain, he sees a lady attempting to drown herself in a pond. Zhong Qing pulls her out of the pond and escorts her to her house. In her house, the lady explains that her husband is too poor to support the family. Her husband had invited a male sexual partner into the family; and if she agreed to have sex with him then her husband could perform anal sex with him as well. Since the lady thought such sexual exchanges are too shameful and disgusting to do, she plans to commit suicide. Zhong Qing then helps the lady by giving her his clothes to change into and also by offering her some money. The lady is impressed by Zhong Qing's generosity and offers herself to Zhong, who rejects her immediately. As an

important scene that demonstrates Zhong Qing's virtue and self-control, Cao Qujing carefully incorporates the *yin-yang* power struggle into this seduction. The setting of this scene, which depicts the almost-drowned woman and a bean arbor in the summer, calls to mind a similar erotic scene in *Jin Ping Mei*. In chapter 27 of *Jin Ping Mei*, Ximen Qing has quite violent sex with Pan Jinlian in the grape arbor in their family garden in order to punish Pan Jinlian for her jealousy toward Li Ping'er. This chapter contains one of the most graphic sexual scenes in *Jin Ping Mei* wherein the sexual indulgence is completely out of control. In *Guwangyan,* uncontrollable female desire has been restrained by the virtuous male protagonist. Although the setting includes several *yin* factors, such as the attractive woman drowning with the arbor and the hot weather, which signifies sexual desire, when Zhong Qing rejects the seduction and the heavy rain gradually stops, the narrative then demonstrates the power of *yang*.[148]

Chapter 18, in particular, emphasizes the power of male sexuality. The landlord Tong Zida has sex with Cui Ming'er and ends up this lascivious woman in bed. The power of *yang* is demonstrated more clearly when another lascivious woman, a fox-spirit, who heard about Tong's amazing skills, hopes to obtain Tong's *yang* essence (*yangjing* 陽精). The fox-spirit with nine tails has practiced immorality for a thousand years. In the process of making elixir (*liandan* 煉丹), by obtaining the *yang* male essence, she can receive an immortal body and rid herself of her foxy corporeality. Tong Zida becomes the

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[148] The motif of grape arbor also appears in Ding Yaokang's *Xu Jin Ping Mei.* In chapter 44 of *Xu Jin Ping Mei, Jingui* 金桂, Pan Jinlian's reincarnation, dreams of her encounter with a scholar and having sex. The other significant reference to a grape arbor can be found in *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, the couple/title of chapter 79 is "Xichen finds his land of bliss in a wrong place/Jijie wreaks havoc under the grape arbor"(希陳誤認武陵源,寄姐大鬧葡萄架). This chapter has no content related to a grape arbor though.

fox-spirit's target and she wants to seduce him in order to get his *yang* essence. The fox-spirit dresses like a beautiful lady and seduces Tong but, unfortunately, Tong has already obtained the skills relating to a sexual fight, so he absorbs the *yin* essence (*yinjing* 陰精)from the lady and makes her lose her thousand years' practice. In many Ming-Qing fictions, the fox-spirit is generally portrayed as an extreme *yin* power, which can ruin men's masculinity and transgress social boundaries. In chapter 18, Tong Zida kills the lascivious woman and ruins the fox-spirit's essence, strengthening his own masculine power.

In chapter 19, the main narrative shifts focus from domestic relationships to public charity. One of the main protagonists, Huan E, goes outside the house looking for the opportunity to show his kindness. The narrative time of chapter 19 is around the Chongzhen regime, the end of the Ming dynasty and the chapter features time of the impoverishment of scholars, low-level merchants, teachers, and refugees. These people need to sell their sons, daughters or themselves to survive. Huan E is portrayed as an unusual philanthropist who gives away his fortune. Among the eleven stories about how Huan E helps others to solve their financial difficulties, four relate to filial piety and three relate to marriage. One important reason Huan E wants to do good deeds is because his father hopes that he can make up for some of their previous evil behavior. Huang E pays special attention to filial sons and daughters and helps these poor people. Huan E helps two filial sons buying a coffin for one's dead father and getting food for the other's ill father. He also helps a filial daughter get money to pay back her father's debts. The narrator mentions that filial piety is the most important virtue in the world: in order to fulfill filial duty, a person can sell himself or his child for the future of the father.

Another important relationship in chapter 19 that needs to be stabilized is the relation between husband and wife, which also faces a serious challenge. Huan E financially supports three poor couples. The first is a poor scholar who could not support his family and whose wife intends to leave him. Huan E punishes this man's wife and offers the poor scholar a private tutoring position to make the family financially self-sustaining. The second family involves a poor scholar who plans to break his betrothal. Huan E adopts the poor girl and prepares a large dowry for her to get married. The final case involves a poor boy who cannot afford the betrothal gifts required by his future father-in-law, Huang E helps him to get money so that he can marry. This chapter presents Huan E's charitable acts after he has reforms himself morally. In summary, the chapters that are related to *yang* numbers reflect the posture of masculinity and men, who could, at some level, restrain the out of control *yin* power and help weak and debased people out in the external sphere.

By evaluating aesthetics of the narrative structure, this chapter suggests that *Guwangyan* should be considered a serious piece of literary work that reflects the concerns of mainstream *xiaoshuo* fiction. Becasue this narrative does not adopt the common structure of splitting into two halves, the deliberately designed three sections which mark the rise and fall of the *yin* and *yang* energies indicate that the writer was very conscious of the aesthetics and the overall structure of his work. Cao Qujing adopts the trope of karmic retribution and *yin-yang* symbolism to frame the entire narrative and to project his own moral evaluations concerning fictional and political figures. The narrative uses *yin-yang* numerology to emphasize the power of *yang* and to establish the internal connection among chapters. Moreover, similar to other Ming-Qing novels, the characters

in *Guwangyan* are part of the aesthetic design. In the following chapter, I will demonstrate how the novel explores the aesthetics of characterization and represents the interiority, complicity and moral contrast of the characters.

CHAPTER IV

CHARACTERIZATION BY *YIN-YANG* DICHOTOMY AND *YIN-ZHEN* CONTRAST IN *GUWANGYAN*

In Chinese narrative history, one important transition during the Ming-Qing period was the development of fictional narrative, which is distinct from historical narrative. Before the flourishing of vernacular fiction at that time, Chinese theories of narrative were centered largely on the model of historiography. One of the signs of the maturity of fiction during the Jiajing 嘉靖 and the Wanli 萬歷 (1522-1620) eras of the Ming dynasty was that novelists began to focus more on aesthetic design, especially in terms of characters, and not merely on plot. Fiction writers had less interest in the faithful, straightforward recording of events and individuals and more in the depiction of invented or fabricated characters.[149] The fiction writer configured events, characters, emotions, and "truth" in a new fashion. The representation of the characters in a novel became a crucial aspect in interpreting the novel's aesthetic value and the author's contribution. This chapter proposes that *Guwangyan* can be regarded as a character-centered narrative, focusing more on the complexity and depth of characterization rather than a sequence of events or incidents. Most characters discussed in this chapter escape simplified categorization as men or women, good or evil, *yin* or *yang*; their bodies and identities are developed and transformed within the narrative. They have anomalous bodies and multi-faceted social roles, transform from negative *yin* to positive *yang* characters, or have chaste hearts while living in a licentious environment. I argue that through a non-

[149] Andrew Plaks points out that although the novels *Sanguo yanyi* and *Shuihu zhuan* had already taken on their shape long before their sixteenth-century editions, the mature generic form of these novels did not appear until close to the time the first known printed editions came to light in the Jiajing and Wanli periods. Andrew Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 280.

polarized *yin-yang* dichotomy and the lewdness-chastity (*yin-zhen* 淫-貞) contrast, Cao Qujing demonstrates the uncertainty, transformation, and development of the characters and explores their complicated inner world.

Current studies of characters and characterization in *Guwangyan* mainly focus on the categorization of the characters. In Chang Jing-yi's study, she introduces four types of main characters: the scholar, the beauty, the shrews and henpecked husbands, and the lascivious men and women. Chang's research attempts to explain the specific reason why Cao Qujing produces these four types of characters. Chang believes that, through the character types of the scholar and the beauty, Cao Qujing projects in the novel an ideal image of men and women who can establish a happy marriage. The use of shrews and henpecked husbands reflects the author's criticism of powerful women and his intention to punish them through his writing. Through the depiction of lascivious men and women, Cao Qujing attempts to save people from having/developing a tainted mind and offers them didactic lessons.[150] Chang's categorization of the characters in *Guwangyan* provides a useful introduction to the main characters of the novel, yet her research does not demonstrate the unique devices of characterization invented and developed by Cao Qujing. The connection between a particular role type of the characters in the novel and the purpose of the author's writing still needs deep exploration. In Wang Zhengbing's study of the female characters in *Guwangyan*, he divides them into five groups: the chaste women, the lascivious women, the shrews, the misers, and the virtuous women. Wang argues that in *Sanguo yanyi* and *Shuihu zhuan* the female characters lack

[150] Chang Jing-yi 張靜宜, *Guwangyan renwu xingxiang ji zuozhe chuangzuo xintai zhi yanjiu* 《姑妄言》人物形象及作者創作心態之研究，Guoli Tainan Daxue, shuoshi lunwen, (Dec. 2008).

distinctive features and are portrayed in a stereotypical way. The author of *Sanguo yanyi* and *Shuihu zhuan* uses female characters to reflect the male hero's virtues and great achievement. Although there are many more female characters in *Jin Ping Mei*, most of them are negative. Wang argues that it is not until the appearance of *Honglou Meng* that a number of positive female characters are vividly portrayed. Written around three decades before *Honglou meng, Guwangyan* reflects the development in the depiction of the various types of female characters in Chinese vernacular fiction.[151] I agree with Wang's argument that Cao Qujing makes an effort to portray the complexity of female characters and to expand the role type of female characters in vernacular fictional narrative. However, the characters in the *Guwangyan* should not be simply categorized by their gender or morality. In this chapter I will expand on the current research of characters and characterization in *Guwangyan* and will show how the author represents the ambiguity, complexity, and fluidity of the characters. This chapter illustrates the aesthetic device of characterization in *Guwangyan* from three aspects: how the *yin-yang* ambiguous characters reflect the turbulence of the fictional world; how the three central male characters symbolize the restoration of the masculine *yang* energy; and how the depth and complexity of the body/mind struggle is manifested through the development of the female protagonist.

[151] Wang Zhengbing 王正兵, "*Guwangyan* zhongde nvxing xingxiang "《姑妄言》中的女性形象， *Yancheng shifan xueyuan xuebao* (renwen shehui kexue ban), vol. 25, issue 5, (Oct. 2008), 45-51.

4.1 The Importance of Characterization

Characterization garnered increasingly more attention from novelists and commentators during the late Ming period. In David Rolston's analysis of Chinese vernacular narrative, he points out a change in the narrative focus from incident to character. Rolston argues that *Shuihu zhuan* can be regarded as a plot-centered narrative which takes incident as its focus while *Jin Ping Mei* can be regarded as a character-centered narrative which takes the delineation of character as its focus. In the original conception of *Shuihu zhuan*, *who* was escorted into exile or saved from execution does not seem as important as *how* they were escorted or saved.[152] While it might be hard to claim that *Shuihu zhuan* and *Jin Ping Mei* demonstrate distinctive attention to either incident or characterization, it is safe to argue that starting with *Shuihu zhuan*, novelists and commentators of the late Ming period paid particular attention to the depiction of the fictional or fabricated characters. The commentator of *Shuihu zhuan*, Jin Shengtan, was the first to use the word *xingge* 性格 (personality) to talk about fictional characters. He claims that the author of *Shuihu zhuan* not only gave 36 different faces to the 36 major heroes in the novel, the author also created 36 different personalities as well.[153] Jin Shengtan also points out that *Shuihu zhuan* emphasizes the construction of meaningful relationships between the characters. For example, Song Jiang 宋江 and Li Kui 李逵 demonstrate precisely opposite personalities in order to more clearly express their

[152] Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary*, 192.

[153] Chen Xizhong 陈曦钟, Hou Zhongyi 侯忠义, and Lu Yuchuan 鲁玉川, *Shuihu zhuan huiping ben* 水浒傳会评本(Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe 1981),15. The English translation of Jin Shengtan's preface is John Wang, "How to Read the Fifth Book of Genius" in David L. Rolston, ed. *How to Read the Chinese Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990),132.

characters.[154] In Sheldon Lu's discussion of the depiction of characters in Ming-Qing fiction, he mentions that the author has a great awareness of the complexity and multifaceted nature of individual figures. In *Shuihu zhuan,* although some of the characters can be categorized as the same type--the hero, for instance--the author vividly demonstrates the characters' distinct personalities.[155] The art of characterization in *Shuihu zhuan* and Jin Shengtan's comments inspire later novelists to explore the aesthetic fabrication of the characters. *Jin Ping Mei*, for instance, portrays the inner nature of the characters rather than skimpily reflecting on a more typical moral depiction. The trend of favoring characters over incidents becomes a significant trend in the Qing fiction that reflected in *Rulin waishi,* is a novel that favors characterization over plot.[156] As Rolston claims, "In China, there was a strong tendency to consider incidents as subordinate to character and primarily important for what they tell us about the people involved."[157]

Due to the current study of the aesthetic value of Ming-Qing fiction, literary historians have developed several systematic ideas to analyze the unique characteristics of characterization in later imperial Chinese fiction. Andrew Plaks points out the significance of recurrence in the framing of characters in *Jin Ping Mei* and argues that the balance and opposition of the characterization is one of the central features of the late

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[154] For details, see Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆， *Guanhuatang diwu caizi shu shuihu zhuan* 貫華堂第五才子書水滸傳, in *Jin Shengtan quanji* 金聖嘆全集 (Nanjing:Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1985),vol.2, 125-26.

[155] Hsiao-peng Lu, *From Historicity to Fictionality: The Chinese Poetics of Narrative* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 142-43.

[156] Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing between the Lines*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 193. Oldrich Kral*, Several Artistic Methods in the Classic Chinese Novel* Ju-lin wai-shi," *Archiv Orientalni* 32 (1964): 16-43.

[157] Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary*, 193

imperial literati novel. Although the two main protagonists in *Jin Ping Mei*, Pan Jinlian and Li Ping'er, have opposing qualities and are bitter rivals in Ximen Qing's household, certain scenes reflect the amity and sisterly harmony between them. The development of the two main characters, the mutuality between them, and their interactions with similar female sexual partners can help readers understand the allegorical implications of the novel.[158]

Furthermore, according to Rolston, there are two important aspects of characterization in Chinese vernacular fiction. One is the relationships between characters and the other is the indirect portrayal of the inner world of the characters. Since Chinese philosophy tends to find that reality is relational, late imperial novelists portray a pair or a group of characters to reflect their personalities. An opposing or anomalous character in a pair can reflect the complicated personality of both characters. In comparison to modern Western novels, which adopt monologue, first-person narrative, and direct psychological description to demonstrate the inner world of the fictional characters, Chinese novels favor indirect methods to describe the inner world of a character -- through his or her outer actions and words. Moreover, late imperial commentators and narrators encouraged readers to explore the duplicity and ambiguity of the characters, which means the characters sometimes present different appearances to different people.[159] As Maram Epstein shows, Ming-Qing novelists design their characters based on symbolism of the cosmologic *yin-yang* competition. The characters

[158] Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel,* 104-20

[159] David L. Rolston and Shuen-fu Lin, *How to Read the Chinese Novel*, Princeton Library of Asian Translations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), esp. chapter 8 "Relational Characterization and Ambiguous Characters," 209-25.

with the destructive aspects of *yin* energy are the lascivious women (*yinfu* 淫婦), shrews (*pofu* 潑婦), and the monks and eunuchs who attack the normative social order and undermine the stability of the family. The characters with *yang* energy are the loyal ministers who maintain orthodoxy and rectify social disorder. The focus of literati novels such as *Yesou puyan* and *Jinghuan yuan* is to demonstrate how the central male characters representing *yang* power overcome the disruptive situation brought about by the *yin* characters.[160]

Based on the above studies, I argue that *Guwangyan* is a character-centered narrative. The significance of characterization in the novel is expressed clearly through both the narrative and the commentary. *Guwangyan* frequently uses the biographic *xiaozhuan* 小傳 structure to introduce the characters. The biographic introductions to the characters serve two functions: to provide the background of the novel's main characters and to introduce the background of the historical figures that may be marginal in the narrative but important in terms of the politics of the late Ming period. The main characters also reflect the social circles and value systems to which they belong. When an important main character first appears, the narrator introduces the character by name and place of origin and supplies details on his or her social and economic position. For example, chapter 5 introduces the family background of Huan E who comes from a high-ranking family of officials. His father and his father-in-law are officials who know each other and arranged a marriage for their children. *Guwangyan* provides brief biographies for both Huan E's father and his father-in-law, including their previous education, official

[160] Maram Epstein, "Engendering Order: Structure, Gender, and Meaning in the Qing Novel *Jinghua Yuan*," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR),* No. 18 (Dec., 1996), 101-27.

experience, familial situation, and how they became friends. They are scholars who obtained their degrees during the same year and then became good friends while serving in their official positions. Huan E's father knows that his son is rich but not too smart, which makes it hard to find him a good wife. Huan E's future father-in-law also knows that his daughter has a short temper, which makes it hard for him to find her a good husband. They both believe that since their education and official positions are a match they should set up the marriage for their children. This brief introduction to the generation of the main character's father paints a larger picture of the character's social background.

Sometimes, the biographies establish the moral level and historical significance of a character. For example, chapter 8 of *Guwangyan* introduces the detailed story of Wei Zhongxian and his father to explain why he brought so many disasters upon the Ming state. Although Wei is not the main character in the novel, his status in the royal palace during the Tianqi reign period actually affects the fate of several characters. The novel includes a long section to introduce Wei's parents' story: Wei's father had been the sexual partner of a local official. As a girl, Wei's mother had an affair with a neighboring monk. Before Wei's parents got married, Wei's mother became pregnant with the monk's child. The immoral behavior of Wei's parents before marriage suggests that Wei Zhongxian coud not possibly be a filial son or upright person. *Guwangyan* not only tells the story of the main characters but also attempts to provide a larger picture by providing a historical and family context.

The importance of characterization is also demonstrated at the very beginning of *Guwangyan*. The commentator, Lin Dunweng, is impressed by the diversity of the

characters and reminds the reader to pay close attention to this diversity. Lin believes that the author seriously considers the negotiation between desire and morality. In a comment to the first chapter of *Guwangyan*, Lin Dunweng claims:

> This book contains loyal subjects and filial sons, friendly and humble brothers, righteous husbands and chaste wives, heroic women and virtuous girls, righteous and benevolent men, outstanding heroes, honest and upright officials, educated literati, merchants and craftsmen, the wealthy and high officials, knights-errant and alchemists, monks and Daoists, fearful ghosts and fox spirits, Miao savages, Hui shamans, widows and orphans, evil fathers and brothers, unfilial sons and treacherous brothers, virtuous friends and those who will harm you, pleasure seekers and actors, gamblers and idlers, as well as lascivious monks and heterodox Daoists, nuns, pimps, evil match-makers, wanton women, catamites and prostitutes, corrupt officials, prisoners and violent retainers, lewd maids and evil slaves, servants and beggars, rebellious officials and bandits. Every kind of event and person in the world is portrayed here. I have read over a thousand unofficial historical novels; none is more comprehensive than this. [The reader] should not skim the novel carelessly and misunderstand the author's intention.
>
> 此一部書內，忠臣孝子，友兄恭弟，義夫節婦，烈女貞姑，義士仁人，英雄豪傑，清官廉吏，文人墨士，商賈匠役，富翁顯宦，劍俠術士，黃冠緇流，仙狐厲鬼，苗 蠻獠玀，回回巫人，寡婦孤兒，諂父惡兄，逆子兇弟，良朋損友，幫閑梨園，賭賊閑漢，至於淫僧異道，比丘尼，馬泊六，壞媒人，濫淫婦，孌童妓女，汙吏贓官， 囚徒暴客，淫婢惡奴，傭人乞丐，逆黨巨寇，不可屈指。世間所有之人，所有之事，無一不備。予閱稗官小說不下千部，未有如此之全者。勿草率翻過，以負作者之心。[161]

[161] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.1, 100.

In this overall comment about the characterizations in *Guwangyan,* Lin Dunweng points out that the contemporaneous reader would have already discovered the variety of characters and attempted to categorize them based on morality, career, supernatural powers, and nationality. Lin's comment lists various types of characters and particularly emphasizes the encyclopedic nature of the characters in *Guwangyan*. Reading the characters is the most important way to understand the intention of the author. However, the commentator's list of the character types does not reflect the important feature of characterization in *Guwangyan*. I argue that rather than depicting the social classes of the characters, Cao Qujing pays particular attention to portraying the *yin-yang* fluidity of the characters and the way in which the characters are transformed in the fictional world. Cao Qujing portrays the *yin-yang* dynamic of the characters and illustrates how the energy of *yang* is established in the male characters.

4.2 *Yin-yang* Hybridity, Performativity, and Camouflage in the Characterization of *Guwangyan*

Cao Qujing adopts the *yin-yang* concept to portray the fluidity of the characters' bodies, gender identities, and social roles. This section will scrutinize several characters in the novel that avoid being easily defined as biological or socially gendered men or women. The following three cases are closely related to the concept of *yin-yang* hybridity, performativity, and camouflage. Cao Qujing continuously encourages his readers to explore the genuine gender identity of these characters and to evaluate their social roles. Put differently, the novel indicates a strong (re)consideration of gender in which the characters' biological sex and cultural gender are demonstrated in a fluid and complementary way.

The first important aspect of the *yin-yang* dynamic in characterization in *Guwangyan* is related to the *yin-yang* hybrid body. Cao Qujing portrays a character named Qi Jie 奇姐, meaning a strange sister, who has an anomalous body and can manipulate her body to play the roles of a lascivious woman, virtuous wife, and dangerous rapist. Qi Jie's birth, body, sexual experience, and death include many strange details. As the narrator comments, [Qi Jie's parents] "bore such a person who is neither yin nor yang and extremely lascivious. And Qi Jie's death is also strange."(生此不陰不陽之奇淫，而奇姐死法亦奇)[162] Cao Qujing has an interest in producing the concept of "strangeness" (*qi* 奇) throughout his novel. Strangeness includes two levels of meaning: strangeness may refer to something that is extremely unusual. The word *qiyin* 奇淫, for instance, means extremely lascivious. The other meaning of *qi* in the narrative refers to marvelous creativity. The commentator of *Guwangyan* continuously praises the narrator for his/her ingenious imagination and fantastic metaphors (*miaoxiang qipi* 妙想奇譬). The fantastic metaphors imply that the author continuously subverts conventional imagination and provides creative depictions. The two concepts of *qi*, strangeness in both content and style, are closely related to fiction as a genre in Chinese literature. In the Tang dynasty, literary tales and stories are generally called *chuanqi* 傳奇, which means transferring the strange story. For fiction readers and writers, *qi* has such a dominant value that authors are expected to compose or input some strangeness into their narrative.

[162] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.14, 1740.

As a writer familiar with Chinese literature, Cao Qujing depicts creative images of androgynous characters to explore this rhetoric of strangeness.[163]

Through the repetition of *qi* in chapter 14 of Guwangyan, the author and commentator force readers to pay attention to the aesthetic exploration and morality transferred by erotic descriptions. Qi Jie's mother is a concubine of a lascivious man who often has sex with her in the garden. One day a fox is attracted by their behavior and transforms into a boy in order to sleep with the concubine. After a one-year relationship, the fox impregnates the concubine and tells her that

> The fetus you conceived is a female. Yet she has male characteristic but not a male part and neither her male nor her female part can bear a child. This is just like an androgynous person who is male in the first half of each month, female in the second half. The morning after you are impregnated, you will obtain lascivious energy from your husband. The girl you conceived will certainly be extremely lewd and she will die of lewdness. This is because of her parents' lust.
>
> 妳怀的孕...做女胎。卻又有陽物而非陽物，是個陽陰各半不能生育的人，傳說二形子就是這樣的了。上半月為男，下半月為女。妳受孕那一夜，次早又感了妳夫主的淫氣，這女子異日必定奇淫，即以淫死．這也是 為父母貪淫之故。[164]

The concubine subsequently delivers Qi Jie who "has a piece of flesh in front of her vagina, which is different from boys' [penises]." (那小陰上有段肉蓋住陰門，卻與男孩子毫不相似)[165] Although this flesh is not exactly the same as a male organ, in the first

[163] *Chuanqi* referring to short stories, tales, and novellas broadly appeared in literature from the Tang to Ming dynasties.

[164] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.14, 1670.

[165] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch. 14, 1671.

half of each month this special piece of flesh will become stiff (*ying*, 硬）and Qi Jie likes to use it as a penis to have sex with other women. Despite this abnormality, Qi Jie is a beautiful and attractive girl and she marries Niu Geng 牛耕, the son of a wealthy landlord. Cao Qujing portrays multiple roles related to this woman. In the marriage, she is a loving wife who fulfills her husband's desire. In the large household, she is a virtuous daughter-in-law who practices filiality to her parents-in-law. However, sometimes her lasciviousness and negative *yin* energy make her a threatening rapist.

From the perspective of Niu Geng, Qi Jie is an excellent wife who satisfies his special desire. Niu Geng is a physically weak man who likes same-sex intercourse and enjoys being penetrated. One night he gets drunk and asks Qi Jie to play with (*nong* 弄) his anus. That night is the first day of a month, when the *yang* energy was rising in Qi Jie's body and the piece of flesh on her vagina turns hard. She then uses the flesh to have sex with Niu Geng. He feels thrilled for having this kind of sex, since previously he had only had sex with servants, who hesitated to penetrate him. Niu Geng even compares his penis with Qi Jie's flesh and finds that "Qi Jie's flesh is much larger than his penis, it is hard to express the excitement of Niu Geng. He believes himself lucky to get both a pretty wife and a handsome husband. " (奇姐這肉比他陽物還魁偉許多，心中喜不待言，自己不但是娶了一個美婦，且又得了一個美夫。) [166] The couple then enjoy their conjugal relationship and deeply love one another.

Not only a loving wife, Qi Jie is also a generous master and filial daughter-in-law in the household. In order to enjoy sex, Qi Jie purchases eight concubines for the family. Qi Jie and Niu Geng practice a variety of sexual intercourse styles with the concubines

[166] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch. 14, 1697.

and servants. She is portrayed as a sexual expert who can evaluate the bodies and sexual capabilities of both men and women. Her understanding of the body and her flexibility in sexual performance enables the couple and their concubines to enjoy the sexual process and learn how to improve their own sexual skills. She also tells her parents-in-law that since they only have one son she is finding those concubines for Niu Geng in order to produce more children who can prosper and expand the household (*changda menhu* 昌大門戶). [167] After two to three years, the eight concubines have delivered six to seven children. Qi Jie's parents-in-law are extremely delighted for her generosity and appreciate the prosperity and harmony she brings to the family.

In addition to this seemingly kind image, the narrative also demonstrates Qi Jie's trajectory, since she attempts to seduce other women by using her female identity. The second part of the Qi Jie episode relates how the power of chastity rehabilitates the gender order. One night Qi Jie invites her cousin-in-law to sleep with her in order to have a night chat. While her cousin is asleep, Qi Jie has sex with her and her cousin immediately wakes up. Her cousin never expected Qi Jie to humiliate her in this way. Qi Jie attempts to calm down the astonished and irritated cousin by saying, "We are playing as women to women, why should you become so angry? It is such a pleasant thing, why do you behave like this?" (我們婦人對女人頑，虧妳也認真惱麼？這是極快活的事，妳怎做這個樣子。)[168] Qi Jie's rhetorical questions make the sexually assaulted girl completely confused. Both she and the reader begin to wonder whether this is an immoral sex act or an erotic game. How can Qi Jie, a good female relative, become a rapist? Qi

[167] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch. 14, 1698.

[168] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch. 14, 1733.

Jie's ambiguous body becomes a perfect mask for her immoral practices, since other women trust her. In other words, Qi Jie can present two faces all the time, wife and husband, good wife and lascivious woman, filial daughter-in-law and dangerous rapist.

Finally, the narrator describes Qi Jie's unusual death in order to emphasize the restoration of morality and social order. Her cousin-in-law visits Qi Jie several days after the rape and the two sleep together again. She pretends to have oral sex with Qi Jie and bites off her strange appendage. The chaste woman pours a drug on the wound, which prevents the bleeding from stopping and Qi Jie dies from an infection. Although the Qi Jie episode seems ultimately to restore morality, the narrative is filled with the ambiguity of her body, sexual preference, and the competition between lasciviousness and chastity.

The second aspect of *yin-yang* dynamic and fluidity in *Guwangyan* is related to the concept of performativity. Cao Qujing deconstructs the stereotypical binary of women as *yin* and men as *yang* by presenting a couple who play the role opposite to their biological sex. An actor could play the female lead on stage and perform as a woman in sexual relationships as well. In chapter 6 the actor Ying Yang and his wife Ms.Yin continuously play a gender role opposite to their biological sex. As a beautiful boy, Ying Yang becomes a successful female lead after three years in the local theater troupe. More importantly, Ying Yang obtains extra money from his wealthy male customers. Unfortunately, when Ying Yang is fifteen years old, he is sodomized by a local landlord named Nie Bianbao 聶變豹. Nie's penis is so large that Ying Yang sustains serious internal injuries. Although Ying Yang is able to mostly recover, his body is permanently impaired. He is unable to sing for a long time and cannot make money by his "rear-yard." After Ying Yang marries Ms. Yin, he cannot make enough money for a living, so he

teaches his wife how to act. Ms. Yin then becomes a supporting actress in the opera troupe and also sells her body. The couple understands that Ms.Yin is making money through her body and Ying Yang has to be supportive in order for them to survive.

Significantly different from other lascivious women in Ming-Qing fiction, Ms.Yin is portrayed as a licentious woman with kindness and intelligence. She spiritually and financially supports her husband and restores the *yin-yang* order of the family. In most Ming-Qing fiction and drama, it is quite common that lascivious women are related to the characteristics of greed, jealousy and violence. The lascivious woman in *Shuihu zhuan*, for instance, is portrayed as a threatening animal. The stories of two lascivious women in *Shuihu zhuan*, Pan Qiaoyun 潘巧雲 and Pan Jinlian, share a similar narrative pattern and are filled with bloody violence.[169] The narrative pattern of the two lascivious women can be roughly summarized as seduction, illicit sex, and death. Both Pan Qianyun and Pan Jinlian are involved in illicit affairs: Pan Qiaoyun has an extramarital lover, Monk Pei Ruhai 裴如海, and Pan Jinlian has an affair with Ximen Qing. These two women also claim that they are seduced by their husband's brothers. They not only betray their husbands but also attempt to destroy the brotherhood between the husband and brother-in-law. Pan Qiaoyun and Pan Jinlian also share a similar process of death in *Shuihu zhuan.* They are killed by their husbands or brothers-in-law, their hearts and five main organs are pulled out of their bodies. In Jin Shengtan's commentary of Pan Jinlian's death, he connects the scene in which Pan's brother-in-law, Wu Song, opens her belly and pulls out

[169] Shi Naian 施耐庵, *Shuihu quanzhuan* 水滸全傳(Hong Kong, Zhonghua shuju xianggang fenju, 1976). The triangle story of Yang Xiong, Pan Qiaoyun, and Pei Ruhai is in vol.2, chapter 44-46. The story about Pan Jinlian, Wu Da, and Ximen Qing is in vol.1, chapter 24-26.

her heart to the scene in which Wu Song 武松 kills the tiger.[170] Jin Shengtan apparently hopes that readers regard Pan Jinlian as a threatening beast like the tiger. Since *Shuihu zhuan* is a novel that significantly promotes the masculine hero and brotherhood, these two lascivious women are portrayed in a relatively stereotypical way and are highly connected to dangerous animals.

Guwangyan, however, demonstrates that a lascivious wife can be kind and loyal. If a husband is not able to satisfy his lascivious wife's desire and support the family, the wife establishes a triangular relationship to fulfill her desire and financially support the family. The triangle relationship between Ying Yang, Ms. Yin, and her lover, Jin Kuang 金礦 (puns on the gold mine), evokes the triangular arrangement in *Jin Ping Mei*, between Han Daoguo 韩道国, his wife Wang Liu'er 王六儿 and Ximen Qing.[171] As a poor employee of Ximen Qing, when Han Daoguo and his wife find that the boss is attracted to Wang Liu'er, they automatically accept this affair and wish to gain from it. In *Jin Ping Mei*, there seems to be no romantic sentiment between Wang Liu'er and Ximen Qing, since Wang keeps asking for a house, luxurious clothes, and money from Ximen Qing. When Han Daoguo finds out that Ximen Qing is dead, the couple immediately betrays Ximen's family and takes his money to the capital. In *Jing Pin Mei*, Wang Liu'er is portrayed as a lustful woman with limited sentiment for either Han Daoguo or Ximen Qing. In *Guwangyan*'s portrayal of a triangular relationship, Ms. Yin becomes a much

[170] Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆，*Guanhuatang diwu caizi shu shuihu zhuan* 貫華堂第五才子書水滸傳, in *Jin Shengtan quanji* 金聖嘆全集 (Nanjing:Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1985),vol.1, 396-97.

[171] The triangle story of Ximen Qing, Wang Liu'er, and Han Daoguo is in chapter 33-34 and 36-38 of *Jin Ping Mei*. Han Daoguo's betrayal of Ximen's family after he passed away is in chapter 81 of *Jin Ping Mei*.

more complex character, representing a combination of lasciviousness, romantic sentiment, and kindness.

After Ms. Yin marries Ying Yang, she finds that her husband cannot satisfy her desires or make enough money for the family. The financial and sexual needs push her to find another man. One day she is attracted to a man named Jin Kuang who comes to her door. She seduces him and finds that they are quite compatible in sex and both want to have a longer relationship. Their communication is surprisingly straightforward. Ms. Yin tells Jin Kuang about the poverty of her family and her plan to sacrifice her body to save her husband. Jin Kuang is impressed by her choice and makes the decision to support the couple financially. Ms. Yin has no intention of cheating on her husband and she confesses to him the nature of her relationship with Jin Kuang to obtain his approval. Ying Yang is also impressed by her kindness (*haoxin* 好心) and agrees with her arrangement. The couple sets up a schedule for Jin Kuang and Ms. Yin to have regular sex. At the same time, Jin Kuang keeps giving them money, which allows Ying Yang the opportunity to retire from hard physical work. Unfortunately this harmonious relationship does not last for long. Ying Yang and Ms. Yin need to relocate to Nanjing. Before they leave, Jin Kuang cannot hold back his tears. Even the commentator claims that Ms. Yin and Jin Kuang are sentimental lovers who are totally different from other lascivious men and women.[172] The mutual support and friendship between the couple and Jin Kuang lasts another eighteen years. When Ms. Yin and Ying Yang return to their hometown to retire, Jin Kuang immediately visits her and attempts to continue their sexual/romantic relationship. While Ms. Yin rejects Jin Kuang this time, after finding out that he is a

[172] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch. 6, 749.

widower she agrees to treat him as a friend and helps him find a new wife. Ms. Yin is a lascivious woman and she knows how to benefit from her body. But both her husband and her lover, Jin Kuang, praise her for her kind heart. She tries to remain honest to her husband and help him maintain social acceptance. In the end Ying Yang becomes a local official and has two sons and Jin Kuang also finds a good wife with the help of Ms. Yin. She is lascivious but her kindness and intelligence ultimately establish two harmonious families.

In this plot, the author demonstrates the *yin-yang* couple's complicated gender relationship. Ying Yang has the name *yang*, yet it is hard for him to act as a conventional male hero. He learns to perform as a woman on stage and is forced into the role as the penetrated partner in his early sexual experiences. In his marriage, he cannot financially support his family and so his wife relies heavily on male clients to make money. Ms. Yin also plays a role opposite to her sex. As a teenager, she attended a school without female classmates and learned about sex from her male teachers and peers. Although her last name is Yin 陰, she lives in a male world and earns her money through men.

The last aspect of *yin-yang* dynamic in *Guwangyan* is the concept of camouflage, which means the character controls the physical body to pretend to be the opposite gender. The representative character of this is Ben Yang (本陽, original yang), whose ability to retract his male organ into his body enables him to dress as a nun. This nun impersonator enters several families to have sex with women. In chapter 18, the narrator tells how Ben Yang is invited into the home of a Buddhist family and has an affair with the daughter, Fo Gu 佛姑, literally "Buddhist Girl." The girl's parents believe that Buddhism is so important that their future son-in-law should be a devout Buddhist. Even though Fo Gu is

over thirty, they have not yet found her a suitable mate. When Ben Yang visits the family the parents find that he is very knowledgeable about the Buddhist and Daoist canons, so they invite him to live with their daughter in the hope that the two will learn religious teachings together. Unfortunately Ben Yang seduces Fo Gu and impregnates her. Fo Gu's brother reports the nun to the local magistrate who discovers that Ben Yang is male. Ben Yang is beaten to death in the court, and Fo Gu's brother forces her to commit suicide.[173]

In this episode, the author portrays a character who successfully destroys one family's ability to protect their daughter. On the surface, Ben Yang is an innocent nun, who is white and plump with clear teeth and bright eyes, wearing neat Daoist robes.[174] However, in the bed chamber, he shares sexual experiences and pleasure with his partner and easily turns erotic girlish chat into sexual intercourse. The novel presents the detailed dialogue between Ben Yang and Fo Gu, showing how Ben Yang arouses the latter's desire, which has been suppressed by Fo Gu's parents for a long time. While Fo Gu could easily expose Ben Yang's male identity on the first night, she chooses to keep it secret and enjoy the sexual process. Rather than simply depicting Ben Yang as an evil man, the author is more interested in how he establishes his female identity and performs as an intimate friend for the unmarried Fo Gu. In this case, it is not only Ben Yang who conceals his identity, Fo Go also presents herself as a chaste and conservative girl. Ben Yang embodies an essential *yang* body covered by the *yin* disguise.

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[173] A similar plot also appears in late Ming writer Ling Mingchu's 凌蒙初 *Chuke pai'an jingqi* 初刻拍案驚奇 no.34 vol.2. The difference is that in Ling Mengchu's story the plot is told from the point of view of a local magistrate who suspects the nun and catches him. Ling's narrative is more interested in immorality than in the individual person who is immoral. The number of cases in which the nun seduces or rapes is the emphasis of the narrative. In *Guwangyan*, however, before achieving a clear moral evaluation of the characters, Cao Qujing offers a space through which to demonstrate the process of seduction, resistance, and enjoyment of the two characters.

[174] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch. 8, 2164.

In *Guwangyan*, through the characters having androgynous bodies or name puns with the *yin-yang* concept, the novel warns its audience that the biological body does not determine the sexual or gender identity of each character. The narrative emphasizes the uncontrollability and fluidity of the material body, which can be contrary to a character's public image. Through the depiction of various characters who travel between conventional gender boundaries, such as actors, actresses, monks, nuns, midwives, and prostitutes, the narrative sophisticatedly presents how some of these characters demonstrate ambiguous gender identities and take advantage of other individuals by manipulating their desires.

4.3 *Yin-yang* Restoration of the Central Male Characters of *Guwangyan*

In the previous section, I introduced three aspects of the *yin-yang* dichotomy of characterization in *Guwangyan*: the *yin-yang* hybridity, performativity, and camouflage. Those gender- and body-ambiguous characters reflect the boundaries between men and women, husband and wife, inside and outside that became blurred in the turbulent late Ming society. However, Cao Qujing still wants to emphasize the positive, male *yang* power which can finally stabilize society and restore social order. The three central male characters in *Guwangyan*, Huan E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida reflect the transformation of the male characters, from a reflection of negative *yin* energy to positive *yang* energy. In comparison with the *yin-yang* ambivalent characters introduced before, Cao Qujing seems to project more hope for the male central characters. Their bodies, personalities, and family relationships experience huge changes within the narrative. The original

image of these three characters is closely related to the role of henpecked husband but after the transformation they become generous philanthropists and virtuous local heroes.

If we put *Guwangyan* within the early to mid-Qing vernacular fiction, it is not hard to find that the *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, *Guwangyan* and *Yesou puyan* reflect the moral spectrum of the male protagonist. Di Xichen in *Xingshi* is depicted as a purely passive, depraved, and marginal henpecked husband. Wen Suchen in *Yesou puyan* is a Confucian sage hero who strictly keeps moral and social boundaries. As a novel composed between these two vernacular novels, *Xingshi* and *Yesou puyan*, *Guwangyan* demonstrates the three male characters' transformations from depraved and henpecked husbands to the polar opposite of generous heroes.[175] Huan E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida began as an ignorant son of an official, a fake scholar, and a cheap landlord, respectively. Because of the inner kindness of these characters and their conjugal sentiment towards

[175] The earliest extant edition of *Xinshi yinyuan zhuan* stems from either 1648 or 1661. See Daria Berg, *Carnival In China*, 10; Yenna Wu, "Xingshi yinyuan zhuan de banben wenti" 醒世姻緣傳的版本問題, *Zhongwai wenxue* 中外文學, vol, 17, issue 2, 1988, 97-107; Xu Fuling 徐復岭, *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan zuozhe he yuyan kaolun* 醒世姻緣傳作者和語言考論 (Jinan, Qulu shushe, 1993), 21-31. Berg suggests that the novel was written after 1628 and before either 1648 or 1661. See Berg, *Carnival In China*, 10.

The date of *Yesou puyan* is a bit problematic since the earliest extant copy of the novel is a manuscript dated 1878, while the earliest extant printed copy (the co-called Pingling huizhen lou edition) is dated 1881. For accounts in English of the extant editions of the novel, see Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative*, 237-8 and Maram Epstein, *Competing Discourses*, 199-204. However, it is certain that its author Xia Jinqu died 1787 at the age of 83 *sui*. See Zhao Jingshen 趙景深, "*Yesou puyan* zuozhe Xia Erming nianpu" 野叟曝言作者夏二銘年譜 in idem, *Zhognguo xiaoshuo congkao* 中國小說叢考 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 1983), 433-47. Zhao suggests that Xia probably completed his novel around 1779. More recently, based on a poem attributed to Xia Jingqu, Xiao Xiangkai 蕭相愷 argues that the novel might have been completed as early as 1750, see his "Zhongguo xiaoshuo shi yanjiu zhong ruogan wenti de kaobian zhiyi" 中國小說史研究中若幹問題的考辯之一，in Xiao Xiangkai and Zhang Hong 张虹, *Zhongguo gudian tongsu xiaohsuo shilun* 中國古典通俗小說史論 (Nanjing, Nanjing chubanshen, 1993), 85. Even if Xiao is correct that Xiao had already made reference to the novel in a poem dated 1750, it remains possible that the novel underwent further "reincarnations" later (Xia Jingqu might have made substantial changes to the later drafts of the novel) since it was mainly circulated in hand-copied manuscript till the late nineteenth century.

their wives, Cao Qujing portrays how the characters have an opportunity to obtain *yang* energy in their lives.

On first glance the three male characters, Huan E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida, seem to be a repetition of each other, since they have similar features such as depravity, stupidity, and being henpecked. A closer scrutinization of the three characters, however, illustrates that they have subtle and distinctive demarcations. In this small male group, each character reflects one specific aspect of a social- and gender-imbalanced relationship. Simultaneously the three central characters are interacting and influencing one another. I adopt the concept of figural density to illustrate the device of the characterization in *Guwangyan*. In Andrew Plaks's analysis of *Jin Ping Mei*, he introduces one device in characterization of the novel as the recurrence of the description. The principle of figural density becomes more crucial to our appreciation of the complexity of *Jin Ping Mei* when we emphasize the implied contrast that emerges from the initial similarity of the repeating figures. Plaks explains that some characters in *Jin Ping Mei* have similar names, physical appearances, and even sexual behaviors. Pan Jinlian and Song Huilian, for instance, share the same character *lian* 蓮 in their names and have very small feet. Song Huilian and Li Ping'er both have white skin. Since the three women all have sexual relationships with Ximen Qing, they also link to one another through another character, event, or relationship. Pan Jinlian and Li Ping'er both have illicit affairs with Ximen Qing which lead to the death of their respective husbands. After they become the concubines of Ximen Qing, they are portrayed as close sisters and, at the same time, as rivals. Since both Pan Jinlian and Song Huilian came from the lower level class as servant-maids, they are eager to reap a financial benefit through sex with Ximen

Qing. Through illustrating the interaction and recurrence of the three lascivious female characters in *Jing Ping Mei,* Plaks points out that the accumulative meaning of the characters is much more significant than just one meaning would be. By portraying Pan Jinlian, Song Huilian, and Li Ping'er through the device of figural density, the author gives readers access to the power struggle of Ximen Qing's household, as well as insight into how the author constructs the similarity and dissimilarity, balance and opposition which are the central features of the literati novel. [176] Cao Qujing follows the style of *Jin Ping Mei* and adopts the strategy of figural density. Huan E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida share some similar features but each of them has his uniqueness and distinctive characteristics. Cao Qujing also makes an effort to portray the collective male *yang* power in stabilizing the local community.

Cao Qujing portrays the names, political connections, and the family relationships of the three central characters to demonstrate their *yin* symbolic value. Huan E's name puns on "evil official" (*huan e* 宦惡). Since Huan E's father is a high official in Beijing, Huan's family has close connections with the local officials. Huan E's name satires the corruption of the bureaucratic system. Jia Wenwu's name implies a fake scholar. Jia puns on "fake" (*jia* 假), while Wenwu means "literary staff." In comparison with his two friends, Jia Wenwu is the one who obtains more Confucian education and likes to show off his literary knowledge. Yet, his academic degrees are bought by his father-in-law. Cao Qujing uses the character's name to satirize a person who has a degree yet without real knowledge. Tong Zida is a miserly landlord who has tons of money but is extremely cheap in treating his friends. One of the main reasons that he wants to make friends with

[176] For a detailed discussion of figural density in *Jin Ping Mei*, please see Andrew Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel*, 98-102.

Huan E and Jia Wenwu is because they are richer than he is and can pay for the banquet and brothel visits for him. In addition to the satirical aspect of the three characters' names, Cao Qujing also uses the name of the servant to illustrate the negative implication of the male group. The servant who works for Huan E and is in charge of connecting the three friends is named Wu He 鄔合 a pun on the saying *wuhe zhizhong* 烏合之眾 which refers to a motley crew of ravens gathering together without order. Apparently, Cao Qujing adopts Wu He's name to refer to the gathering of the three central characters without a clear goal.

A further aspect of the three characters which points to the symbolic *yin* values is their political and social connection with the eunuch Wei Zhongxian. In Ming-Qing fiction, the eunuch is frequently related to *yin* energy. Since eunuchs often abused their power within the royal court, in *Guwangyan* Wei Zhongxian is portrayed as a negative power, connected with the wet-nurse Madame Ke 客氏, who manipulates the court and the Tianqi天啟 emperor. In chapter 8, *Guwangyan* offers a detailed description of Wei Zhongxian and the challenge of the entire bureaucratic system. Cao Qujing also provides a brief biography of this eunuch. Wei Zhongxian is originally a hoodlum and gambler whose initial name was Wei Jinzhong 魏進忠. After losing all his inherited property and selling his wife to a merchant, he takes the step of self-castrating to become a eunuch and enters into palace service to escape his creditors. In the palace he gets together with Madame Ke, the wet-nurse of the future Ming Tianqi emperor. Then Wei Zhongxian and Madame Ke begin manipulating the Tianqi emperor, who gives Wei Jinzhong his new name, Wei Zhongxian. The emperor's favor later gives Wei absolute power over the court.

The original image of Huan E is portrayed as a stupid and arrogant libertine. One of the main reasons that he thinks he is superior to others is the family connection with Wei Zhongxian. *Guwangyan* introduces his early education experience to emphasize how stupid Huan E is. Huan E's father hires a teacher to teach his son to learn the classical canon. Huan E has no interest in learning and his teacher has no intention to teach him. They just squander their time together without any serious learning taking place. After three years of studying, Huan E only knows one book, *Three-Character Classic* (San zi jing 三字經). Both Huan E and the teacher feel satisfied. Huan E believes that "he already read the book [*San zi jing*] many times, and all the scholars under the heaven are not able to compete with him, he has no intention to read other books." (宦萼自己以為已經讀過數遍，並天下才子恐也無賽於我，因此再也不去念別書。)[177] When Huan E is around twenty, "he becomes a strong and fat guy, yet he is still a person raised following natural instincts, knowing nothing of human relations." (雖然長成一條肥壯大漢，還是渾然天理，一毫人事不知。)[178] Although Huan E is an indifferent student he is fully aware of the importance of the eunuch Wei in the social relationship. He believes that currently "there are only three people superior to him, the emperor, Wei Zhongxian, and his father. He is inferior to them." (但只是如今上有皇帝，有魏上公，有老爹先生，我豈非三人之下乎？)[179] When he is reminded that he can make connections with the cousins, uncles and relatives of the large Huan family, he gets angry.

[177] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch. 5, 552.

[178] Ibid.

[179] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch. 5, 567.

He is afraid that some poor cousins and uncles will claim their connection with him and if people know that he has some poor relatives, he will feel extremely shamed. He believes that "as the third powerful person in the state who is superior to hundreds and thousands of people, he is not able to lower his status in front of these poor relatives; the person who knows the situation will laugh at him." (你想我一個萬人之上、三人之下的一個人，怎肯下氣在這些窮骨肉跟前，豈不懼哉識者所笑。)[180] He is portrayed as an ignorant and arrogant dandy who has no interest in learning the knowledge from books or society and believes that he only needs to make friends who come from a similar social status.

Jia Wenwu is a bogus scholar who establishes academic success via the connection with Wei Zhongxian. When Jia Wenwu is a little boy, he is smart yet dislikes reading. After Jia Wenwu gets married, his father in-law purchases a *juren* degree for him. Jia Wenwu knows that he cannot get a higher degree by himself. He visits Ruan Dacheng and Wei Zhongxian in Beijing, hoping to get some support from them. Wei Zhongxian is impressed by Jia's luxurious gifts and accepts Jia as his adopted grandson. Wei Zhongxian exclaims that "You have a grandfather like me, if you cannot get a *jinshi* degree, you will lose our decency."（你有咱這樣個爺，連孫兒的進士也不能中一個，把咱的體面都沒了。) [181] Wei Zhongxian then asks Jia Wenwu to be patient and helps him obtain a *jinshi* degree in the spring of the next year. Even the narrator comments, "Why do we need to read plenty of books? The only thing we need is to be born with a

[180] Ibid.

[181] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.8, 949.

future and be lucky." (胸中何用書千卷，只要生來福運齊)[182] Huan E and Jia Wenwu are not intelligent and have no interest in learning. The main approach for them to establish and maintain their social status is a connection with the eunuch, the extreme *yin* energy in the court.

In addition to their social and political connections with the representative *yin* power, another important aspect of the *yin-yang* turbulence of these three characters is their conjugal relationships. They all have shrewish wives who were incarnated from animals. Cao Qujing pays particularly attention in portraying the subtle distinctions of these three central characters, since their bodies, age, and financial situations give them have different reasons to take the submissive position in the family. Huan E's wife was incarnated from a female monkey and is extremely short tempered. Although Huan E has good physical capital (*benqian* 本錢) and can barely meet her sexual requests, Huan E is scared of her anger. Jia Wenwu's wife, who was incarnated from a female tiger, is ten years older than Jia. When they got married, she was in her twenties and Jia was too young to satisfy her desires. Tong Zida's wife is miserly and lascivious. Tong is scared of being blamed for squandering money and afraid of his wife's strong desires. The *yin* energy and animalist features of their wives make the three husbands feel anxious, scared, and cowardly at home; therefore they all prefer to keep a distance from their wives and stay away from their houses.

These two types of characters with *yin* energy, eunuch and shrew, dominate the public and private lives of the three central characters within the first third of the novel. However, Cao Qujing's main innovation of characterization is not simply representing

[182] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch. 8, 950.

the weak and passive sides of the henpecked husbands; he explores why and how they can get transformed. The three henpecked husbands are related yet different from Di Xichen in *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, the most pathetic henpecked husband in seventeenth-century Chinese vernacular fiction. *Guwangyan* and *Xingshi* share some obviously similar features in portraying the unbalanced conjugal relationship. Both stories depict the shrewish wife as a reincarnated animal. The reason the husbands need to tolerate the bullying by their wives is because of their behavior in the previous life. In *Xingshi*, the henpecked husband, Di Xichen, is portrayed as an extremely passive character that never has energy and intelligence to find a solution to the family chaos.[183] He is a vile, passive, and weak husband and tortured by his beautiful, shrewish wife and violent concubine. *Guwangyan*, however, portrays the sentiment and inner kindness of these three husbands and demonstrates how they try to find a solution to rebalance the *yin-yang* energy in the family.

Xingshi and *Guwangyan* provide two different explanations for the karmic reason of having a shrewish wife. In *Xingshi*, the previous incarnation of Di Xichen, Chao Yuan, is a profligate philistine who abuses his wife, disrespects his father, and betrays his friends. He is finally beheaded by his tenant since he has an illicit affair with the tenant's wife.[184] Chao gets punished because of his uncontrolled lust (*yu* 欲).[185] After Chao Yuan is reincarnated as Di Xichen, Di still lacks self-cultivation and is portrayed as a weak and

[183] The detailed discussion of Di Xichen, is in Daria Berg, *Carnival in China : A Reading of the Xingshi Yinyuan Zhuan*. Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2002. 171-205.

[184] Chao Yuan is the main hero in chapter 1-19 of *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, and his adultery with the tenant's wife is in chapter 19 of *Xingshi*.

[185] See Maram Epstein's *Competing Discourse*, 126.

passive character. Cao Qujing, however, demonstrates that the issue of henpecked husbands in *Guwangyan* is related to sentiment, *qing*, not purely to lust. Even if the wives have stronger sexual desires than their husbands, it is the husbands' responsibility and intention to protect the marriage, finding a solution by transforming their bodies to fulfill their wives' desires.

The dream in chapter 1 of *Guwangyan* illustrates the previous lives of the three husbands and explains that the most important reason they lost their lives was due to their sincere longing (*xiangsi* 相思). Previously, they were three scholars who were knowledgeable and well educated, yet since they were not able to pass the civil service examination they had to live in poverty. Without enough money, they were abandoned by the girl they loved.[186] They then committed suicide. They explained to the Ghost King that "admiring pretty women is not the right way, yet the pursuit of young women is human nature. They were obsessed in the missing, and died for the missing. " (慕色雖非正道，好逑自是人倫。各害相思，抱思而歿 。)[187] In their previous lives, they regarded themselves as victims of sentiment and longing and followed basic human nature. Therefore the Ghost King gives them an opportunity to live a different life in which they would become rich and stupid with shrewish wives.

Since the three characters died because of natural sentiment, rather than illegitimate lust, Cao Qujing in particular portrays how they were transformed in personality and morality. Huan E and his friends discover that Zhong Qing gets a *juren* degree and is connected to the local officials. As a upright scholar, Zhong Qing get

[186] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.1, 141.

[187] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.1, 141-42.

married to Qian Gui and does not take advantage of his new status. Huan E was impressed by the virtues of Zhong Qing and he makes a decision to learn from Zhong Qing and transform himself. He talks to his friends:

> In the world there is such a good person who even if he is humiliated by others, he still claims that he is in the wrong.[188] I often bully others and claim that others offend me. In comparison with him, I feel ashamed. I think the current prevailing powers will end someday. Why can't I become a good person? Is there any benefit to being an evil person? Moreover, the Master Wei [Wei Zhongxian] is already on the decline, the huge Tai Mountain has collapsed. The power of my family is declining. And nobody can live forever. After my father passed away these powers will be worn away. . … If in the future, I find a person who is as rich and powerful as I, yet much more evil than me. If I defend him, he may not be as generous as Master Zhong has been, it would contain result in a huge dispute. I made my decision from today I will no longer be Evil Huan.
>
> 世上有如此好人，人辱了他，他還說是他得罪了人。我每常淩辱了人，還說是人觸犯了我。這樣比並起來，豈不自愧？我想時勢也有盡了的日子，何不做個好人，只管作惡何益？況如今魏上公已完，泰山已倒，我家的勢力漸漸差了些。況且人生可有長生不老的？我家父百年之後，這些豪勢豈不冰消瓦解。我若只顧目前作惡，倘後來遇了我這樣有錢有勢，比我還惡的惡人，得罪了他，就未必肯像鐘舉人這樣包容了，那時豈不 弄出天大的是非。我從今後決不做宦惡了。[189]

In this long explanation of his transformation, Huan E lists several serious reasons. His status and that of Zhong Qing have changed, since Zhong has obtained a degree and will

[188] In chapter 12, Zhong Qing and Qian Gui have some argument with Huan E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu in the brothel. Qian Gui refuses to serve them.

[189] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.15, 1780-81.

be a potential official. Huan E's self-esteem is mostly built on the authority of Wei Zhongxian whose influce is declining. And Huan's father will predictably pass away. As I have introduced before, as an arrogant person, Huan E only admires two people, his father and Wei Zhongxian, and he finds both of them cannot be depended on forever. He also finds that with the decline of his own status, he will possibly encounter somebody stronger and more threatening. He makes a decision to abandon his previous behavior. Of the three male characters, Huan E is the richest and has a deeper connection with the official system than Jia and Tong. His change directly influences his two friends. Following Huan E, Jia Wenwu also makes the decision to change himself. As he explains to himself,

> I thought I just took advantage of money and with the help of my father-in-law obtained the degrees of *juren* and *jinshi*. I was the top scholar in the Jiangnan area. I did not even think that there are plenty of *juren* and *jinshi* under the heavens, quite a few of whom have real talent and knowledge. I didn't know how many of these scholars with high degrees are very humble and modest. How could I [with my false dengrees] pretend to be like them?. . . From now on I really need to learn to engage myself with some proper affairs.
>
> 我想我不過是仗著孔方兄之厚，借著富泰山之力，貪緣了一個舉人進士，就以為遍江南獨我尊。便不曾回想天下之舉人進士，車 載鬥量，而且真才實料的亦自不少。不知有多少科甲大老先生都謙謙自遜。我假斯文的是什麼? …… 今後也去學做些正經事吧.[190]

Tong Zida also says that he is obsessed by money. It feels as if he dies if he has to spend even one penny. As a poor degree holder, Zhong Qing rejects the money offered by

[190] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.15, 1782-83.

others. It is apparent that some money is acceptable and some money cannot be accepted. Moreover, no one can live one hundred years. After death money has no fuction. “I will not be so arrogant in the future; I just follow along humbly, hide my head, and stay at home.” (我從今後也不自大了，只隨高逐低，縮頭藏頭，安分守己，在家受用罷。)[191] During the process of transformation, the three characters are closely connected to each other. Based on their social and classical backgrounds, Cao Qujing positions the literati scholar as a positive role model who inspires change in the arrogant dandy, bogus scholar, and illiterate landlord.

After the crucial scene depicting their transformations the three characters make their decision to live a new life. Huan E turns from being a stupid dandy to a responsible local philanthropist. He does plenty of “good deeds”(*shanshi* 善事) which include philanthropy (giving towards the enrichment of public life) as well as charity (compassionate giving to the poor) in the city.[192] He often walks on the street to help people in poverty or trouble. He builds several charity houses and business in order to contribute his positive energy to society. He builds a pawnshop for the purpose of helping the people in poverty and only requests limited interest. He also has a coffin store to distribute cheap coffins to the poor. He asks Wu He to help him take charge of the orphanage and the hospital and shelter. He hires Mei Gen to help him manage several charity schools.[193] “He is always wandering in the street to search for people who need

[191] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.15, 1782.

[192] For the terms *philanthropy* and *charity* in seventeenth-century Chinese texts, please see Joanna F. Handlin Smith, “Benevolent Societies: The Reshaping of Charity during the Late Ming and Early Qing,” *Journal of Asian Studies*, vol.46, no. 2, 1987, 309-35, 311-12.

[193] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.20, 2453-54.

help and never tires of doing it." (自己還在外邊尋著好事做，勇猛力行，全無倦怠吝惜之心。)[194] People start to call him a benevolent master (*enren laoye* 恩人老爺) and gentleman (*junzi* 君子). Even his parents are impressed by his good behavior and think that their son has become an extremely good person (*dahaoren* 大好人). Jia Wenwu and Tong Zida attempt to cooperate with the local upright officials and stabilize the social chaos. Tong Zida donates food and money to save the refugees fleeing to Nanjing.[195] Jia Wenwu devotes his money to the Nanjing magistrate to support the Ming military troops defending against the Li Zicheng rebellion. *Guwangyan* shows that merchants and commoners can have the potential to become saviors. They can use their money to help local poor families, support local officials and save refugees. Doing benevolent work (*shanxing* 善行) becomes the new goal of the three central characters.

Not surprisingly, the three characters' family relations are also regulated and masculine *yang* gradually dominates the negative *yin*. After Huan E and Jia Wenwu have strengthened their sexual power, they also establish a contained sexual morality. They stop searching for sexual adventures with women or catamites within or outside of the household. On the contrary, they actively pursue the ways in which they can better satisfy their wives. When Huan E is seduced by a girl who wants to devote her body to him in order to show appreciation for his help, he insists on rejecting her. Jia Wenwu gets help

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[194] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.20, 2454.

[195] A detailed discussion of Tong Zida's saving of the refugee is in chapter V of this dissertation.

from a Daoist master and enlarges his penis which allows him to fulfill his wife's desires.[196]

On the surface, *Xingshi* and *Guwangyan* present the image of henpecked husbands, yet, *Xingshi* emphasizes the evil and depravity of the male protagonists who lack personality development and sentimental details within the narrative. *Guwangyan* illustrates the inner kindness of the three male characters and demonstrates sympathy towards the *yin*-dominated male protagonists. Huan E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida are stupid and snobbish, yet have no intention or capability to seriously hurt others. In depicting the characters' transformations, Cao Qujing pays close attention to their subtle distinctions and makes each male character handle the conjugal relationship in his individual way. Cao Qujing places his male characters within the spectrum – from depraved negative libertines to virtuous hero -- and demonstrates how the bodies and sentiments of the characters are developed and transformed along that spectrum. Although Huan, Jia, and Tong might not adhere to Confucian orthodoxy automatically as a typical sagely hero, Wen Suchen in *Yesou puyan* for instance, yet they still can get inspiration from their literati friends, enjoy family pleasures, and contribute to social stability.

4.4 Internal Struggle of the Female Protagonist

In the previous sections, I demonstrated how the novel manifests the tension between *yin* and *yang* energy and dislocates the gender identity of the characters. In this section, I will illustrate how the author portrays the complexity of the female characters

[196] The detailed discussion of Jia Wenwu's body transformation is in chapter VI of this dissertation.

with the interaction between the mind, body, and sexuality. In chapter II I discussed how Cao Qujing is particularly interested in the *yin* 淫- *zhen* 貞 contrast. Several female characters in this chapter all have relationships with *yin -zhen* contrasts. *Guwangyan* explores the complexity and depth of the female characters. In general late imperial novelists do not represent the inner mind of their characters, as broadly represented in Western novels through monologue or the notion of the unconscious mind. [197] My reading, however, demonstrates how the author uses poems and the struggle between body and mind to reflect the character's interiority.

During the Ming-Qing period, the discourse of chastity circulated universally in official documents, literati discussions, vernacular novels, and dramas. In historical documents, many materials record women's devotion to chastity. They readily sacrificed their bodies by suicide or celibacy after being widowed for the reputation and future of their entire families. Weijing Lu's book about the chastity cult argues that the young maidens or widows who committed suicide after the deaths of their fiancés and husbands were not passive victims of Confucian gender ideology. Rather, their insistence on following their own path precipitated debates about ritual among late Qing literati. Chaste women's poems and autobiographies prove that they understood themselves as moral actors.[198] In vernacular fiction and drama, male writers present multifaceted representations of the chaste woman. *Guwangyan* presents several female characters who compromise their chastity in order to survive the turbulent ending of the Ming dynasty. Compromised yet intact chastity is an intriguing (and scandalous) proposition that had

[197] Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary*, 212-13.

[198] Weijing Lu, *True to Her Word: The Faithful Maiden Cult in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

special significance for this period. Cao Qujing in effect calls for a redefinition of virtue to accommodate compromise, pragmatism, and self-interest. In *Guwangyan* the possibility of having a defiled body and chaste mind (*shenru xinzhen*) 身辱心貞 is presented as instrumental for survival and reconciliation.[199]

A good example of the author's representation of the struggle between the bodies and minds of women can be focused in the story of Qian Gui. Qian Gui is a blind courtesan who has a lascivious mother and greedy father. Both of her parents want to obtain large sums of money through her work as a prostitute. However, Qian Gui decides to keep her spiritual chastity after hearing the story of a heroic woman. In chapter 3, Qian Gui asks her maid to read her the story of Du Xiaoying 杜小英 from a *Lienü zhuan* 烈女傳 (an *anthology* of biographical pieces on virtuous women).[200] *Guwangyan* retells Du's story which includes a brief biography of her life and ten poems she wrote before her suicide. In the biography, the narrative explains that when Du Xiaoying was still very young, she already had a low opinion of the famous Mulan木蘭, who had joined the army by masquerading as a man. According to Du, Mulan had compromised her chastity by living among men, even though technically she remained a virgin. Later in life, Du was kidnapped by Ming government troops dispatched to suppress a peasant rebellion. Brought before the commanding general of the troops, Du eloquently accused the troops

[199] The discussion of the tension between the body and mind of female characters in women's poetry and Li Yu's drama can be found in Wai-yee Li, "The Abducted Women: Victimhood and Agency during the Ming-Qing Transition," in Ailing Wang ed., *Kongjian yu wenhua changyu, Space and Cultural Fields: The Cultural Interpretation of Mobility* (Taibei: Hanxue yanjiu zhongxin, 2009),143-86.

[200] The historical record of Du Xiaoying (1638-54) is in Tan Qian 談遷, *Beiyoulu* 北遊錄 (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1997), 337-39.

of oppressing the common people rather than fulfilling their promise of suppressing rebellion. To protect her chastity, Du committed suicide by jumping into Dongting Lake before the general could sexually assault her. Before her death, however, she composed ten poems declaring her intention to keep her chastity at any cost.

An important fact in the story of Du Xiaoying is that she sealed the poems into the clothes she was wearing before she committed suicide with a note for those who found her body. The note said that since Wuchang was the capital of the province and a gathering place for many scholar-officials (*shidafu* 士大夫) and since that year was the year of the provincial exams (thus many examination candidates would be in the capital), she believed that these morally upright scholars would deliver her poems to her parents when they discovered her body.[201] Du Xiaoying seemed convinced that these literati would be able to appreciate her heroic act of martyrdom and would be sure to spread her good name. In Grace Fong's argument concerning the historical image of Du Xiaoying, she emphasizes that even though Du could not fully control her physical body, she produced a textual body to safeguard her fame and reputation; therefore readers of later generations would remember her story and circulate it broadly.[202] The heroic action of Du Xiaoying makes Qian Gui reconsider her life and she decides to find an upright scholar to appreciate her virtue and understand her inner chastity. After listening to the story of Du, Qian Gui tearfully makes a pledge:

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[201] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.3, 363-64.

[202] Grace S. Fong, "Signifying Bodies: The Cultural Significance of Suicide Writings by Women in Ming-Qing China," in Paul S. Ropp, Paola Zamperini, and Harriet T. Zurndorfer,ed. *Passionate Women: Female Suicide in Late Imperial China* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2001),116-21.

This is how a woman should conduct herself. Unfortunately I was born into prostitution. My body is already soiled, and even death cannot change this fact. Although I lost my chastity at the beginning of my life, there is still time to feel regret at the end. If one day I can find a talented man, I shall purify my body to serve him. I will not allow myself to draft along with others and become a laughingstock.

為女子者，不當如是耶？我生不辰，出於煙花，身已汙矣，死於無及。雖失之於始，尚可悔之於終，倘異日得遇才郎，必當潔身以待，萬不可隨波逐流，笑殺多人也。[203]

Although in the same chapter, the narrator has told the process by which Qian Gui lost her virginity to her first customer, the narrative still presents Qian Gui as inspired by the idea of chastity.

Later on, Qian Gui carefully accumulates enough money to leave the brothel and rejects a marriage proposal from a hypocritical scholar. Lonely, living in a brothel with limited friends, poems become her only way to express sentiment. She composes a song lyric to express her desire for her future lover:

Autumn 秋

The cricket in late autumn is crying to the dew,

The moon is coming from the silver toad,

Falling mallets sound from thousands of homes.

[203] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.3, 367.

The stamens of cassia perfume the air,

The chrysanthemum is just blooming,

I drink the newly made wine and am drunk in the shade of flowers.

The golden wind startles the yellow leaves,

The sound of the geese from the end of the heaven is frequent.

The jade candle melts into tears,

The incense in the golden burner is gone,

I hear the sounds of the fading stone anvils.

寒蛩泣露，銀蟾吐月，萬戶搗衣聲。桂蕊飄香，菊英初綻，新釀醉花陰。金風簌簌驚黃葉，天際雁聲頻。玉燭淚流，金爐香燼，側耳聽殘砧。[204]

Cao Qujing uses this poem to demonstrate not only the literary knowledge and talent of Qian Gui, but also her complicated emotions. The first stanza depicts a conventional autumn scene including cassia, chrysanthemums, and wine. The second stanza continues with the autumnal scene, yet the focus of the poem moves to the bedroom of the speaker. All that accompanies her is the candle, tears, and an inactive incense burner; she can only hear the sound of the stone anvils. The sounds of the mallet in the third line and the stone anvils at the end of the poem are often juxtaposed to depict women's listless frustration and loneliness.

After she meets her soul mate, Zhong Qing, Qian Gui ends her life as a prostitute. Zhong Qing cherishes her devotion to their relationship and they become the central moral exemplars. Qian Gui also writes a poem to express her pleasure of finding her future husband:

[204] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.3, 373.

The wish of half of my life has been satisfied.

I was trapped in the deep sentiment.

When will the aroma of the Osmanthus fragrance come to my pillow?

My dreamy ghost will go to the head of the Bending River.

半生心願一朝酬，意密情殷不自由。何日桂香來枕畔，夢魂先到曲江頭。[205]

The location of the last line, the head of the Bending River (*qujiangtou*, 曲江頭), refers to a pleasure quarter in the Tang court where the emperor would visit his consorts.[206] This poem reflects the contradictions of Qian Gui's thoughts. On one hand, she feels relieved since she has found her soul mate and future husband. On the other hand, she is anxious about her future life. Still, she has a wonderful time with Zhong Qing and is sure of their mutual affection even though her courtesan identity will make it hard for her to realize the ideal of a happy domestic life. In the second couplet of the poem, the narrator projects the uncertainty of the future. In this novel, Qian Gui frequently uses poems and song lyrics to express her desire and sentiment. Her role model, Du Xiaoying, also used poems

[205] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.4, 519.

[206] The motif of the head of the Bending River also appears in the sixth poem of Du Fu's *Autumn Meditations* 秋興 (ca.766). "The mouth of the Qutang Gorge, the bank of the Bending River, ten thousand miles of wind and mist join them in pale autumn. Through Calyx Hall's hidden passage the imperial aura passed. Now the little Lotus Park is filled with border sorrows. Pearls on curtains, embroidery on pillars, around the yellow cranes, from brocade hawsers and ivory masts rise the white gulls. I turn my head, sad now for the place of song and dance, Qin has been since olden days the land of emperors. 瞿唐峽口曲江頭, 萬里風煙接素秋。花萼夾城通禦氣 ,芙蓉小苑入邊愁。朱簾繡柱圍黃鶴，錦纜牙檣起白鷗 。回首可伶歌舞地，秦中自古帝王州。 Trans. by A. C. Graham, in *Anthology of Chinese Literature: From Early Times to the Fourteenth Century* (Grove Press, 1994), 237. The poet portrays the splendid scenario of the head of the Bending River and the little Lotus Park to reflect his nostalgia of the Tang capital Chang'an before the An Lushan rebellion (755-63).

to convey her identity and chastity. While these two women have no opportunity to meet, readers can feel Qian Gui's sympathy and empathy towards Du Xiaoying.

Cao Qujing is particularly interested in portraying the female characters who embody this *yin-zhen* paradox. In the previous parts of this chapter, I introduced two cases related to the contrast. Qi Jie seduces her chaste cousin-in-law and is killed by her. Qian Gui has a chaste heart while she has a lascivious mother and survives in a prostitution business. Chapter 19 of *Guwangyan* also depicts the story of a chaste woman who fights and kills the lascivious maids in her house. In those depictions of the contrast between the lascivious and chaste women, Cao Qujing attempts to criticize the lewdness and compliment the chaste. According to David Rolston, Chinese fiction writers like to use relational discourse to portray their characters.[207] Cao Qujing believes that the good characters' virtue will not be suppressed by the representation of sexually illicit affairs; on the contrary, the reader will be impressed simultaneously by the damage of lewdness and the power of chastity. The rhetoric of compare-contrast can intensify the virtuous characters that represent the *yang* power of the fictional world.

In the previous three chapters, I introduced the textual body of *Guwangyan*. I illustrated the literary and historical background of how to understand the title and commentary of the novel. I also introduced how the author designs the narrative structure and characterization of the novel. The following two chapters will discuss the issues of masculinity and family in *Guwangyan*. For the subject of masculinity I will focus on male friendship and homosexuality in the novel. Chapter V demonstrates how a healthy male friendship is established in the novel and how a heterosexual relationship is channeled into heterosexual marriage. The mutually supportive male friendships which

[207] Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary,* 210-12.

transcend social classes and the harmonious conjugal relationships contribute to a healthier local community. For the subject of family and state, I will illustrate how the author portrays the autonomous family, which is the family that exists independent of the allegorical state and family analogical relationships. Rather than depicting a microcosmic and macrocosmic reflection of the family and state, Cao Qujing attempts to portray a utopian local family community which maintains the local moral system and morality while remaining detached from the dynastic crisis.

CHAPTER V

MALE FRIENDSHIP AND HOMOSEXUALITY IN *GUWANGYAN*

In past decades, masculinity and male-male relationships have become a focus of both gender and cultural studies. These studies have focused on the subject matter of male friendship, the continuity and transformation of masculinity within various genres and time periods, and desire and sentiment within the male same-sex relationship. Many scholars agree that in pre-modern China, men and women mostly existed within the structure of sexual segregation. Men had their own male community, in which they established a male identity through the evaluations of other men. Geng Song claims that in pre-modern China "the male-male relationship played a more important role in the construction of masculinity than the male-female relationship did."[208] *Guwangyan* explores a broad range of male-male relationships within the early-to-mid Qing period cultural background. In Giovanni Vitiello's study of masculinity of this particular novel, he claims that *Guwangyan* demonstrates a unique version of masculinity, reflecting a hybrid male heroic image and the social criteria of homoerotic practice.[209] Following Vitiello's reading, my research offers an interpretation of masculinity and male-male bonding in *Guwangyan*. The concept of masculinity is an idea that teaches men what they should be rather than what men actually are.[210] Within the novel, Cao Qujing attempts to

[208] Geng Song, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 157.

[209] Giovanni Vitiello, *The Libertine's Friend: Homosexuality and Masculinity in Late Imperial China* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 132-53.

[210] Martin W. Huang, *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2006), 185

demonstrate how men should handle male friendship and same-sex relationships. This chapter concentrates on the dynamic interaction and literary hybrid of male friendship, homosexuality, and heterosexual marriage in *Guwangyan*.[211]

Within the field of Chinese studies, serious examination of men as gendered beings is just beginning to be studied. Among these studies, Kam Louie's *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Gender and Society in China* is probably the most ambitious.[212] Louie proposes a new paradigm based on the concepts of *wen* 文 (which he translates as "cultural attainment") and *wu* 武 (translated as "martial valor") as an alternative to the *yin-yang* model widely relied upon by scholars of Chinese gender studies. As a result he offers a conceptual framework in which the question of how masculinity is constructed within Chinese culture can be more fruitfully investigated. In comparison, other studies are more empirical in their approaches as well as more specific in their coverage. Martin Huang's *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China* explores the representation of the feminine "other" in the negotiating process of literati's gender identity in the Ming-Qing period. Female characters in late imperial literary works can be regarded as mirror reflections of male characters or as projections of the male authors. Huang's gender

[211] For lack of a better term, I use the term *homosexuality* with hesitation, fully aware of its inadequacy in discussing many cases of male bonding in traditional China. Scholars of Western sexual history have argued that "homosexual" was a concept "invented" when those involved in same-sex love were singled out and identified as members of a "third gender," a result of the increasingly strong homophobia in Europe beginning from the eighteenth century. In late imperial China, people with inclinations toward same-sex passion were never considered belonging to a "third gender," and there was no gender category of "homosexuals" in pre-twentieth-century China, as understood in its modern sense. Martin Huang introduces the different concepts of *homosexual* between Europe and pre-twentieth-century China in *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China*, 151-52. Giovanni Vitiello introduces the historical complexity of using this term in the introduction of his book, *The Libertine's Friend*, 13-14.

[212] Kam Louie, *Theorising Chinese Masculinity: Society and Gender in China* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

"transvestism" in masculinity illustrates how male writers present themselves as "neglected but still faithful to wives or concubines" to vindicate their Confucian virtues or to express their frustrations about their value as virtuous men who want to be better appreciated by other men in superior positions.[213] Geng Song's *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* focuses on the representation of *caizi* 才子 (usually translated as "talented scholar") in traditional fiction and drama.[214] In her book, *Masculinity Besieged?: Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century,* Xueping Zhong examines male subjectivity and anxiety in literature and films produced in post-Mao China, demonstrating how male intellectuals, marginalized by the state, tried to reassert their masculine identities.[215]

Among these studies, one of the most important aspects in examining pre-modern Chinese masculinity is looking at male-male relationships which can be roughly divided into two aspects: male friendship and erotic relationships which are interactively related to each other.[216] The five cardinal human relationships (*wulun* 五倫) of Confucian culture are ruler and subject, father and son, husband and wife, brother and brother, and friend and friend. The last relationship is the only pair that warrants less hierarchical meaning and more equal meaning. During the late Ming, literati regarded male friends as an indispensable part of their lives. It was very important for literati to have male friends for

[213] Huang, *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China,* 2

[214] Song, *The Fragile Scholar*,69-79.

[215] Xueping Zhong, *Masculinity Besieged?: Issues of Modernity and Male Subjectivity in Chinese Literature of the Late Twentieth Century* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

[216] Martin Huang, "Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction," *NAN NÜ -- Men, Women & Gender in Early & Imperial China* 9.1 (2007): 15.

moral cultivation, career promotion, and aesthetic entertainment.[217] Both Martin Huang and Susan Mann argue that male-male relationships were important in the late imperial period in China.[218] At the same time, erotic male relationships also became significant and many literary and dramatic works depict male homoerotic relationships.[219]

In order to demonstrate the portrayal of male-male relationships in *Guwangyan*, this chapter includes three parts. First, I will focus on male friendships, which I will briefly introduce within the relationship of family and politics in the Ming-Qing period, then elaborate on how *Guwangyan* represents the hero's paradoxical and complicated male bonding with his brother and friend. The male friendship in *Guwangyan* is also transformable. The central male characters originally establish their brotherhood for material benefit, *li*, yet, later after they got transformed into good persons. They successfully contribute to local charity cooperatively which makes the core mission of their friendship turn into the "rightness," *yi*. The second part will concentrate on same-sex erotic male relationships in *Guwangyan*. In late Ming literary representation of same-sex eroticism as a discourse of *qing*, love for a pretty boy is understandable and admirable. My approach will illustrate that the novel demonstrates how the author expresses his anxiety to the homosexual vogue in the fictional world. Cao Qujing explores the detailed reasons that men would try same-sex practices. Some have a huge

[217] Joseph S.C.Lam, "Music and Male Bonding in Ming China," *NAN NÜ -- Men, Women & Gender in Early & Imperial China* 9.1 (2007): 84-85.

[218] Huang, "Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction," 2-33.And S. Mann, "The Male Bond in Chinese History and Culture," *American Historical Review* 105.5 (2000): 1603.

[219] Representative studies of literary representation of male same-sex desires include: Sophie Volpp, "Classifying Lust: The Seventeenth-Century Vogue for Male Love," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61, no. 1 (2001); Vitiello, *The Libertine's Friend: Homosexuality and Masculinity in Late Imperial China*; Cuncun Wu, *Homoerotic Sensibilities in Late Imperial China* (New York: Routledge Curzon, 2004).

passion and others might dabble just for curiosity. I will introduce how *Guwangyan* demonstrates the problem involved in the extreme passion in a same-sex relationship. The author attempts to channel them into heterosexual marriage. Friendship works as a healthy therapeutic power for the male characters, while erotic same-sex desire is threatening to the orthodox conjugal relationship and needs to be rechanneled into heterosexual marriage. The third part will illustrate how *Guwangyan* adopts the trope of same-sex relationship to represent the desexualized sentiment in the heterosexual marriage.

5.1 Male Friendship in *Guwangyan*

The first part of this chapter explores a male friendship involving the male protagonist, Zhong Qing. Both Martin Huang and Vitiello comment on Zhong Qing. Huang regards Zhong Qing as a typical scholar of this time who fits into the scholar and beauty paradigm. Huang claims that Zhong Qing is portrayed as a Confucian hero who is loyal to both his lover and the state.[220] Vitiello analyzes Zhong Qing as a hybrid hero who demonstrates both literary talent and chivalric virtues.[221] Both scholars contextualize their reading of Zhong Qing within the Chinese cultural paradigm of masculinities as a *wen* and *wu* binary. But neither of these two scholars analyzes the male friendship of Zhong Qing and Mei Gen 梅根 which lasts Zhong's entire life. Their friendship has a significant influence on Zhong Qing's personality, marriage, political pursuits and, likewise, reflects the author's interpretation of masculinity within the elite context of

[220] Martin Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, *251-70,*

[221] Vitiello, *The Libertine's Friend,* 132-38

male homosocial bonding. My reading will fill this academic void demonstrating how *Guwangyan* represents the complicated and paradoxical relationship between kinship and male friendship within the late Ming and early Qing periods' literati discourse. Zhong Qing and Mei Gen's friendship excludes same-sex desire while providing a space for the literati's criticism of imperial rule. My research aims to interpret the masculinity of Zhong Qing from the perspective of male friendship. And the friendship between Zhong Qing and Mei Gen also plays an important role for the other characters.

The concept of male bonding is an important subject of current interest within the study of masculinity in pre-modern Chinese society. The forum "The Male Bond in Chinese History and Culture" published in *The American Historical Review* is a collaborative effort by several scholars to examine three kinds of male bonding in China.[222] In her introduction to the forum, Susan Mann argues eloquently concerning the importance of studying male bonding in Chinese history and culture. She introduces the three articles presented in the forum as attempts to defamiliarize and reexamine Confucian norms governing human relationships within the male homosocial culture. Susan Mann introduces three sites of male bonding: the family, the civil service examination, and sojourning. Among the articles, Norman Kutcher's "The Fifth Relationship: Dangerous Friendships in the Confucian Context" is the most relevant to my research. He explores the deep anxiety in Confucian discourses that results from the

[222] Mann, "The Male Bond in Chinese History and Culture." This forum includes three papers about the male bonding. Norman Kutcher's "The Fifth Relationship: Dangerous Friendships in the Confucian Context" explores the anxiety over the friendship in Confucian discourses. Adrian Davis's "Fraternity and Fratricide in Late Imperial China" focuses on the tensions among male siblings within a family. Lee McIsaac's "Righteous Fraternities and Honorable Men: Sworn Brotherhoods in Wartime Chongqing" examines male bonding in secret societies.

friendships.[223] He points out that Confucian writers believe that a friendship can not only cultivate men but contaminate them at the same time. A man with bad friends can be influenced by these friends and he can become bad himself. Therefore, in order to control the negative power of friendship, Confucian and neo-Confucian writers[224] generally prefer to emphasize hierarchy in male friendships. They use examples of teacher and student, minister and subject, and father and son relationships to analogize male friendship, believing that by positioning male friendships within a hierarchical relationship would encourage men to fulfill their moral cultivation and career development. Kutcher argues that during the Ming-Qing period, this hierarchical interpretation of friendship was still powerful, but there appeared yet another approach to understand friendship in a more equal way. Due to the extremely harsh educational and bureaucratic competition in the career pursuits of the literati, male scholars sought friendships outside the realm of education. Many literati began to pursue friendships based on similar emotional or artistic pursuits. This definition of male friendship in the Ming-Qing period was regarded as an alternative way of making space within the Confucian hierarchy.

Kutcher's study of male bonding within Confucian society only briefly mentions the new trend of interpreting friendship within the Ming-Qing period. Some scholars pay particular attention to this specific time period. Joseph McDermott's "Friendship and Its

[223] Norman Kutcher, "The Fifth Relationship: Dangerous Friendships in the Confucian Context," *American Historical Review* 105.5 (2000).

[224] Ibid. The neo-Confucian writers are generally referring to literati in the Song dynasty such as Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200).

Friends in the Late Ming" covers the last century of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644).[225] McDermott claims it was during this period that friendship appears to have been granted unprecedented legitimacy in the writings of many influential Confucian thinkers and activists. His greatest interest is in "those writings that see human relationships [friendship] as a moral basis for criticizing Chinese imperial rule."[226] He finds in these writings "a realignment and expansion of traditional moral focus away from the family and state (during the last century of the Ming period rule), as a moral attraction of friendship that opened up new ways for neo-Confucians to criticize and change their political traditions."[227] The friendships of men were relevant to politics but not for mutual support between two literati officials. They instead provided a space for more criticism of imperial rule.

In 2007, Martin Huang edited a special issue on male friendships in *Nan Nü: Men, Women and Gender in China,* which has a collection of four papers concerned with the significance of male friendships during the Ming period.[228] Martin Huang's introduction provides a comprehensive review of the study of Chinese masculinity throughout various theoretical frameworks within the Ming-Qing period. He also introduces the complex

[225] Joseph Peter McDermott, "Friendship and Its Friends in the Late Ming," In *Jinshi jiazu yu zhengzhi bijiao lishi lunwenji* 近世家族與政治比較歷史論文集 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan jindaishi yanjiusuo 中央研究院近代史研究所, 1992), 67-96.

[226] McDermott, "Friendship and Its Friends in the Late Ming," 68.

[227] McDermott, "Friendship and Its Friends in the Late Ming," 70.

[228] Huang, "Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction." The four papers in this special theme issue are Anne Gerritsen's "Friendship through Fourteenth-century Fissures: Dai Liang, Wu Sidao and Ding Henian," Joseph Lam's "Music and Male Bonding in Ming China," Kimberly Besio's "A Friendship of Metal and Stone: Representations of Fan Juqing and Zhang Yuanbo in the Ming Dynasty," and Martin Huang's "Male Friendship and *Jiangxue* (Philosophical Debates) in Sixteenth-century China."

roles played by the family during the conceptualization of male friendship. One of the most common ways of solidifying and authenticating a friendship between two adult males in late imperial China was to arrange a marriage between their children. At the same time, "this close parallel and compatibility assumed between friendship and family relationships such as the fraternal bond were considered by some to have the potential to undermine the stability of the family." [229] The research in this special issue helps us to understand the male friendship within the Ming-Qing periods' cultural and intellectual backgrounds. *Guwangyan* presents the importance of this friendship through the hero, Zhong Qing. The following sections will illustrate how the novel presents the dynamic interaction between kinship and friendship relevant to Zhong Qing and will explore how the friendship of scholars is depicted as an intellectual space for political criticism. Male friendship also helped the male characters cross class boundaries. Friendship between scholars, landlords, and merchants could improve the life of all families and contribute to local society.

5.1.1 Kinship and Political Criticism in the Scholar's Friendship in *Guwangyan*

The tension between kinship and friendship concerning the hero Zhong Qing represents the author's views on scholars' homosociality and friendship. The narrative shows how Zhong Qing is not able to obtain a friendship with his biological brother, but instead becomes friends with Mei Gen who understands and helps him financially and emotionally. The friendship between Zhong Qing and Mei Gen helps to establish an alternative space where they are able to express political criticism of the late Ming imperial rule. It is an important way for them to survive and maintain their families

[229] Huang, "Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction," 13-14.

during the dynastic crisis. Their friendship is also stabilized through the establishment of family ties via an arranged marriage between their children. As Martin Huang summarized "For friendship to thrive, a man had to free himself from the restrictive structure of the Confucian family, and yet, at the same time, the values of friendship could be appreciated only in terms of models based on this very Confucian institution."[230]

Guwangyan portrays the tragic childhood abandonment of Zhong Qing by his elder brother, Zhong Quan 鐘悛. Although the two boys share the same parents, Zhong Qing's brother has no interest in him. Zhong Quan is eighteen years older than Zhong Qing. When his baby brother was born, Zhong Quan already had a wife and learned that his younger brother would someday split the family wealth with him. Zhong Quan prefered to think of himself as an only child, eligible to inherit all the family wealth upon their parents' deaths. But now he not only has to share the estate with his younger brother, but if their father passes away while his brother is still young he will be responsible for Zhong Qing. Zhong Quan has a son named Xiao Gouzi 小狗子 (little dog). Father and son dislike reading and learning while Zhong Qing enjoys reading. Zhong Quan feels extremely jealous of Qing's passion for learning. The conflict between the brothers grows as they age. When Zhong Qing is nine years old, his father becomes seriously ill. Qing's father begs his father-in-law to take care of Qing. The father secretly gives his father-in-law a list of his property and asks him to take care of Zhong Qing until he reaches adulthood. Although Zhong Qing's father is very fond of him and tries his best to make sure he has support, the youngest Qing is still abandoned by his brother. After their parents pass away, Zhong Quan sells all their family possessions, leaves their hometown,

[230] Huang, "Male Friendship in Ming China: An Introduction," 15.

and goes far away to another village, accompanied by his wife and son. When Zhong Qing is fifteen years old his grandfather also passes away. At this time, he becomes an orphan. Zhong Qing has no opportunity to build a close relationship with his brother, which now makes it even more important for him to seek out a male friend who could offer help and company.

Zhong Qing has a close friend named Mei Gen who was a former classmate. They were friends when they were little boys (*zongjiao zhijiao* 總角之交). When Mei Gen discovers that Zhong Qing is poor, he financially supports him. For several years the only reason that Zhong Qing has enough food to eat and enough clothing to wear is because Mei Gen continuously supports him. More importantly, Mei Gen gives comfort to Zhong Qing by telling him that being poor is not shameful. One day, Mei Gen visits Zhong Qing and asks what he is doing. Zhong Qing explains that because he is so poor and feels ashamed to visit his friends, he is spending all his time reading books. Mei Gen says that a gentleman should do what is appropriate to the financial situation. People should not laugh at another's poverty. Then he goes on to tell a story about Yuan Xian 原憲 and Zi Gong 子貢 who were both pupils of Confucius. Following Confucius's death, Zi Gong became the prime minister of the state of Wei 衛. Yuan Xian lived in a state of poverty in the same area. When Zi Gong visited Yuan Xian, Yuan told him he had heard that people with no money are called poor, but if people are taught to be better but do not follow the correct path (*dao* 道) they are called sick. A person like Yuan Xian is poor, but not

sick.[231] By telling this story, Mei Gen tries to bring comfort to Zhong Qing. Anyone with high morals will not criticize the poor. Mei Gen also adds that Qing is a talented person, therefore making money should be extremely easy for him and he goes on to encourage Qing to act on his political ambitions.

Not having a close brother in his family, Zhong Qing attempts to make this friendship as close as kinship. When Zhong Qing and Mei Gen talk, they always refer to each other as brothers. The narrator also uses a brotherly sentiment to describe their relationship, such as: "their relationship is one of real brotherhood" or "they have a love for each other" (*qingtong gurou, qinai wubi* 情同骨肉，親愛無比).[232] Without the abandonment by his own brother, it would be more difficult for Zhong Qing to establish an extremely close relationship with Mei Gen. According to Martin Huang's study of male friendships in the Ming-Qing period, two close adult males like to create family ties to stabilize male-to-male bonding. Zhong Qing and Mei Gen also help each other to establish their marriages. Mei Gen introduces Qian Gui to Zhong Qing and delivers love letters between them. Mei Gen also arranges Zhong Qing's wedding ceremony. Correspondingly, Zhong Qing is the person who helps Mei Gen get married a second time. In the conclusion of the novel, Mei Gen and Zhong Qing's children get married. Their friendship is fully confirmed through this established kinship.

In *Guwangyan,* Zhong Qing and Mei Gen are depicted as scholars who pass the civil service examination which gives them the opportunity to become officials. Their friendship has definitely not narrowed down their prospects within the domestic sphere.

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[231] Sima Qian, *Shi Ji*, vol. 5 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), "Zhongni dizi liezhuan," 仲尼弟子列傳，2208.

[232] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.4, 433.

They have political aspirations and increasing anxiety over the state of a declining empire. In McDermott's argument about male friendship, he argues that a mutually rewarding friendship can transcend political factionalism.[233] At first Zhong Qing and Mei Gen have differing opinions concerning late Ming period politics. Zhong Qing desires a position in the official bureaucracy and wishes to support the emperor, while Mei Gen, in turn, persuades him to withdraw from politics. They mutually support each other in exploring alternative ways of living, not only the service as officials.

Upon hearing that Mei Gen has passed the civil service examination, Zhong Qing assumes that Mei would pursue an official position. But instead, Mei Gen explains that he has no interest in holding a position within the current turbulent government and goes on to elaborate on the current political situation:

> The emperor is not unintelligent, yet isolated and surrounded by too many unqualified ministers. The officials are doing business to benefit themselves. They are engaged in factionalism and very few of the officials are loyal to the state. Some officials have been known to bribe other officials. The authority and wealth of the royal court are gradually moving to the local gentry. The commoners and poor families are being squeezed for their wealth. The high officials and noble families are the only ones eating meat. Children from wealthy families become the next officials of the court. The economic status of both average and poor families is being exploited. The eunuchs are just like dogs and pigs that eat the coarse wheat, but they are relied on as a very important class. There are many people in the prison system and the literati offer zero appreciation. Heavy taxing and duties make people wish they could overthrow the throne.

[233] McDermott, "Friendship and Its Friends in the Late Ming," 95-96.

> 君非甚暗，孤立而煬蔽恒多；臣盡行私，比黨而公忠絕少。甚至賄通公府。朝廷之威福日移，利入戚紳。閭左之脂膏盡竭，公侯皆食肉。紈褲而倚為腹心，宦豎悉齕糠，犬豕, 而借為耳目。獄囚累累，士無報禮之心；征斂重重，民有偕亡之恨。[234]

In his criticism of the Ming rule, Mei Gen points out several serious issues involved in current politics. The emperor has no sincere support from his close ministers. Officials are not supporting the government but want only to benefit themselves. State wealth is distributed unevenly. The state is so corrupted that Ming people want to subvert the government. Zhong Qing is won over by Mei Gen's argument and withdraws his bid for an official position. The above critical declaration from Mei Gen is not a fictional view composed by Cao Qujing. The statement is adopted from *The Edict of the First Year of Yongchang Reign* (*Yongchang yuannian zhaoshu*, 永昌元年詔書), an official document prepared by Li Zicheng before his troops entered the Ming capital, Beijing, in 1644. [235] Li Zicheng's edict portrays the current political and social chaos of the Ming Empire and provides a legitimate reason for the establishment of Li Zicheng's local government. *Guwangyan* presents a harsh satire of Li Zicheng and his military rebellion. His uncontrolled lust and brutality brought intolerable disaster to the people of the Ming Empire. The descriptions of Li Zicheng and his military troops in *Guwangyan* reflect the inhumanity and bloody violence of that rebellion. However, Li Zicheng's edict is painfully accurate in its exposure of the political chaos of the imperial court. When Cao

[234] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.23, 2793.

[235] The original historical text from *The Edict of the First Year of Yongchang Reign* is君非甚暗，孤立而煬蔽恒多；臣盡行私，比黨而公忠絕少。甚至賄通宮府，朝端之威福日移；利擅宗神，閭左之脂膏罄竭。公侯皆食肉綺袴，而倚為腹心，宦官悉齕糠犬豚，而借其耳目。獄囚累累，士無報禮之心；征斂重重，民有偕亡之恨. in Peng Sunyi 彭孫貽 *Pingkou zhi* 平寇誌(Beijing: Jinghua chubanshe, 2001), 2638.

Qujing was composing *Guwangyan*, Qing rule was fully established. He does not avidly express sorrow over the loss of the Han culture or nostalgia over the past Ming dynasty, but simply writes about the political and social reasons which led to the defeat of the Ming Empire. Cao Qujing sets his two main scholars within the late Ming period political chaos and provides them with a critical point of view of the government while still maintaining a distance from it.

Zhong Qing and Mei Gen's friendship represents the author's profound thinking concerning the literati's sentiments towards the state and emperor. In Chinese literature, there is a long tradition of depicting male and female romantic relationships to portray the ruler and subject's relationship. Many male poets and writers portray a lonely woman's feelings toward her absent husband to mirror the loyalty one has toward the emperor.[236] In Martin Huang's interpretation of Zhong Qing and Qian Gui's romantic relationship, their mutual faithfulness can be regarded as a symbolic representation of loyalty to the state.[237] Zhong Qing has always wanted to be a loyal minister. But Zhong's friendship with Mei Gen and their discussion of political and social situations apparently complicates the concept of loyalty toward the state. The emperor's unprofessionalism and the abuse of power by the people of the inner court, particularly the eunuchs, influence the scholars in the novel to share their anxiety and resentment of the throne and major power holders. Zhong Qing is not blindly loyal to the declining Ming Empire, as he is able to identify critical comments toward the throne. The male friendship in the novel can be viewed as a criticism of imperial rule. Cao Qujing was fully aware there was very little room in which the Confucian loyal officials could evaluate and judge the ruler and

[236] Huang, *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China*, 2-3.

[237] Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China, 251-70.*

emperor. The story about male friendship between Zhong Qing and Mei Gen provided a platform to reflect the frustrations with the ruler and the anxieties of the loyal officials.

5.1.2 Transformable Male Bonding: from *li* to *yi*

In addition to the friendship between two Confucian scholars, *Guwangyan* also explores the friendship among the libertines, landlords, and merchants. Huan E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu originally bond together for material benefit and pleasure. With the transformation of their personalities, the main purpose of the bond of these male characters also changes from *li* (benefit 利) to *yi* (rightness 義). These three characters, with the support of Zhong Qing, contribute their money to save local drought refugees. Male friendship in the second part of the novel emphasizes the heroic behavior of the main characters, Zhong Qing, Hua E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida. They try to perform charitable and benevolent acts which the local officials have no intention or are not able to do. Their friendship becomes a counterbalance to the late Ming social disorder.

Huan E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida's friendship is originally established for the pursuit of material benefits. In chapter 7 of *Guwangyan*, Huan, Jia, and Tong feel that they are such good friends that they need a ceremony to confirm their brotherhood. They set up a table in Huan E's garden and make a vow to their friendship which is mimics the brotherhood ceremony portrayed in *Sanguo yanyi*. Yet their vow of brotherhood emphasizes material benefit and sexual adventures, which is significantly different from the brotherhood described in *Sanguo yanyi* which values social rightness and mutual faithfulness. They ask one of their friends to design a vow to vindicate their brotherhood.

> We have different last names and swear to be a union. We only want to be born on the same day and same year, do not want to die on the same day and year. After we make our vow today, the three of us will take turns hosting a banquet with wine and meat or visiting prostitutes in the brothels. If any one of us betrays this union, he will be killed by others or the gods. We are talking to each other and establish brotherhood since we are wealthy today. If in the future we do not have a luxurious life, we must separate this brotherly union. We report the vow to the heavens and hope our shared ambition can be witnessed.
>
> 某等向系異姓，今結同盟。只願同年同日生，不願同年同日死。自今設誓之後，某等三人輪流做主，或以酒肉開筵，或向煙花訪妓。倘負斯盟，人神共殛。某等今日富貴相告，故結弟兄之社。他年豪華不敵，定散手足之盟，上告蒼穹，願鑒同誌。[238]

The person who wrote this vow for them aimed to satirize their friendship. Their union is mainly focused on money and aims to increase the opportunities for the enjoyment of food or sexual adventures. Huan, Jia, and Tong are excited by the vow. They think it accurately reflects what they want. They believe that the main goal of establishing the brotherhood is to have a better life. “Having money is important for maintaining or concealing their friendship.” (有錢相聚，無錢散夥)[239] Tong Zida claims frankly that “I swear brotherhood with two of you since you have money and power. If you two brothers lost your fortune, why do I still want to be your brother? Even the brothers with the same parents will do it, needless to say we are just ‘Wine and Meat League’?” (我因二位哥有錢勢才來拜把子。若是兩位兄倒了運，我還同你作什弟兄？同胞骨肉尚如此，何況

[238] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.9, 1115-16.

[239] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.9, 1117.

區區酒肉盟?)[240] The only disagreement among them is who should pay for the banquets and prostitution visiting. Tong Zida complains that since he does not have a lot of money, he refuses to take turns in hosting the banquet at the same frequency as his two brothers. Huan and Jia agree to pay for the food ten times more than Tong. Tong Zida then completely agrees with the vow. This scenario of brotherhood celebration is in contrast to the ceremony of Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei's brotherhood. In *Sanguo* when Liu, Guan, and Zhang make their vows in the Peach Garden, it claims that

> We three though of different families, swear brotherhood, and promise mutual help to one end. We will rescue each other in difficulty; we will aid each other in danger. We swear to serve the state and save the people. We ask not the same day of birth, but we seek to die together. May Heaven, the all-ruling, and Earth, the all-producing, read our hearts. If we turn aside from righteousness or forget kindliness, may Heaven and Human smite us!
>
> 雖然異姓，既結為兄弟，則同心協力，救困扶危；上報國家，下安黎庶。不求同年同月同日生，只願同年同月同日死。皇天後土，實鑒此心，背義忘恩，天人共戮![241]

In *Sanguo* the most important goal of friendship for Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei is to protect the state and support the people. They believe that they will be separated only by death and wish that the heavens witness their genuine feelings. Some scholars point out that the *Sanguo* story emphasizes two levels of *yi*. One level is *dayi* (大義 major *yi*),

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[240] Ibid.

[241] Luo Guanzhong羅貫中, *Sanguozhi tongsu yanyi* 三國誌通俗演義 (Shanghai : Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), vol.1, 5. English translation is from C.H.Brewitt-Taylor, Translator, *Romance of the Three Kindoms* (Rutland, Vermont; Tolyo, Japan: Charles E. Tuttle Company, 1959), vol.1, 6-7.

which refers to *zhong* 忠 or loyalty to the state and society. The other is *xiaoyi* (小義 minor *yi*), which refers to faithfulness and honor by emphasizing an equal and mutual relationship between friends. The brotherhood in *Sanguo* is the combination of both *dayi* and *xiaoyi*.[242] Liu Bei, Guan Yu, and Zhang Fei keep their vows extremely seriously in their heroic life and practice *dayi* and *xiaoyi*. The main purpose of *Guwangyan*'s brotherhood is just wine, meat, and women -- which are related to *li*. Huan, Jia, and Tong have no intention of contributing to the state or to people.

As I have introduced in the previous chapter, the central male characters make the decision to change into good people, which not only leads to a change in the core values of their friendship but also allows them to incorporate Zhong Qing into their friendship circle. Chapter 17 of *Guwangyan* portrays "a benevolent act" (*yiju* 義舉) accomplished by the new circle of friends. Tong Zida, Jia Wenwu, Huan E, and Zhong Qing cooperate together to save refugees in Nanjing. One October during the Chongzhen reign, around ten thousand refugees move to Nanjing and hope to find some place to stay. Unfortunately Nanjing is experiencing a serious drought and the price of rice is unaffordable. The refugees stay in the street without enough clothes, crying all the time. Some local officials hope to save them, yet because of the financial crisis they are not able to do anything. Tong Zida, the wealthy landlord, decides that he wants to give food to the poor refugees from October to April of the following year. Although he has enough rice for the refugees, he doesn't know where he can keep these ten thousand people and where to cook food for them. He then invites Huan E, Tong Zida, and Zhong Qing to discuss his plan of charity. Huan E agrees to build hundreds of tents for the refugees and

[242] Wang Chazhen 王姹禎，Liang Yuting 梁玉婷， "Xiantan Sanguo yanyi zhong de yi," 閑談《三國演義》中的義，*Mingzuo xinshang*, no.10, 2014.

donate thousands of cotton gowns for them to keep warm. Jia Wenwu agrees to prepare the wood for the fire and cook some simple dishes. The only problem then is they cannot find a place to accommodate all the refugees. Zhong Qing successfully persuades the Nanjing magistrate to allow them to use the military training field (*jiaochang* 教場) for several months. With the support from the local officials, the four friends make a pledge to work together for this "benevolent act."

The next morning, Huan E's family brings plenty of cotton and textiles to make winter clothes and plenty of bamboo and ropes to make the tents. Jia Wenwu prepares the simple dishes. Tong Zida brings the rice. They also prepare hundreds of pots, buckets, spoons, bowls and chopsticks. Huan, Tong, and Jia have their servants help them cook the porridge and serve the refugees, who are excited to discover that they will finally get some food and help. Both the Nanjing magistrates and the refugees greatly appreciate the help from the four friends. The narrator comments that this benevolent behavior is a *yiju* 義舉.[243] This *yi* concept combines both the concept of *dayi* and *xiaoyi*. Since the local officials are too poor to save those refugees, the four friends contribute their money and energy to help the state and the people. They also financially and spiritually support each other. *Guwangyan* demonstrates the significant transformation of the male friendship from only pursuing material benefits to the accomplishment of improving the local society. The novel illustrates how friendship can cross social class boundaries -- one of the reasons that all four protagonists survive the late Ming political chaos. When Zhong Qing quits his position as a legal official, he has no savings. Huan E buys a new mansion and contributes a lot of domestic goods for Zhong Qing. Tong Zida gives one hundred

[243] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.17, 2007.

dan of rice to Zhong Qing. Their material support helps Zhong Qing live a decent life. Zhong Qing also offers political suggestions to Jia Wenwu when Jia is offered a position in the government. Their friendship is transformed from the purpose of drinking wine and visiting women and turns into support for each other and contributions to the local good.

In this section, I have introduced two aspects of male friendship in *Guwangyan*. One is the scholars' friendship which helps Zhong Qing survive his tough childhood and obtain a political position. The friendship between the scholars also demonstrates *Guwangyan*'s criticism of the late Ming imperial rule. The other aspect demonstrates the transformation of the friendship from *li* to *yi*. Huan E, Jia Wenwu, and Tong Zida are not portrayed in the same way as the heroes in *Sanguo yanyi*, who always practice their vows to the state and brotherhood. *Guwangyan* pays particular attention to the transformable friendship related to merchants and landlords who know how to use money to financially support their friends and practice the benevolence and rightness.

5.2 Homoeroticism in *Guwangyan*

As scholars have pointed out and studied, there was a vogue of male same-sex practices among the literati during the Ming and Qing dynasties. [244] This vogue is supported by rich textual materials, such as poetry, notation books (*biji* 筆記) and

[244] See Brett Hinsch, *Passions of the Cut Sleeve* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); James Gough, "Deviant Marriage Patterns," in *Normal and Abnormal Behavior in Chinese Culture*, ed. Arthur Kleinman and Tsung-yi Lin (Dordrecht: D. Reidel Publisher Co., 1981); and Vivian Ng, "Homosexuality and the State in Late Imperial China," in *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*, ed. Martin Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

fiction.[245] Although Sophie Volpp argues that interest in and acceptance of writings about male same-sex practices was mostly because of the strangeness (*qi* 奇) rather than the actual practices, Matthew Sommer's studies, which document the banning of sexual intercourse between males beginning in the Ming dynasty, actually demonstrate that the phenomenon of male same-sex practices had become so popular and visible that the government had to establish new laws to discourage and prohibit this kind of infertile non-Confucian behavior.[246] While we cannot tell for sure how widely practiced and accepted it was, the promulgation of new laws and the increasing number of literary works referring to male same-sex practices did indicate the literati's attention to and interaction with the actual practice among intellectual circles.

To legitimate their desire for beautiful young boys, scholarly writers advocated the aesthetics of *qing* in their literary works. One of the most extreme examples is the first story, "Qingzhen ji" 情貞記 (Records of Virtuous Love), in *Bian er chai* 弁而釵 (Cap and Hairpins as Well), in which one of the male protagonists, Feng Xiang 風翔, defends himself when asking another male scholar, Zhao Wangsun 趙王孫, for sex, "The place where *qing* concentrates is exactly people like us. The thing that happened today is

[245] For example, Lanling Xiaoxiao Sheng's 蘭陵笑笑生 *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅，Cao Xueqing's 曹雪芹 *Honglou meng,* the poems on Xu Ziyun 徐子雲 by Chen Weisong 陳維菘 and his literati friends, Shen Defu's *Bizhou zhai yutan* 敝帚齋餘談 (Casual Conversations of the Worn Brush Studio), Li Yu's 李漁 short story "Nan Mengmu jiaohe sanqian " 男孟母教合三遷 (A Male Mencius' s Mother), Ling Mengchu's 淩蒙初 *Pai'an jingqi* 拍案驚奇 (Slapping the Table in Amazement), the anonymous writer, Zui Xihu xinyue zhuren's 醉西湖心月主人 *Bian er chai* 弁而釵 (Cap and Hairpins as well), etc.

[246] Sophie Volpp, "Classifying Lust: The Seventeenth-century Vogue for Male Love," *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61, no.1 (Jun., 2001): 77-117. Matthew Sommer, "The Penetrated Male in Late Imperial China: Judicial Construction and Social Stigma," *Modern China* 23, no.2 (1997): 140-80.

inappropriate in terms of principles. But in terms of *qing*, men can become women and women can become men too." (情之所鐘，正在我輩 。今日之事， 論理自是不改，論情則男可女，女亦可男。)[247] As Feng Xiang suggests, in the case of male same-sex practices, *qing* is a medium that follows this cultural transgression, where men are willing to be the penetrated for *qing*. Giovanni Vitiello also concludes in his research, "The notion of *qing* is predicated upon the erasure of all boundaries."[248] Therefore, with the presence of *qing*, the men who are involved in same-sex sexual behaviors are acceptable, understandable, and even admirable. The narrative logic proves his argument by presenting a happy ending for the two men—Zhao saved Feng from a death sentence, and then they both quit their jobs and established marital relationships between the two families for generations. In Li Yu's work, "Cuiya lou" 萃雅樓 (Tower of Collected Elegance), one of the *Twelve Towers* 十二楼, portrays romantic emotion between two business-scholars and their male lovers. The title of the first chapter in "Cuiya lou" is "The boy who sells flowers does not sell rear courtyard flowers, the person who buys commodities buys goods without money." (賣花郎不賣後庭花 買貨人慣買無錢貨). Li Yu's narrative projects a neutral, approving attitude towards the male protagonists' homoerotic relationship. In this story, Li Yu demonstrates the virtues of the pretty boy, who not only maintains the virtue of loyalty towards his lovers but also bravely exposes the corruption of the officials.

[247] Zui Xihu Xinyue Zhuren's 醉西湖心月主人, Bian er chai 弁而钗 (Zhonghe:Shuangdi guoji, 1996), 78.

[248] Giovanni Viotello, "Exemplary Sodomites: Chivalry and Love in Late Ming Culture," *NAN NÜ*, no.2 (2000): 214.

Unlike the late Ming story and Li Yu's works, male same-sex desires are not framed within the cult of *qing* aesthetics in *Guwangyan*, which portrays homoeroticism within a larger interaction of moral, desire and aesthetic. The same-sex relationships in *Guwangyan* are related to the male characters' morality, social status, and economic background. I divide the discussion of same-sex relationship in *Guwangyan* into three groups. The first is related to satire of the hypocrisy in the relationships of male characters in the lower level of society. They mainly have sex for lust and money and it is very common for them to cross moral or ritual boundaries. The second is the parody of the scholar's connoisseurship towards male beauty. The episode in *Guwangyan* seems to be a typical story portraying the romantic sentiment between a scholar and a pretty boy, yet Cao Qujing exposes the underlying series of betrayals in their relationship. The third part is the author's exploration of the way of channeling same-sex desire into heterosexual marriage, which is related to the characters' social statuses. For characters coming from a high level of society, fulfilling homosexuality desire can be a pre-marital adventure for their heterosexual marriage. For the character who had been the victim of sodomy because of poverty, *Guwangyan* attempts to offer an idealistic solution. The text does not regard same-sex behavior as a unified behavior which can be simply evaluated and extinguished. The representation of male same-sex relationships in the novel takes into account money, desire, social status, and sentiment.

5.2.1 Satire of the Hypocrisy in the Male Homoerotic Relationship

Guwangyan portrays the hypocrisy and incest among male same-sex practitioners of the lower level of society to satirize their relationship based on lust and money. The

first case involves a triangle relationship among a father, son, and male prostitute. You Xialiu 遊夏流 (befittingly punning with "lower type" 下流) is a jobless idler on the street who is the son of a private tutor named You Hungong 遊混公 (punning with "Mr. Promiscuity"). You Xialiu is a hypocritical character who harshly criticizes homosexual practices, while at the same time enjoying a same-sex relationship. You Hungong is a private teacher working for several families who does not teach students serious subjects, but instead regularly seduces one student. The father and son share a male prostitute named Yang Weiying 楊為英, who bases their relationship for money and sexual exchange. In Vitiello's reading of the father, he argues that the portrayal of the father in *Guwangyan* can be regarded as a sociopolitical critique of the scholarly elite. Since You Hungong comes from a socially elite family and is a teacher, he uses his power to seduce a boy with a much lower social status.[249] In this section, however, I want to analyze this from a different approach. I will focus more on the image of You Xialiu, the son, and the father and son relationship and suggest the author presents a condemnation of their relationship which transgresses moral and ritual boundaries.

The sexual and social statuses of these three characters are significantly different from the male same-sex stories in *Bian Erchai*'s *Qingzhen ji* and Li Yu's stories, which portray the story between a well-educated, wealthy scholar and a beautiful young boy. All three characters in this episode of *Guwangyan* live in a low level of society. You Hungong already lost his teaching position for several years and has became a poor scholar. You Xialiu is a gambler and male prostitute, who "would like to do any lousy thing. Anytime he has money he will go gambling. If he has large bills, he will visit the

[249] Vitiello, *The Libertine's Friend,* 149.

brothel. He loves the pretty bodies as soon as he sees them, and if he has no money he will trade his rear yard for money." (凡系下流的事，無所不做。遇錢就賭，有鈔即嫖，見龍陽便愛。若沒得錢了，情願拿他的尊臀兌換。)[250] Even though You Xialiu "pays money for Yang Weiying's services, he was often penetrated by Yang Weiying." (雖是他拿錢包著楊為英，卻倒是楊為英弄得他工夫多。)[251] In other words, You Xialiu and Yang Weiying are both male prostitutes. They earn money through the use of their body with the hierarchy of penetrating and penetrated not strictly established. Cao Qujing has no sympathy towards this type of same-sex relationship and in particular criticizes the hypocrisy and incest among the three characters.

You Xialiu is a hypocritical character who likes to manipulate language for his benefit. As a teenager You Xialiu liked to engage in many corrupt activities, such as gambling, prostitution, and cheating. The most significant feature of this character is his mouth and tongue. He always knows how to defend his choices, while censuring the behavior of others. If he borrows money from a friend he not only has no intention of returning it, he criticizes his friends for taking money too seriously. However, if a friend forgets to return a penny to him, he will continuously ask for the money and then remind his friend that he should be a gentleman and value trust. The narrator comments that You Xialiu is excellent at manipulating his conversations with people. While something may seem reasonably right from the perspective of another person, in his words other people's

[250] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.10, 1205.

[251] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.10, 1210.

behavior becomes nonsense and inhuman.[252] The concept of right or wrong does not make any sense to him, since he speaks only for his own benefit.

You Xialiu's hypocrisy is also demonstrated in his interpretation of a same-sex relationship. When people talk about same-sex desires, he becomes serious and comments that

> If a man does such a lascivious thing, he will be shamed by his relatives and friends. How does the man practicing same-sex relation face his parents and brothers? How will he face his wife and children in the future? It is impossible to say that the person can hide his same-sex desire. Even if others do not know about it, the person should feel shamed in his own mind. These people are worse than dogs and pigs; it will defile me to talk about them.
>
> 以须眉丈夫而效淫娼之事，不要說為親友所恥，即在家庭中，今日何以對父母兄弟？將來何以對妻子兒女？勿謂為人所知，即人不知，寧不內愧？此輩狗彘之不若，言之猶恐汙吾頰？[253]

You Xialiu has very harsh condemnation of same-sex practitioners. Yet ironically, people know that he has a male lover. When people implicitly mention his sexual preference, he eloquently defends himself. He lists several important historical figures who also had same-sex preferences. He says that Murong Chong 慕容冲 was a catamite then became an emperor.[254] Dong Xian 董贤 used to be a catamite and then became a prime

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[252] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.10, 1205-06.

[253] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.10, 1206-07.

[254] Murong Chong 慕容冲 (ca. 359-386), formally Emperor Wei of Western Yan (西燕威帝), was an emperor of the Western Yan. In 368, after his uncle Murong Ke 慕容克, the regent for his brother Murong Wei 慕容暐, had died in 367, he succeeded Murong Ke in his post as the commander of the armed forces. After Former Yan 前燕 was destroyed by Former Qin 前秦 in 370, he and his brothers were made local officials throughout the Former Qin realm. Historical

minister.[255] Chen Zigao 陈子高 was a catamite and then became a male queen.[256] Mi Zixia 弥子瑕 (ca.500 BCE) used to be a same-sex partner, but then became Duke Ling of Wei's 衛靈公 minister.[257] You Xialiu goes on to claim that "plenty of people with decent clothes and hats are having same-sex relationships. It is just a game. What harm can it produce? " (今日衣冠中人為之者眾矣，此皆遊戲三昧耳，庸何傷乎？)[258] You

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accounts indicate that he had a sexual relationship with the Former Qin emperor Fu Jian 符坚 and that Fu Jian's favors for him and his sister Consort Murong, whom Fu Jian took as a concubine, were the talk of the Former Qin capital Chang'an. See *Book of Jin* (Jin shu), vol. 111.and *Zizhi tongjian* (Comprehensive Mirror in Aid of Governance), vols. 101, 105, 106.

[255] Dong Xian 董賢 (23 BCE [?] -1 BCE) was a Han dynasty politician who quickly rose from obscurity as a minor official to being the most powerful official in the imperial administration of Emperor Ai within a span of a few years. Most scholars agree that Dong's quick career advancement came mostly because of his personal relationship with Emperor Ai, likely a homosexual one, rather than a demonstration of abilities. An idiomatic term for homosexuality in Chinese is *duanxiu zhi pi* (斷袖之癖, literally, "passion of the cut sleeve"), derived from an episode involving Dong and Emperor Ai. They often slept together on the same bed, which in ancient China was not necessarily an indication of a sexual relationship. One afternoon, after Emperor Ai woke up from a nap, Dong was still sleeping, and Emperor Ai's sleeve was stuck under Dong's head. Rather than waking Dong up, Emperor Ai cut off his sleeve to allow Dong to continue to sleep without disturbance. See Bret Hinsch. *Passions of the Cut Sleeve*, University of California Press, (1990).

[256] Chen Zigao 陈子高(ca.6th century) was a pretty boy in the Wei-Jin period (5-6th century). Within a period of political chaos, Chen Zigao was captured by Chen Qian 陈茜, a general of the Chen state. Chen Zigao seduced the king of Lingchuan, the first emperor of the Chen dynasty, with his feminine charms. The king, noting that Zigao was more seductive than any of the women in his harem, had the boy dress as a women and crowned him Queen. Later he was assigned a position by Chen Qian. The late Ming dramatist Wang Jide wrote a story about Chen Zigao. For a study of Wang Jide's Male Queen, see Sophie Volpp, "Gender, Power and Spectacle in Late-Imperial Chinese Theater," in *Gender Reversals and Gender Cultures: Anthropological and Historical Perspectives*, ed. Sabrina P. Ramet (London: Routledge, 1996).

[257] The story of *fentao* (分桃), or sharing a peach, originally appeared in "Shuinan Pian" (說難，"The Difficulties of Persuasion") of Han Fei Zi 韓非子(d.233 BCE), the collected work of the famous Legalist philosopher Han Fei of the Warring States period (403-222 BCE). It narrates the relationship between the Duke Ling of Wei 衛靈公 (534-493 BCE) and his male favorite Mi Zixia.

[258] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.10, 1207.

Xialiu's defense of same-sex relationships has no sincere sentiment. Depending upon the situation, he either criticizes homosexuality as an evil and shameful behavior or claims it is just a social game. The narrator repeatedly comments on You Xialiu's hypocritical talk saying that Xialiu indulges in "loud and empty talk and his silken tongue is like a reed pipe" (*gaotan kuolun, qiaoshe ruhuang* 高談闊論，巧言如簧).[259] He "tells many lies." (*huangshuo* 謊說).[260] As soon as he meets people, he will "talk judgmentally and make fun of the weak points of others" (*shuhei daohuang, jiyi changduan* 數黑道黃，譏議長短）[261] You Xialiu's repetitive lying makes it impossible to trust his words, which only attempt to hide his own mistakes. The narrator compares You Xialiu to an animal and believes that he is "a human being with animalistic behavior" (*renzhi shouxing* 人質獸行).[262]

In order to emphasize the inhuman part of You Xialu, *Guwangyan* depicts a triangular relationship among You Xialiu, his father, and Yang Weiying. Although both father and son have a sexual relationship with Yang Weiying, You Hungong refuses to pay an adequate amount of money to Yang. The very angry Yang Weiying plans to get revenge by setting up the father to have sex with his son. One day, Yang Weiying meets with You Xialu and gets him very drunk, so much so that after making love for a while, Xialiu falls into a deep sleep. Weiying exits the scene and Hungong walks in. He gropes his way to the couch where Weiying is supposed to be waiting for him. Hungong finds a

[259] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.10, 1242.

[260] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.12, 1410.

[261] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.12, 1431.

[262] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.10, 1207.

naked boy lying on his stomach and begins to sodomize him without saying a word. Eventually, You Hungong discovers that he is having sex with his son and quietly leaves the room.

In the Ming-Qing period the relationship between father and son was extremely important, reflecting the essential Confucian relationship and the foundation of the sstability of the family. This relationship is a type of primordial, biological tie and is charged with strong emotion. Filiality was seen as essential to the traditional ideal of moral cultivation of the individual and serves various social and political functions. In the traditional Confucian canon, the *Book of Rituals* (Liji 禮記) specifically emphasizes: "What is human righteousness? The father should be kind to his son, while the son should be filial to his father. The older brother is kind. The husband is upright. The wife is virtuous. The senior is generous and the junior is obedient. The emperor is benevolent and the minister is loyal. These ten behaviors are named ten rightnesses."（何謂人義，父慈、子孝、兄良、夫義、婦德、長惠、幼順、君仁、臣忠，十者謂之十義。）[263] In the triangle relationship of *Guwangyan*, there is not any kindness from father to son or respect from son to father. You Xialiu and his father completely destroy the relationship between father and son and turn their relationship into a competition for a prostitute and even have an incestuous relationship. Yang Weiying also does not have any reverence and sentiment towards his two clients. What is circulated among the three characters is just money, body fluids, and lust. Cao Qujing adopts the scenario of the father and son's incestuous intercourse to criticize the chaotic sexual relationships among the hypocritical male same-sex practitioners, the cheap father, and the cunning male prostitute.

[263] Yang Tianyu 楊天宇, *Liji yizhu* 禮記譯註, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1997), 376.

5.2.2 Parody of the Scholar's Connoisseurship of Male Beauty

In contrast to the hypocrisy of You Xialiu, *Guwangyan* portrays another male character that expresses genuine feelings towards his male lover. This story seems to be a romantic story that happens between two beautiful boys. However *Guwangyan* does not make the two lovers end up in a happy marriage. The scholar who devotes deep sentiment towards his same-sex partner experiences serious betrayal. Si Jinchao 司進朝 is an educated son from a wealthy family and his interest in pretty boys is more a connoisseurial pursuit. When his friend is curious about why he likes men, he explains that if people cannot understand a same-sex relationship it is because they are outsiders. "Although the flavor of men and women is the same, the pleasure is totally different." (雖男女之味相同，而其趣大相遠絕)[264] Even the ancient emperor who had plenty of women in his court still liked the male beauties.[265] Si Jinchao's opinions reflect an important value in the male-same-sex relationship—the acknowledged connoisseurship of beautiful boys. Si Jinchao regards the beauty of boys and girls as being different, yet both valuable. He likes to seek out the most beautiful boys/girls, polishing their style and then having sex with them as an enjoyable process. He has a beautiful wife, two beautiful concubines, and four pretty maids. He teaches the concubines and maids to play instruments and sing. But he feels a bit frustrated that he cannot find a pretty boy. "Although he has some friends with the enjoyment of the rear courtyard, he feels regret that he did not encounter an extremely pretty one." (他雖相與了些後庭朋友，每以未遇

[264] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.18, 2203.

[265] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.18, 2203-04.

一殊麗者為恨.)[266] One day, he encounters Fu Xin (富新，the name puns on betrayal 负心). He is impressed by Fu's beauty and says to himself, "What is the old mother who bore such a pretty man? " (何物老嫗，生此尤物)[267] The word referring to Fu Xin is a creature with bewitching beauty (*youwu* 尤物), which in Chinese literature has been connected with the femme fatale. In the Tang tale *Ying-ying story (Ying-ying zhuan* 鶯鶯傳*)* for instance, the female protagonist is acclaimed as a creature that "ordained by Heaven to possess bewitching beauty will inevitably cast a curse on others if they don't do the same to themselves."(大凡天之所命尤物也，不妖其身，必妖於人。)[268] When Fu Xin is connected with *youwu*, readers can anticipate his role to be that of a femme fatale related to gender transgression. He is not only a pretty boy but a tempting woman. The ironic part of this story is that although Si Jinchao regards the pretty boy as effeminized and treats him as his male concubine, Fu Xin does not want to be a same-sex lover and actually wants to be the master of the household.

In order to demonstrate the sincerity Si Jinchao displays towards Fu Xin, *Guwangyan* depicts how he gradually establishes a connection with Fu Xin and accommodates Fu into his family. He first visits Fu Xin's family, then invites Fu to live in his house and study with him. Si Jinchao claims that he will "treat Fu Xin as his brother" (手足一般)[269] and they can study hard and prepare for the civil service

[266] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.18, 2204.

[267] Ibid.

[268] Stephen Owen, Translator and Editor, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911*. 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996.), 548.

[269] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.18, 2205.

examination. In order to help Fu Xin concentrate on his studies, he will financially support Fu Xin's mother for two years and provide her all the clothes she needs. Fu Xin can live in Si's house. If Fu misses his mother, he can go home to visit. Si Jinchao is very humble in asking whether Fu Xin likes his offer. As a boy coming from a poor family, Fu Xin is extremely excited to become the brother of Si Jinchao and to move into Si's House. In the first night between Si Jinchao and Fu Xin, the author describes a banquet at which Si wants to establish a serious commitment with Fu Xin. He "asks for some wine and fills one cup and carries it with two hands to Fu Xin, saying 'Please drink this cup of wine and I wish we can have a commitment forever'" (忙叫取了酒來，斟了一盅，雙手遞與富新。道："敬此一邑，願永諧盟好。")[270] Through this gesture, Si shows that he wants to establish a permanent relationship with Fu Xin.

Si Jinchao shares his concubines and maids with Fu Xin and finally takes him as his concubine. In order to demonstrate his trust and intimacy toward Fu Xin, Si Jinchao allows Fu to be in charge of his family when Si needs to travel to handle the funeral of his father in a distant province. Before leaving, Si Jinchao asks Fu Xin to take care of the outside business and "tells all the servants to obey Fu Xin's orders carefully and treat Fu as himself." (小心聽服富新使令，如同對我一般。)[271] Unlike a female concubine who is contained within the domestic sphere, Fu Xin takes this opportunity to destroy the internal/external (*nei*/*wai* 內/外) boundary of the household. He squanders Si Jinchao's money and sells Si's property. And because of his status as the "male concubine" it is easy for him to enter into the inner quarters of the household and have affairs with the

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[270] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.18, 2214.

[271] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.18, 2226.

wife and concubines of Si Jinchao. In the absence of Si, Fu Xin actually plays the role of the master of the household.

From the narrative introduction of Fu Xin and Si Jinchao's relationship, readers can find that a subtle change happens in their relationship as it moves from sworn brothers, to lovers, and to husband and male concubine. During the process, Si Jinchao always attempts to demonstrate his sincerity to Fu Xin. The most important feature of Fu Xin, however, is the series of betrayals. The commentator carefully calculates the four instances of his betrayals. First, Fu Xin betrays his first female patron who financial supports his study. Then he betrays Si Jinchao by having an affair with Si's wife. Thirdly, Fu Xin betrays Si's wife by having a relationship with Si's concubine. The fourth betrayal occurs when Fu Xin abandons his heterosexual partners. Fu Xin has relationships with six concubines and maids in Si's family, but when he leave Si's house he takes just three of them, completely ignoring the other three. He even steals a lot of Si's money and jewelry when he breaks up with Si. In other words, Fu Xin continuously betrays his female patrons, male patrons, and female sexual partners not only for sex but also for financial benefit. My close reading demonstrates that Fu Xin has no real interest in same-sex relationships. He is only interested in heterosexuality; his same-sex behavior occurs only when he is either sodomized or seduced by others. He agrees to sleep with Si Jinchao only because he can sleep with two of his other maids. Cao Qujing attempts to demonstrate the contrast between Si Jinchao's sincere attitude towards his male lover and Fu Xin's series of betrayals to his patrons and sexual partners. The destructive power of the male-male samesex relationship is not purely in destroying the conjugal relationship and confusing the husband's lineage, but also in transgressing the *nei*/*wai* boundaries.

5.2.3 Channeling Homoeroticism into Heterosexual Marriage

In this section, I will demonstrate how the author portrays his male characters who channel their homosexual desires or relationships into a heterosexual marriage. The fact that most Ming-Qing male characters have relationships with pretty boys and women is not an issue that is completely unacceptable, particularly for the male penetrator who has the sexual privilege over people with lower status. Ximen Qing and Jia Baoyu, for instance, have same-sex relationships when they are actually interested in the heterosexual relationship or romantic love. Masculinity and homosexuality have two levels of interaction. For the male penetrator, there is no injury to his masculinity if he has sex with a pretty boy. The male who is penetrated will be effeminized if he has sex with another man; therefore, the penetrated man's masculinity is affected in a same-sex relationship. As Martin Huang states in his study of effeminacy and femininity, the male who penetrates another male can still maintain his maculinity, however, the male who is penetrated, is effeminized.[272] Moreover, the distinctive roles of the penetrator and the penetrated played by men were mainly determined by their social status and age in the Ming-Qing period. According to Sommer, "The age and status hierarchies tended to parallel the hierarchy of roles in anal intercourse."[273] Generally, the male penetrator is older, richer, and has a higher social status than the male penetrated in a same-sex pair. Ming-Qing literary texts demonstrate that most penetrated males are beautiful boys and only the penetrated male is perceived as "different". Desiring another male seems to carry

[272] Huang, *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China*. Introductuion, 1-9.

[273] Matthew Harvey Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000), 115.

little significance in popular culture.[274] This section explores the different approaches of merging homosexuality into heterosexual marriage by demonstrating how the penetrator and the penetrated male bring their homoerotic desires and experiences into a marriage. For the male penetrator, this feat is relatively easy since he does not upset the proper gender hierarchy. He can still play the role of husband/father in the division of social labor, like Ximen Qing in *Jin Ping Mei*. The penetrated male, however, has greater difficulty since he has compromised his masculinity. Cao Qujing projects sympathy towards the penetrated male character and tries to design a social appropriate marriage for this type of character as a refuge from sexual abuse.

The three main male characters in *Guwangyan*, Huan E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu, all have same-sex desires in the early stages of their marriages. They are attracted to pretty boys prior to fully enjoying sexual relationships with their wives. But the desire for the boy is either automatically transformed into desire for the wife or completely disappears. The novel does not allow the characters to have same-sex desires once they become good husbands. Same-sex desire is portrayed as an easily manipulated lust that can be redirected, suspended or completely extinguished. When the male characters are transformed in physical body and morality their sexual power is strengthened, and they only desire women and to have sex within the marital relationship. In *Guwangyan*, it is hard to continue same-sex relationship within a heterosexual marriage. There is no harm in having desires before a man really establishes his *yang*

[274] A detailed analysis of the relationship between the hierarchy in same-sex intercourse and the issue of masculinity can be found in Sommer, *Sex, Law, and Society in Late Imperial China*, chapter four, "The Problem of the Penetrated Male: Qing Sodomy Legislation and the Fixing of Male Gender," 114-65.

authority in the bedchamber, but after that, same-sex desires must be eliminated from the marriage.

I will now introduce two cases demonstrating how the novel portrays male penetrators who channel their homosexual desires into a heterosexual marriage: Huan E and Tong Zida. One day, Huan E sees Yang Weiying and is attracted to him. Huan says to himself, "I never tried the taste of the intestine, why don't I try it once?" (況我從未嘗著這大腸頭的滋味，何不破一破戒？)[275] Huan E asks You Xialiu to arrange a date for him so they can experience their same-sex desires. Several days later, Huan E goes to You's house to have dinner with Yang Weiying. Huan E and Weiying enjoy some wine. Prior to moving their communication to the bedroom, Huan E realizes that he needs to use the restroom. Unfortunately, while in the restroom he is secretly watched by You Xialiu's lascivious wife who is impressed by the size of Huan E's penis and grabs him, asking for sex. Huan E is totally shocked by the ugliness and abruptness of You Xialiu's wife, so he immediately leaves the house. When he arrives home, he feels extremely angry and remembers his feelings. He recalls the attractiveness of Yang Weiying's body which is sexy and pretty. The erotic memory arouses his desires and he initiates sex with his wife, Ms. Hou. During sex, Huan E thinks about the boy and regards Ms. Hou's vagina as the backyard of the boy which makes their sex unexpectedly better.[276] A similar story involves Tong Zida who also has a lascivious wife. At first, he is scared to have sex with his wife and instead wants to find a pretty male servant to fulfill his desires. When he and the servant are having sex, his wife walks into his study and the boy immediately

[275] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.12, 1409-10.

[276] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.12, 1418-19.

runs away. In order to calm down his angry wife, Tong Zida tries to satisfy her sexually. Both Huan E and Tong Zida attempt to experience same-sex intercourse for the first time in order to distinguish its difference from a heterosexual viewpoint. They both could not fulfill their wife's desire at home, therefore they want to try a boy's body. But before they can really complete it, the narrator makes some unexpected interruptions materialize. Same-sex intercourse does not take place, but the desires are transformed and the men are then capable of offering much better service to their wives, creating a peaceful conjugal relationship. Sex with young boys is seen as an appetizer before a serious banquet. After these two same-sex attempts, Huan E and Tong Zida lose their desire to have sex with boys. When the story develops to the transitional chapter, chapter 15, they become good husbands and only have sex with their wives or concubines. In contrast, the wealthy male penetrator in *Jin Ping Mei*, Ximen Qing, has sex with men and women simultaneously. It was accepted during this period of history for the power holder of a polygamous household to have desires for any pretty servant, page boy, or woman. Lust is one aspect of Ximen Qing's masculinity, as well as same-sex desire. Also in *Jin Ping Mei*, Ximen Qing's same-sex experience is a repetitive behavior that parallels his heterosexual experiences throughout his entire life. In *Guwangyan*, Cao Qujing exposes the commonality and popularity of male same-sex desires in the elite/wealthy communities while the men still uphold the heterosexual relationship.

In comparison with the relatively easy transformation of the male penetrator, Cao Qujing adopts the case of Ying Yang 嬴阳 to demonstrate the possibilities of changing a penetrated man into a husband. I have previously discussed the story of Ying Yang in chapter four of this dissertation. What I wish to emphasize here is that before Ying Yang

is sodomized by a local bully, he was an underground male prostitute/actor. Being penetrated, he is effeminized and loses his masculinity. After the sodomy, his weak body made him unable to support his family economically or to sexually fulfill his wife. In other words, a *yin-yang* imbalance exists in his family. In order to reestablish the roles of husband and father for Ying Yang, in chapter 24 of *Guwangyan,* the narrator introduces a karma reward for Yang. He obtains an official position with the help of Ruan Dacheng and takes on a new concubine who is a virgin. Ying Yang's relatively weak sexual capability seems to come into balance with his concubine. Both of them enjoy sex and the concubine gets pregnant. At the age of 50, Ying Yang becomes a popular local official with a wife, a concubine, and two sons. He reestablishes his role as a man in both the public and private spheres. This image is in striking contrast to the fate of most penetrated actors who are compelled into the lower range of society, having few opportunities to become local officials. Even when Ying Yang was a teenager his father was anxious about his son's future. Cao Qujing writes a fictional story about an attractive boy who is able to reestablish his masculinity after having been penetrated by achieving gender balance within his family. The underlying idea behind these two stories is that a homosexual relationship needs to be channeled within a heterosexual marital relationship in which the *ying-yang* hierarchy is maintained and emphasized.

5.3 Literary Twist of Heterosexuality, Homosexuality, and Homosociality

Last but not least, this section explores the interaction among heterosexuality, homosexuality, and homosocial relationships. Keith McMahon argues that the scholar and beauty romance can be regarded as a representation of male friendship, since the

talented heroines often dress as pretty boys. [277] The visual gender distinction between a scholar and a beauty is not emphasized in the novels. Female characters are thus able to emerge from the inner chamber, participating in the civil service examination and playing a role as political officials. The relatively chaste relationships between male and female characters in a romance simultaneously reflect the narrative trend of desexualizing the romantic relationship. I will scrutinize how *Guwangyan* represents the desexualization of romantic sentiment through the marriage of a sexually unmatched couple. Through the perspective of the wife, Cao Qujing illustrates how a husband and wife nurture their feelings and, likewise, how the couple reestablishes the stability of the family through symbolic homosexual intercourse.

The sexually unmatched couple consists of a natural eunuch and his luscious wife. The story about their marriage is mainly told from the perceptive of the wife to illustrate how she understands the dynamic relationship between love and desire. Wu He 鄔合 is an errand runner (*bangxian* 幫閑) who serves the three wealthiest families in Nanjing: Huan, Tong, and Jia. His role is similar to Ying Bojue in *Jin Ping Mei* who is smart, humorous, and sophisticated. Yet, Wu is unfortunately sexually impotent. As an orphan, he lacked a family member to help him solve questions about marriage. He plans to marry a "stone woman" (*shinu* 石女), whose vagina is naturally impenetrable, or a widow who could take care of his life. His future wife, Ying Jiaojiao 贏皎皎, however, is a lascivious girl who had sex with the family's servant and, subsequently, delivered a baby in her teenage years. After Jiaojiao's parents drowned the grandchild and buried it

[277] Keith McMahon, "The Classic "Beauty-Scholar" Romance And the Superioity of the Talented Women," *Body, Subject & Power in China*, ed. Angela Zito and Tani E. Barlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 227-251.

in their garden, they decided to dismiss the servant and marry off their overly mature daughter as soon as possible. Because of the go-between's intentional concealment of the real situation, both Jiaojiao's parents and Wu He are quite satisfied with each other. Later, the lascivious girl and the natural eunuch get married.

It is not difficult to predict that after marrying, Jiaojiao is not satisfied with her sex life. Rather than simply adding in an adulterous affair for this woman, the author gives her a way out of her house, offering her experience and a sexual "journey" in a turbulent society. A monk in the nearby temple seduces Jiaojiao. After sex, the monk agrees to leave the city with her and enjoy a free life together. Jiaojiao elopes with him to his temple. Since the monk previously was a swindler and Wu He has asked the police to search for his wife, Jiaojiao and the monk are caught by the local policemen. When Jiaojiao is in prison the jailers rape her. Her original goal of pursuing lust and love outside of the family is destroyed through these sexual tortures. Cao Qujing describes several of the wife's experiences in order to illustrate the importance of the balance of desire and emotion and to show how the wife discovers the value of her husband.

There are three scenarios in chapters 6 and 7 in *Guwangyan* that portray how she changes her mind. The first takes place after she moves to the temple to live with the monk and has sex with him the first night. The monk has not had sex with a woman for a long time, so they have sex many times. After several orgasms, Jiaojiao's liquid has dried up and intercourse becomes quite painful for her. However, the monk keeps penetrating her and her vagina becomes swollen. While Jiaojiao begs him to stop, the monk refuses until he is finally exhausted. After sex, Jiaojiao lies in bed thinking, "When I married into Wu's family, though we did not have sex, his kindness (*en'qing* 恩情) was quite

appreciable. Today, I meet a monk, wishing that we could have some affection (*en'ai* 恩愛). Who knew that he was so cruel? In the future, I will die by his hand." (後來嫁了鄔家，雖然是幹夫妻，他這種恩情實令人感激不盡。今日遇了這和尚，只說也必定有些恩愛。跟了他來，誰知這樣狠毒，將來定然死在他手中.)[278] In other words, the woman leaves her family for both the satisfaction of sex and love; what she obtains instead from the monk is sexual torture. The bright future she thought she could obtain before her elopement was completely ruined by the reality she encounters outside of the family. The second scenario is in prison, where Jiaojiao is quite regretful. She thinks, "After I married into Wu's family, I had a good living. I was cheated and raped by the monk and experienced torture." She thinks again about the emotion and love (*qing'ai* 情愛) she had with Wu He, which she should have not discarded, and feels regretful and hateful. (嫁到鄔家，好端端的過日子，被這賊禿奸騙，到今日受這樣的荼毒。....”又想起鄔合的情愛來，難拋難舍，又悔又恨)[279] This description of her internal dialogue is quite similar to the description of her thoughts in the temple; yet, her situation has become much more difficult. She had just been raped by two jailers for an entire night and she knows that she will probably now be sold to a brothel. In prison, Jiaojiao starts to reevaluate Wu He's emotion and love.

The final scenario that shows how her attention has completely switched from desire to love takes place after Wu He takes her home and treats her as before. Sometimes, when she still has sexual desire, she thinks about the cruelty of the monk and

[278] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.7, 803.

[279] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.7, 831-32.

the violence of the two jailers, and she becomes unhappy and disinterested. She loves (*teng'ai* 疼愛) her husband more than before, with all her heart, and they live together happily.[280] I want to emphasize an easily neglected point when we identify the heroine's mind change: the various expressions used to present her changed sentiment in terms of her gratitude towards her husband's kindness, her pursuit of love and emotion with the monk, and finally, her love for her husband. Her subjectivity in the family relationship has been strengthened and gradually switched from pure grateful sentiment to her love towards her husband.

If the sub-plot concerning this couple ended in their return to their previous status of a non-sexual marriage, it would oversimplify the situation and readers might challenge whether this woman's personality had indeed been changed. On the contrary, Cao Qujing presents a revengeful experience, implying that the boundary between *yin* and *yang*, inside and outside, has been established in Wu He's family. Jiaojiao has no intention of having sex with any man outside of her marriage. Moreover, the couple has the intention to punish whoever might want to destroy their family. When Jiaojiao's first lover, who was the father of her murdered child, reappears, attempting to reconnect with her, the couple cooperatively enacts revenge on him. The lover, called Long Yang 龍陽, became an underground male prostitute after he was kicked out of Jiaojiao's family. He then heard the story about her experiences with the monk and in prison and, guessing that Jiaojiao must have a bad relationship with her husband, attempts to have sex with her. Jiaojiao is quite ashamed and angry to see Long Yang again, yet she does not reject him directly. Later, she tells her whole story to her husband, and together they design a

[280] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.7, 839.

strategy to seduce Long Yang and beat him. On the following evening, Jiaojiao stays in her bed, waiting for Long Yang. Wu He has a mallet and hides in the kitchen. After Long Yang comes into the bedroom, Jiaojiao pretends to seduce him and kisses him, suddenly biting his tongue. Long runs out of the bedroom, scared and in pain. Wu He beats him with the mallet and the couple immediately ties him up with ropes. In order to express her anger, Jiaojiao says to Long Yang, "You raped me several years ago, yet I have treated you well. You broadcast my bad reputation everywhere. Today, you want to rape me again, so let me express my anger." (你奸了我幾年，我哪些兒虧了你？你還四處花敗我。你今日又想來奸我，我且出出氣著。)[281] She picks up the mallet, using the thinner pole, and inserts it forcefully four to five inches into his anus. The boy twists his bottom in a lot of pain.[282] Finally, the couple pushes Long Yang, still with the mallet in his anus, out of their house. When Long runs down the street, people think he is either a ghost or a monster that has a huge tail and cannot speak, so they beat him to death.

In *Guwangyan,* the mallet is frequently employed as a euphemism referring to a man's huge phallus, with the general depiction being of a female character excited to see a giant mallet or a flesh mallet (*rou bangchui* 肉棒槌), anticipating amazing sex. In this scene, the couple holds the mallet and sodomizes the intruder of the family to maintain the peace of their marriage. Through her sexual experiences outside of the family, Jiaojiao encounters unemotional sexual abuse and rape which make her revalue the meaning of love. Therefore she and Wu He do not need sexuality to maintain their marriage. Wu He and Jiaojiao's story reminds readers of the story of the natural eunuch

[281] Cao, *Guwangyan,* ch.7, 872.

[282] Ibid.

"Ingenia" (Qiaoniang 巧娘) in *Liaozhai zhiyi*. Pu Songling also provides a happy ending for the natural eunuch character whose body is cured by a female ghost. It is not hard for the late imperial writer to change the body of the character and create a story that fulfills the conventional cultural imagination. Enlarging a male character's male part is a typical trope for resolving unsatisfied female desire. In the story of Wu He and Jiaojiao, Cao Qujing, however, adopts a nonsexual relationship to emphasize the power of sentiment. The couple cannot enjoy sex in the marriage but their mutual understanding and appreciation has been strengthened. Their relationship is quite similar to a male-male friendship. By using the symbolic phallus, a mallet, to sodomize the male prostitute, this couple finally confirms the boundaries between their devoted marriage and the sexually chaotic outside world.

This chapter has scrutinized the male-male relationship and the masculinity of the fictional male characters in *Guwangyan*. I argued that the male friendship between Zhong Qing and Mei Gen reflects the most important example of male bonding within the late Ming and early Qing literati culture. Male friendship helps Zhong Qing survive the abandonment of his brother and helps establish a new kinship with his friends. The friendship also provides a space for criticism of the late Ming rule. Moreover, I concluded that *Guwangyan* offers a conservative view of the male same-sex relationship which the author implies should be channeled into heterosexual marriage. The novel ridicules sexual exchanges for money among the male same-sex practitioners of the lower level of society and parodies the scholar's connoisseurship of male beauty. The intertwining of male friendships, male same-sex erotic relationships, and heterosexual relationships describe the complicated and multilayered masculinities which reflect the

representation of the text what men should be as scholars, husbands, and male lovers. Since family is such a crucial subject in the text, the following chapter will illustrate how the novel represents the interaction between the dynastic crysis and family continuity.

CHAPTER VI

SENTIMENT, DAOISM, AND FAMILY CONTINUITY IN *GUWANGYAN*

This chapter will focus on family relationships presented in *Guwangyan*. I will discuss various aspects of the intellectual discourse to clarify the author's individualistic representation of marriage and family relationships. During the Ming-Qing transitional period the conventional relationship between family and state faced a challenge from the literati's point of view. This trend is represented in literati novels and explores the complicated tension between the self, the family, and the state. *Guwangyan* broadly illustrates the fragmented family within a dynastic crisis and simultaneously explores various ways of creating and maintaining family stability. The family is defined not purely as a place to practice ritual and social order, but also a space in which to demonstrate individualistic negotiation within the moral and social systems. In addition, the novel attempts to create a hybrid approach based on the Confucian moralist requirements of gender regulation and family stability on one side and the Daoist ideology of pursuing sensual gratification while maintaining social withdrawal on the other side.

In this chapter, I will explore marriage and family relationships in *Guwangyan* from four different aspects. First, I will briefly introduce the intellectual discourse about the family and sentiment during the Ming-Qing transitional period -- a time when an individualistic interpretation of cosmology was gradually established. Philological study helped literati reconsider the model of the scholar as sage. As a result, the marital relationship in this novel is regarded as an individualistic response to the mainstream

moral requirements of a marriage. Secondly, I will introduce how *Guwangyan* incorporates romantic sentiment and sensual pleasure into a literati official marital relationship. On the surface, the story involving the main couple in *Guwangyan* is a typical scholar-beauty romance that ignores the sensual aspect of the main protagonists. My reading demonstrates that the author adopts historical and fictional narratives concerning courtesans, weaving them into the main plot in order to channel both romantic sentiment and corporal pleasure into the marital relationship. Thirdly, I will introduce the implications of Daoism within the marriages in *Guwangyan*, including the literati's Daoist pursuit of political withdrawal and the common merchants' application of Daoist sexual skills. Lastly, I will broaden the discussion of the family relationships in *Guwangyan* to include a much larger political landscape. I argue that the latter part of the novel establishes a significant contrast between a realistic presentation of political disasters and an idealistic description of family and community reunion. When the political crisis becomes more and more threatening to the stability of many families in this fictional writing of the Ming Empire, the author attempts to demonstrate how the Daoist reclusive way of life and the Confucian gentry concept of community can be possible influences for maintaining family households.

6.1 Confucianism, Daoism, and the Cult of *Qing*

The Ming-Qing transitional period bore witness to a significant change in the literati's thoughts about the individual, the family, the state, and cosmology. The literati's thoughts about the interaction between the individual and cosmology were influenced by both conventional Confucianism, which was oscillating between the orthodox Cheng-Zhu

Song-learning school and the liberal Han-learning school, and Daoist ideology. This period was also a time when literati reevaluated the power of sentiment within social crisis and familial stability. All these ideas were reflected within the fictional discourse of *Guwangyan*, attempting to achieve a balance or hybrid between Confucianism and Daoism. In order to access a clearer picture of the dynamic relationship of family and state in the novel, I will briefly introduce several intellectual discourses relevant to this writing period.

One of the dominant texts in neo-Confucian philosophy, *The Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), explicitly explains the corresponding relationship between self-cultivation and the state.

> The ancients who wished to manifest their clear character to the world would first bring order to their states. Those who wished to bring order to their states would first regulate their families. Those who wished to regulate their families would first cultivate their personal lives. Those who wished to cultivate their personal lives would first rectify their minds. …when the mind is rectified, the personal life is cultivated; when the personal life is cultivated, the family will be regulated; when the family is regulated, the state will be in order; and when the state is in order, there will be peace throughout the world. From the Son of Heaven down to the common people, all must regard cultivation of the personal life as the root or foundation. [283]

[283] The English translation is modified from Daniel K. Gardner, "The Great Learning," in *The Four Books: The Basic Teachings of the Later Confucian Tradition* (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co., 2007), 3-8.

> 古之欲明明德於天下者，先治其國；欲治其國者，先齊其家；欲齊其家者，先修其身；欲修其身者，先正其心;....心正而后身修，身修而后家齐，家齐而后国治，国治而后天下平。

This idea was particularly emphasized by the Ming Hongwu 洪武 emperor, Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1368-1398) who wanted to establish a strong, government-centered state. He also established a position of authority for Cheng-Zhu neo-Confucianism, which was regarded as the dominant interpretation of philosophical canons. In Benjamin Elman's words, both society and intellectuals focused on orthodoxy and morality.[284] Ming-Qing novels frequently adopt the trope of using a strictly hierarchical family to microcosmically reflect a stable empire, or they present a family in chaos to represent the decadence of the society. *Yesou puyan,* for instance, presents a stable, polygamous family and a strong state to emphasize the importance of harmonious family relationships for the maintenance of a sound state. The less self-cultivated, male masters of the families in *Jin Ping Mei*, *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan* and *Honglou meng* represent the corresponding links between the destruction of the family and the instability of the empire. The underlying ideology relevant in such novels is that the most crucial problem in a fictional world is a male leader who is regarded as emperor of the society. Inevitably, the male master's failure in self-cultivation leads to a crisis of the household which parallels the decadence of the society.

However, at the conclusion of the Ming dynasty, as literati witnessed the collapse calamity of a hegemonic empire, they gradually became disillusioned with the totalitarian Ming state and the superiority of the Cheng-Zhu neo-Confucian ideology. According to

[284] Benjamin A. Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1984), 202-20.

Benjamin Elman, being the moral examples of the society was not the only focus of the literati, and more scholars paid attention to the study of the disciplined practice of a specific skill, such as hermeneutics, phonology, mathematics, or medicine.[285] Yingshi Yu and Kai-wing Chow have suggested that the intellectual turn toward Han-learning in the Qing dynasty might not only have promoted a search for empirical roots within Confucianism but was also related to ideological thinking. Qing period intellectuals attempted to escape the neo-Confucian way of only emphasizing exemplary morality and thus turned from morality to professionalism. More and more literati adopted a specific area of study as their preferred field and become an expert in that area rather than being a moral example in general.[286] For example, the late Ming philosopher Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613-1682) advocated knowledge "of practical use to society" (*jingshi zhiyong* 經世致用). Gu proposed that scholars abandon the Neo-Confucian commentaries that interpreted Confucius and return to the original classics as well as the commentaries of the Han scholars who had been close to the sages.[287] Early Qing period Confucian scholars Yan Yuan 顏元 (1635–1704) and his disciple Li Gong 李塨 (1659–1733) also emphasized practical knowledge.[288]. This profound reconsideration of self, the state, and the cosmos

[285] Ibid.

[286] Yingshi Yu, "Self-preface," in *Lun Dai Zhen yu Zhang Xuecheng: Qingdai zhongqi xueshu sixiang shi yanjiu* (Xianggang: Long men shu dian, 1976), 1-9, and Kai-wing Chow, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China : Ethics, Classics, and Lineage Discourse* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994),1-23.

[287] Antonio S. Cua ed., *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 272-76.

[288] Wei Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge,: Harvard University Asia Center; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2003), 29-52.

inescapably affected literati's thinking about the family. Literati regarded the marital relationship as superior to the other four relationships and at times even more important than the relationship of ruler and subject.

Concurrently, when the wave of individualistic thinking emerged in opposition to the rigid indoctrination of Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy, another philosophical idea materialized that proved to be quite influential among literati and played an indispensable role in the interpretation of sentiment and desire in literature -- Daoism. Not only did many literati have Daoist references in their pen names, but the main concept of detachment, withdrawal, and pursuit of nature was also popular among literati who were unsuccessful in the civil examination competition. Daoist ideas became an important recourse for the literati's exploration of sentiment. Many novels were written under the influence of Daoist concepts. The mid-Ming literati novel *Xiyouji* reflects the practice of Daoism both in content and on a structural level. The number of chapters and the characters' personalities in *Xiyouji* represent the five elements and a *yin-yang* interaction within the Daoist philosophy. Several late Ming novels that present desire and sexuality within a family relationship also emphasize the power of Daoism, such as *Lang Shi* 浪史 (Tales from a life of indulgence, ca.1620) and *Zhulin yeshi* 株林野史 (The Wild History of Zhu Forest, ca. eighteenth century). The ideology of "returning to nature" became a perfect explanation as to why the protagonist who had several sexual partners could become an immortal in these novels. The author of *Honglou meng*, Cao Xueqin, apparently had an affinity to Zhuangzi 莊子and the neo-Daoist scholar, Ruan Ji 阮籍 (210–265).[289]

[289] Yingshi Yu, *Honglou meng de liangge shijie* (Taibei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1978), 202-20, and Zhuya Zhou, *Daoist Philosophy and Literati Writings in Late Imperial China: A Case Study of The Story of the Stone* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 2013).

Another important intellectual discourse that was relevant to Confucianism and Daoism and had a significant influence in Ming-Qing period literature was the cult of *qing*. From the late Ming to the Qing period, the discourse of *qing* experienced a transformation from a subversive and transgressive power of the social order to the supplemental component of social stability. In late Ming period, *qing* was frequently regarded as a subversive dialogue which could transgress the boundaries between genders, social status, and life/death. Many novels and dramas used the platform of two lovers sacrificing their dignity and lives to fulfill their pursuit of emotion. For example, stories in Feng Menglong's *Qing Shi* 情史 (The History of Sentiment) depict the romantic relationship between two men. Tang Xianzu's *Mudan ting* 牡丹亭 (The Peony Pavilion) narrates a story of a heroine and a hero who transcend the separation of life and death. In comparison with the marital relationship, which was generally designed by the couple's parents or a matchmaker, the extramarital relationship became much more attractive and impressive in presenting the super power of sentiment. However, in the early Qing period, literati reconsidered the subversive power of emotion. In literature, novelists explored the ways of accommodating sentiment within ritual propriety rather than emphasizing its destructive energy. The genre of *caizi jiaren* (scholar and beauty) fiction, for example, portrayed a mutual sentiment between husband and wife who are socially and ritually matched with each other. The hero of these romantic stories does not look for sensual and spiritual companions outside of his marriage. Scholar and beauty fictions demonstrated a popular trend of incorporating romantic sentiment into the family relationship. In Martin Huang's examination of the genealogy of *qing*, he points out that during the early Qing period, *qing* became incorporated into the concept of principle (*lixue*, 理學) and private

sentiment was merged into public sentiment.[290] Sufeng Xu's study of the poetry exchanged between Qing literati and their wives demonstrates that literati incorporated romantic emotion into their marriage.[291] In Maram Epstein's study on the rituals of scholars' emotions in the early Qing dynasty, she points out that, in their biographic works, literati framed their intimate emotions and relationships within ritualistic parameters.[292] Qing literati attempted to channel *qing* into a constructive power of social relationships. Several historians have explored the ongoing phenomenon of gradual change in domesticating and legitimizing *qing*. Dorothy Ko, in her study of late Ming women, compares the courtesan to the subversive power of society which, in turn, blurred the boundaries between gender and classes. The courtesan was the most important soul mate of literati.[293] Susan Mann, in her study of Qing period female poets, however, found that the courtesan had been removed from the spiritual lives of literati. Literati and their well-educated wives expressed mutual love through poetry.[294] In other words, emotion became a supplemental pillar of social and family stability during the early to mid Qing

[290] Martin W. Huang, "Sentiments of Desire: Thoughts on the Cult of Qing in Ming-Qing Literature," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* Dec. 20, (1998),153-84.

[291] Sufeng Xu, "Domesticating Romantic Love During the High Qing Classical Revival : The Poetic Exchanges between Wang Zhaoyuan (1763-1851) and Her Husband Hao Yixing (1757-1829)," *NAN NÜ -- Men, Women & Gender in Early & Imperial China* 15.2, (2013), 219-64, 226.

[292] Maram Epstein, "Writing Emotions: Ritual Innovation as Emotional Expression," *NAN NÜ -- Men, Women & Gender in Early & Imperial China* 11.2(2009), 155-96.

[293] Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 251-85.

[294] Susan Mann, *Precious Records : Women in China's Long Eighteenth Century* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997),76-120.

period. According to Susan Mann, family morality incorporating *qing* became a dominant trend in the Qing period. [295]

Guwangyan was composed within the social and intellectual landscape in which literati explored more practical ways of philosophical thinking and attempted to present romantic sentiment within the parameters of ritual propriety. The novel represents a transitional stage in which literati novels channeled desire and sentiment from the extramarital relationship into the marital relationship. Cao Qujing also explored various ways of presenting Daoism as a way to maintain the stability and continuity of the family.

6.2 The Innovation of the Courtesan Narrative

From the perspective of Confucianism, relationships within the family were important for social stability, therefore locating the marriage relationship within a ritual propriety was an important concern for many literati. During the late Ming period, the use of *qing* discourse in literature created a strong concern for the destructive energy of sentiment in a marriage. *Guwangyan* explores a way of combining ritual propriety and emotion within a literati-official family. Cao Qujing reinvents the conventional narrative about the courtesan and interweaves that within a framework of scholar and beauty fiction to demonstrate the importance of channeling feelings and desires into the Confucian marriage relationship.

In the late Ming and early Qing periods, several literati maintained the importance and priority of the marital relationship within the conventional rituals system. The late Ming philosopher Li Zhi (1527-1602) mentioned in his essay “Discussion on Husband

[295] Ibid.

Wife (*Fufu lun* 夫婦論)" that husband and wife are the origin of human beings. First we have the husband and wife, and then we have the father and son. When we have father and son, then we have brothers. When we have brothers, we have superior and subordinate. If the husband and wife relationship is upright, everything will come from the upright. That is why husband and wife are the origin of everything.[296] Li's idea differed from the Confucian concept of leader and subject as the most important one among the "Five Relations." The author of *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, Xizhou sheng 西周生, believes that the conjugal relationship should be the most important among the five relations. In the turbulent dynastic transitional period, the importance of mutual love in a conjugal relationship is more valuable than *yi* 義 (righteousness) of the relationship in public. The "Yi Yan" (弁言, the Preface) of *Xingshi* states:

> There are five relationships: Ruler and Subject; Father and Son; brothers; friends; and couples, conjugal relationships existing among them. These five relationships should be valued at the same level. Yet, from ancient times until now, how many loyal ministers could we find? How many filial sons could we see? How many mutually loving brothers could we see? And how many friends having similar ideas and taking the same road could we see? However, the beloved husband and wife could be found everywhere. Probably, the persons who could not become a loyal minister, a filial son, good brothers and friends then become couples. Human feelings could not be used in two ways. If the couple has deep emotional

[296] For a detailed discussion of Li Zhi's argument of family see Pauline C. Lee*, Li Zhi, Confucianism, and the Virtue of Desire* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011), 85-86.

> ties for one another, then integrity toward the ruler and subjects, father and son, and friends will be limited. If a person could simply move his feelings into the bedroom, he could enjoy his life and keep his virtue."
>
> 五倫有君臣、父子、兄弟、朋友，而夫婦處其中，俱應合重。但從古至今，能得幾個忠臣？能得幾個孝子？又能得幾個相敬相愛的兄弟？幾個誌同道合的朋友？倒只恩恩愛愛的夫婦比比皆是。大約那不做忠臣、不做孝子、成不得好兄弟、做不來好朋友，都為溺在夫婦一倫去了。夫人之精神從無兩用，夫婦情深，君臣父子兄弟朋友的身上自然義短。把這幾倫的全副精神都移在閨房之內，夫婦之私，…這也是不枉了受他的享用，也不枉喪了自己的人品。[297]

Xizhou sheng also declares the importance of having a virtuous wife for a gentleman in the "Yin Qi" (引起, the Introudction) of *Xingshi*. He claims that a gentleman has three delights, all of which are greater than ruling over an empire: first, that his parents are alive and well and his brothers harmonious; second that he is unashamed to face either heaven or man; and thirdly that he locates talented men and educates them. All three delights depend on the prerequisite that one must first have a virtuous wife. [298] Similar to Li Zhi and Xizhou sheng's argument, Cao Qujing also emphasized the importance of a marital relationship in *Guwangyan*. In chapter three of *Guwangyan*, the narrator claims: "The marital relationship is the beginning of the five relationships. First there are husband and wife, and then there are father and son, brothers, friends, ruler and subject."

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297 Xizhou sheng 西周生, *Xingshi yinyuan* 醒世姻缘 , (Taibei : Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi; 台北市 : 聯經出版事業公司, 1986), "Yi Yan" (弁言, the Preface). Translation is mine.

[298] For the English translation of the "Yin Qi" of *Xingshi yinyuan zhuan*, please see Yenna Wu, *Ameliorative Satire and the Seventeenth-century Chinese Novel, Xingshi Yinyuan Zhuan-Marriage as Retribution, Awakening the World*, 303-04.

(夫妻一倫乃五倫之始，有夫妻然後有父子、兄弟、朋友、君臣)[299] The narrator also mentions the hierarchy between the wife and concubine. A concubine should be regarded as matter and can be exchanged with any other material, but a wife is a very important person who is in charge of the family and can birth offspring. To disrespect the wife is completely inappropriate.

The main plot of *Guwangyan* depicts the harmonious marital lives of the two protagonists: Zhong Qing and Qian Gui. Although several scholastic readings of *Guwangyan* have branded their romantic story as an example of the scholar and beauty genre, by exploring the author's literary inheritance and innovation drawn from other cultural conventions, the courtesan narrative becomes more significant.[300] Zhong and Qian fall in love at their very first meeting, exchanging poetry as their way of spiritual communication. Zhong regards Qian as his "soul mate" (*zhiji* 知己). Zhong attends the civil service examination with the help of Qian and they finally enjoy their marriage. Their romantic story seems a typical scholar and beauty narrative. However, more up-to-date studies of the scholar and beauty genre offer us a much deeper understanding of this narrative style and I argue that *Guwangyan* deviates from representing the fictional idealistic gender relationship. In Keith McMahon's study of the chaste scholar and beauty romance, he introduces the basic format of this genre. The young man and woman meet by chance and get to know each other, often through the exchange of literary message,

[299] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.3, 376.

[300] A reading of Zhong Qing and Qian Gui's story as scholar and beauty can be found in Martin W. Huang, "*Qing Versus Yu*: The Polarization of Desire in *Yesou puyan* and *Guwangyan," Desire and Fictional Narrative, 251-70, and* Gary Xu, "Ethics of Form: Qing and Narrative Excess in *Guwangyan*," *Dynastic Crisis and Cultural Innovation: From the Late Ming to the Late Qing and Beyond,* edited by Dewei Wang, Wei Shang, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2005), 235-63.

especially love poetry. It is spontaneously apparent that they are meant for each other. Mean people try to steal the woman away or otherwise prevent the two from uniting but fail because the youths are so much cleverer and more virtuous. “Their love exists just outside- but not too far from—the traditional system of marriage according to “ritual,” *li* [禮], that is, following the arrangement of parents and matching the wealth and rank of the two families.”[301] One important characteristic of the scholar and beauty genre is the absence of the descriptions of sex, although some novels allow the unmarried lovers to embrace or hold hands. In some novels, the hero and heroine are both portrayed as beauties (*meiren* 美人) while the feminine traits of the girls have been minimized. Various appearances involving cross-dressing scenarios specifically emphasized the ambiguity between the sexes. [302] *Guwangyan*, however, demonstrates a more serious stance regarding gender demarcation and the physical differences between male and female characters. Development of the couple’s romantic feelings seems to parallel the ongoing process of their sexual maturation. Therefore I argue that rather than categorizing Zhong and Qian’s story as an example of the scholar and beauty genre, it is more productive to explore HOW the novel incorporates a courtesan narrative into this basic scholar and beauty romance frame.

[301] McMahon, *Misers, Shrews, and Polygamists,*104.

[302] Discussions of the scholar and beauty genre can be read in Keith McMahon, “The Classic ‘Beauty-Scholar’ Romance And the Superioity of the Talented Women,” in *Body, Subject and Power in China*, edited by Angelo Zito and Tani E. Barlow (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) , 227-52, Chloë F. Starr, *Red-Light Novels of the Late Qing* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 40-47, and Geng Song, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), 19-36.

The courtesan in the Nanjing Qinhuai 秦淮 pleasure quarter of Nanjing is a significant cultural phenomenon within the transitional Ming-Qing period. The story of courtesans and their relationships with literati patrons frequently appeared in historical and literary narratives. Several famous courtesans, such as Xue Susu 薛素素(ca.1564-1650?) and Liu Rushi 柳如是 (1618-1664), not only accompanied their famous literati patrons to cultural activities but also became successful poets, painters, and editors.[303] Compared to the virtuous wives of the literati, late Ming period courtesans actually had opportunities to enjoy their literary talent through romantic love. The image of the courtesan repeatedly appeared in Ming-Qing vernacular fictions and dramas. Feng Menglong's short story collections *Sanyan* 三言 (Three Words) include several stories about courtesans, such as "Du Shiniang nuchen baibaoxiang" 杜十娘怒沈百寶箱 (Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger) and "Maiyoulang duzhan huakui " 賣油郎獨占花魁 (The Oil Vendor Wins the Flower Queen). The famous Qing drama *Taohua shan* 桃花扇 (*Peach Blossom Fan*) adopts the romantic story of a courtesan and literati to reflect the melancholy of the dynastic collapse.

One crucial problem of a courtesan's life, which was presented in both historical and fictional stories, is that of marriage. The courtesans' sexual and emotional freedom made it impossible for them to be accepted by the ritual-insistent literati families. Some courtesans acted more loyal to the family and state than to their own partners. Liu Rushi, for instance, criticizes her lover Qian Qianyi 钱谦益(1582–1664) for his cowardice in

[303] The story of Xue Susu can be read in Daria Berg, "Cultural Discourse on Xue Susu, a Courtesan in Late Ming China," *The International Journal of Asian Studies* 6.02(2009),171-200. Liu Rushi's story is in Yinke Chen, *Liu Rushi biezhuan* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), and Kang-i Sun Chang, *The Late-Ming Poet Chen Tzu-Lung : Crises of Love and Loyalism*.

surrendering to the Qing authorities. But, many stories demonstrate the enormous difficulties faced by a courtesan who attempts to merge into the family of a literatus. She has to face serious suspicions from the literatus' family as well as the likely challenges presented regarding how she can reform from her previous life. The question of whether the courtesan, who had been a commodity in the marketplace, could control herself in order to fulfill ritual duties within the Confucian family became a long-time point of stress in the literati's mind. In historical reality, the courtesan either had several marriages without being fully accepted or simply became a marginalized concubine within the household. In many novels, the narrative focused on how a courtesan finds a dependable husband and how difficult it is for the couple to overcome challenges rather than enjoy their marital relationship. These narratives about the courtesan exposed the tensions stemming from the differences between the courtesan's and scholar's understanding of marriage, as well as economic conflicts and/or social obstacles. Even though the courtesan selflessly devoted herself to her husband and family, her previous freedom within the men's circle made her incompatible with the ritual propriety of the family. Therefore, most writers cautiously avoided descriptions of the courtesan's family life or their harmonious marriages to scholars. [304]

Guwangyan, however, wrote of the mutual admiration between the courtesan and scholar, who use marriage to confirm their sentiments and nurture their romantic relationship. The physical and emotional freedom of the courtesan helps her identify her

[304] In Ming-Qing fictions, there are also plenty of stories presenting the relationship between the courtesan/prostitute and the merchant in *Sanyan* collections, such as "The Miserable Yu Tang Chun Meets Her Husband" in *Jingshi tongyan* and "The Oil Vendor Wins the Flower Queen" in *Xingshi hengyan*. These marriages have good results, since merchant families generally do not need to take responsibility for ritual maintenance. The stories focus more on the flexibility of the merchant class. In this section, I focus my study on courtesan and scholar couples, which are closer to the theme of *Guwangyan*.

real lover and establish a family. For a better understanding of how Cao Qujing manipulates and reforms the courtesan narrative, I will introduce the motif of the pearl (*zhu* 珠), appearing in the romantic episodes of *Guwangyan* with reference to Zhong Qing and Qian Gui. The concept of pearl I adopt in this chapter refers to both the pearl as jewelry, *zhenzhu* 珍珠 and the eyeball, *yanzhu* 眼珠.The first chapter begins with a splendid description of the Qinhuai pleasure quarter in Nanjing during the late Ming period. A phenomenon is introduced in which male customers prefer blind courtesans rather than visually healthy ones. Lesser-educated merchants were allowed to purchase phony degrees, but the bogus degree holders could not satisfy the well-trained courtesans. These merchants prefer the company of blind courtesans who are less demanding, so several of the more famous courtesans are left with a limited number of clients. The narrator comments that the popular trend of preferring blind courtesans is due to the many commoners in society who have eyes but lack eyeballs (*yannei wuzhu* 眼內無珠). The clients do not appreciate the courtesans' talents or feelings. In other words, the motif of the pearl in *Guwangyan* refers not only to the object which is the shiniest and most valuable but also speaks of having the virtue of being able to distinguish a treasure from a common item. Cao Qujing adopts this motif of the pearl to enhance the characterization of Qian Gui who is talented, loyal, and pretty as a pearl and also has the capabilities of finding her soul mate. Likewise, Zhong Qing can see the virtues of the blind courtesan thus saving Qian Gui from defiling her life. Their mutual support, love, and appreciation make them like pearls in comparison to the fictional societal trend that overly praises and believes in material and sensual pleasures.

The motif of the pearl is broadly used in Ming-Qing period fiction to refer to *yin* or feminine power. For instance, in the two short stories of *San Yan*, "Jiang Xingge Reencounters the Pearl-Sewn Shirt" and "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger," Feng Monglong uses the pearl to connect the narrative and identify the female protagonists' values. In *Guwangyan,* the author adopts the motif of the pearl to show the courtesan as the personification of romantic sentiment and how, in turn, this romantic sentiment is treasured by the literati. The courtesan, Qian Gui, is born into a brothel managed by her parents. Since she is an extremely bright child, her parents invite a tutor to teach her to read. Unfortunately, when she is ten years old she loses her sight so her parents ask her to launch her own business when she was thirteen. After her first night with a merchant, a neighbor of her family claims, "It is such a round pearl, you [the pearl] are more valuable than other treasures. Today you are lost in the hands of a villager; it is extremely pitiful that a treasure has been buried under the ground. " (一颗骊珠圆又圆，奇珍应让你为先。今朝误落村夫手，异宝尘埋实可怜) [305] This marks the first time that the narrative connects Qian Gui directly with the motif of the pearl.

Not only does Qian Gui's physical attractiveness make her valuable, but her pursuit of love makes her different from the other courtesan images. The narrator explains how Qian carefully selects a potential husband from her clients, by using her heart rather than her physical sight. In chapter 3 she meets a young scholar who claims he wants to help her get out of prostitution and marry her. Qian Gui rejects his proposal and later explains to her maid why she has not chosen this seemingly attractive scholar. The scholar already has a wife and in order to persuade Qian to marry him, he claims that

[305] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.3, 323.

he would abandon his marriage. Qian Gui explains to her maid that even though the scholar seemed like a devoted lover, his personality was not persistent. If he could abandon his lovely wife, what else would he abandon? Qian believes that if she wants a husband so she can get out of prostitution, she must find a person that likewise wants to establish a mutually loving marriage. Qian points out that the client did not have deep feelings for her, but only had interests in her corporeal beauty (*se*, 色). In the future, if she should lose her physical beauty, he would not still love her. The maid still cannot fully understand Qian's choice. In order to further demonstrate the bright heart (*huixin* 慧心) of Qian Gui and hopefully convince readers, the author inserts a fast-forwarded narrative telling of the later life of the scholar-client. He not only disrespects his wife and commits adultery with many women but is later killed by an extramarital relationship. The narrator goes on to praise the blind Qian Gui for being able to see a person's beginning and ending at a first meeting. She is extremely sensitive, based on previous lessons. Her intuitive judgment could erase men with sight all over the world. (一瞽目女子，初相會便知人之終始，龜鑒若此，把世上有眼男兒一齊抹殺)[306] The novel emphasizes that even though Qian Gui does not have healthy eyes, she has a smart mind and heart, thus her sharp intuition allows her to distinguish a true lover from her clients.

Yet another important factor which insures that Qian Gui would fit into a literati marriage is the commitment from Zhong Qing who regards her as his soul mate. Zhong Qing is an orphan who has no family. After he visits Qian's brothel, they fall in love and decide to be together for the rest of their lives. Since Zhong is a poor student, Qian Gui

[306] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.3, 397.

offers her money and financially supports Zhong until he takes the civil service examination.[307] After Zhong obtains a degree, he decides to marry Qian and help her get out of prostitution. Before their wedding, one of Zhong's friends asks him not to marry a blind courtesan. Zhong points out that when he was poor, Qian did not show disdain for him but instead supported him financially so he could study. Relying on her money, Zhong Qing could study hard without financial concerns. Qian Gui also had strong feelings towards Zhong, so now he believes it would be inauspicious to betray her. Zhong goes on explaining to his friend, "I was poor when I was young and my relatives regarded me as a stranger. She loved me as soon as she encountered me; therefore, a blind woman is thousands of times better than a man with good eyes." (弟自幼孤貧，骨肉親友視陌路。他一遇我即親愛若此，一瞽目婦人勝有眼男兒萬倍。)[308] Zhong emphasizes many times that his name means "devotion to sentiment" (*zhongqing* 钟情), meaning he could not betray their love. The overall character of Zhong Qing reminds the reader of the male protagonist in "The Oil Vendor Wins the Flower Queen" in Feng Menglong's *Xingshi hengyan*, whose name is Qin Zhong 秦重. Both heroes devote themselves to a romantic relationship and accommodate their lover's previous courtesan life. Qin Zhong in "The Oil Vender" represents a trend in low-level merchants' attitudes towards sentiment that at that time was less restricted to being chaste and more tolerant of the pursuit of desire. Zhong Qing in *Guwangyan* reflects the incorporation of the merchants' flexible attitudes regarding marriage. In *Guwangyan* Zhong Qing and Qian Gui represent

[307] The plot of Qian Gui is influenced by the famous Ming short story "The Oil Vendor Wins the Flower Queen." Qian Gui's mother uses the story of Wang Mei 王美, the heroine in "The Oil Vendor" to persuade Qian Gui to continue her prostitution. (ch.3, 370)
[308] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.14, 1630.

an ideal marital relationship by overcoming the obstacles presented to them: the physical body, social status, and poverty.

In chapter 16, the motif of the pearl reappears confirming the virtues of Qian Gui and Zhong Qing, while also corresponding to the repetitive description of brightness vs blindness in their romantic episodes. Qian and Zhong experience the same dream in this chapter. In the dream, they travel to an old City God Temple where the city god claims that because Zhong Qing was so romantic that he kept his commitment to his first lover, Qian Gui, Zhong deserves a good marriage. Qian, who once was a courtesan, may keep her marriage to Zhong. The city god also believes she deserves bright eyes, so he gives her two shining pearls that turn into healthy eyes. When the couple awakens from their dreams and find that Qian Gui has her sight, they are thrilled to be able to see each other. In this scene, Qian achieves a transformation—from being a pearl covered by dust or defiled courtesan, to being a shining pearl, or virtuous office-wife. Qian's blindness had provided her with a unique way to discover an appropriate lover. The blindness/brightness analogy also refers to Zhong Qing who found a chaste wife from within the courtesan business. Both of them now have eyes that aid them in identifying the pearls in life.

Guwangyan's sophisticated representation of the pearl motif and courtesan life was significantly influenced by Feng Menglong's vernacular short stories. I specifically want to explain the inter-textual connection between Qian Gui and Zhong Qing's story and the canonical courtesan story "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger," part of the *Sanyan* collection.[309] As can Qian Gui, Du Shiniang can be related to the theme of

[309] Du Shiniang is the heroine of the late Ming story "Du Shiniang nuchen baibaoxiang" in Feng Menglong's *Jingshi tongyan*, vol.32. She falls in love with Li Jia, a talented but weak-willed man

the pearl. The "Du Shiniang" story illustrates the sharp contrast between Du's worth as a pearl and the ignorance of her lover, Li Jia, who fails to recognize it. When Li Jia tries to collect money to help Du escape from the brothel, his friend claims that they probably need to give plenty of pearls and thousands of gold to Du's mother. Li's friend has clearly identified Du's financial value to the reader. Later when Du Shiniang feels extremely disappointed and plans to drown herself in the river, she throws many pearls into the water. She denounces Li Jia by saying, "I have jade in my chest, and I am frustrated that you [Li Jia] have no eyes [to see it]." (妾櫝中有玉，恨郎眼內無珠)[310] Du Shiniang claims that she has authentic feelings for Li Jia and her treasures could make a decent life for them. She offers herself as the pearl to Li Jia, but her lover cannot understand it and betrays their relationship. In the ending of the story, the author comments that although Du Shiniang had been a chivalrous courtesan she could not find a good husband since she misread Li Jia. If we interpret Du Shiniang and Li Jia's story from a perspective of blindness vs brightness, it is not difficult to see that blindness and misrecognition exist in both characters. Li Jia is presented as a blind character that could not see the value of Du Shijiang. Du is also portrayed as a blind heroine since she refuses to face the weakness and inconsistence of her lover. Li mentions various times that he cannot marry a courtesan, given that his father would think it against the family rituals. Du still believes that Li is a dependable lover. The story is presented in a sorrowful light

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of letters. He purchases her freedom—with her capital—but as they are making their way south towards his hometown, he lets a merchant who has his eyes on Du Shiniang for himself talk him into selling her, for fear of his father's reaction when he shows up with a woman of such compromised status. Realizing how wrong she has been to entrust her love to such a weakling, Du Shiniang commits suicide.

[310] Feng Menglong, *Jingshi tongyan*, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe 1996), vol.32, 460.

with much regret for the blindness of both partners. Readers can continuously recognize the hesitations of Li Jia and the reservations of Du Shijiang. Neither has a clear idea of what kind of person they love and what a common future together might look like. *Guwangyan* adopts the pearl motif from the "Du Shiniang" story but modifies the dualism of blindness and brightness in the characterization. Even though Qian Gui was blind, she knew how to select a man who would satisfy her emotional needs. In order to make their relationship more convincing, *Guwangyan* simplifies Zhong Qing's relationship with his patriarchal family. We can point out that in Du Shiniang, the beautiful, chivalrous, and romantic female character is presented to be the pearl, while in *Guwangyan*, Qian Gui's acute sense of insight in choosing a lover and the mutual sentiment between Qian and Zhong becomes the pearl.

The courtesan narrative factor in *Guwangyan* represents Cao Qujing's interpretation of the scholar and beauty genre and the sentiment involved in a literati's marriage. Cao Qujing believed that the main pillars in a companion marriage involving a courtesan are not only the devotion of the female, but also the presence of a liberal and independent hero. Du Shiniang's tragic life was a result of her short-sightedness, self-cheating, and ineffective communication. In presenting Qian Gui's feelings, Cao attempts to explore the ways of protecting and maintaining a courtesan's love in a domestic relationship. Zhong Qing demonstrates the liberal Daoist attitudes toward the physical body; thus he does not regard Qian's business life before marriage as a humiliation. It is quite natural for them to enjoy sensual pleasures before the official marital rituals. After they are married, the couple becomes mutually supportive. Qian Gui supports all her husband's career pursuits, even his final withdrawal from politics. Zhong Qing's friends,

fellow merchants, landlords, and phony officials smoothly accept Qian Gui and her courtesan history. Qian Gui and Zhong Qing's acute perception in finding each other and the persistence of their romantic relationship help to make their pearls obtainable. By manipulating and repacking the courtesan stories in *Guwangyan*, Cao Qujing establishes his own personal discussion of a courtesan's marriage which was very different from the historical and fictional narratives of that time.

6.3 Ramifications of the Daoist Concept in Marriage

In *Guwangyan,* Zhong Qing is mainly portrayed as a typical Confucian scholar, through which Cao Qujing uses his marriage to demonstrate the importance of Confucianism in family relationships, such as domesticating romantic sentiment within a ritual propriety and maintaining loyalty to both the lover and the state. However, during the Qing period, the uncertainty of the self-sage ideology actually opened up a space for another consideration, Daoism. *Guwangyan* explores the ramifications of Daoist concepts within the marriage relationship. I particularly illustrate two types of the ideal lives related to the concept of Daoist thought in *Guwangyan*. For literati-scholar the ideal life refers to keep a distance from the political struggles during the dynastic crisis and enjoy a harmonious marriage. For the merchants or people of other social standing, the ideal life refers to follow the Daoist practice of sexuality and longevity.

The pursuit of Daoist ideas in a scholars' life is authentically demonstrated by Zhong Qing's best friend, Mei Gen 梅根. Mei was a schoolmate of Zhong in their youth. In contrast to Zhong who wants to get a degree and find an official position in the government in order to serve society, Mei Gen does not have a strong political ambition.

He is more concerned with his personal life and the life of his family. He had a pretty wife called Ms. Xue 雪氏 who had a talent for composing poetry. Their friends at the time often wrote poetry to acclaim their marital relationship. Sadly, Ms. Xue passed away quickly one summer from a fever. Mei Gen was brokenhearted and became emaciated after her death. The narrator comments that Mei Gen resembled Xun Can 荀粲 who also felt sad at the loss of his wife. Xun Can (209?-38, courtesy name Fengqian 奉倩) was a scholar of the Three Kingdoms Period (220-80). He was also a devoted husband in *Shishuo xinyu* (世說新語, A New Account of the Tales of the World, written by Liu Yiqing 劉義慶, 420-581). The story of Xun Can in this tale is that as his wife lay sick with a high fever, he went out to the courtyard, froze himself, returned to her bed, and pressed his chilled body next to hers trying to reduce her temperature. She died, and shortly after so did he. Xun Can became an example to all loyal husbands. Yet from the point of view of the literati contemporary to Xun , he was perceived as a slightly negative and weak-willed man. His story was subsequently included in the section titled "Delusion and Infatuation" (*huoni* 惑溺) in *Shishuo xinyu.*[311] Adopting a similar plot from *Shishuo xinyu*, *Guwangyan* demonstrates a much more positive attitude towards a devoted husband. Mei Gen is portrayed as a firm man who is not mocked by his literati friends.

By utilizing Mei Gen's second marriage as an example, *Guwangyan* demonstrates the scholar's political marginalization and how he practices Daoist pursuits

[311] Liu Yiqing, *Shishuo xinyu* (Beijing:Zhonghua shuju,1999), 578-79. For an English translation of the story, see Richard B. Mather, trans., *A New Account of Tales of the World* (University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 522-23. For the discussion about Xun Can and his family life, see Howard L. Goodman, *Xun Xu and the Politics of Precision in Third-Century AD China* (Boston: Brill, 2010), 59-62.

in his marital life. Chapter 9 of *Guwangyan* introduces Mei Gen's second marriage. Ms. Li 李氏 has been a beautiful widow since her husband passed away three years earlier. Since her first husband was illiterate and only interested in gambling and sexual pleasure, she attempts to search for a better man who is well educated. As Zhong Qing's neighbor, Ms. Li discovers that Zhong is a virtuous and industrious scholar, she visits his house and proposes to him. Regrettably Zhong already regards Qian Gui as his wife, he rejects Li's proposal, but agrees to introduce her to his best friend, Mei Gen. When Mei and Li meet, they are both impressed with each other's beauty and, consequently, get married. As in his devotion in his first marriage, Mei is satisfied with his second wife. He even decides to cancel an opportunity to attend the civil service examination to instead enjoy his marriage at home. The narrator comments that "it is not necessary to become noble to enjoy a happy marriage; it is preferable to become a pair of mandarin ducks rather than a fairy." (得成比翼何須貴，願做鴛鴦不羨仙)[312]

Almost all literati exemplified by Mei Gei and the similar fictional characters exhibit a spiritual connection to Daosim, by keeping a distance from the political struggles of the time and by enjoying a reclusive way of life. In chapter 23, Mei Gen passes the triennial provincial imperial exam. Zhong Qing believes that Mei should definitely go to the capital and take the palace examination in order to get an official position. But Mei Gen explains that he chose instead to stay in Nanjing. Mei explains that he only attended the exam to complete his learning debt since he had studied the official text materials for many years. No matter whether he passed the exam or not, he would not try again. He goes on to explain that the current political state of affairs was already in

[312] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.9, 1139.

jeopardy. He did not want to become another corrupt official, only to become a figurehead without any power. Since he is not formally a military official, he could not go into battle and fight for the state. Thus, it made no sense to become a member of the government. Mei Gen uses a conventional metaphorical idea to illustrate the powerlessness of working for the government "when the mansion is falling, a single post cannot bear the burden." (大廈將傾，非一木所能支)[313] He goes on to point out that the state did not belong to the Ming Empire; therefore he prefers to travel around his hometown with Zhong Qing, rather than participating in a declining government. Compared to Zhong, Mei Gen is portrayed as a more politically detached scholar who is always aware of any political chaos while he enjoys his socially reclusive way of life. Mei Gen's role models are two famous poet/painters from the late Ming period, Tang Yin 唐伯虎 (1470–1524) and Zhu Zhishan 祝枝山 (1460-1526). Both had passed the civil service exams but neither attained top level positions. Instead, both devoted their energy to literati painting and calligraphy. Mei Gen agrees that the reclusive way of life is much more enjoyable than the pursuit of success, fame, wealth, and nobility (*gongmingfugui* 功名富貴). This particular attitude towards the social trend reminds readers of another reclusive character in Ming-Qing period fiction, Wang Mian 王冕 in *Rulin waishi*. In the first chapter of *Rulin waishi*, the main character, Wang Mian, is described as a self-taught painter and scholar who prefers to live in nature rather than be involved in the pursuit of

[313] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.23, 2792.

wealth and notoriety. The beginning song lyric in chapter 1 demonstrates the fragile emptiness of chasing success, fame, wealth, and nobility in society. [314]

Guwangyan not only presents Daoist ideology in the literati's political and family life but also demonstrates how persons of other social status benefit from practicing Daoism. Cao Qujing was interested in the physical application of Daoist ideas, especially those related to the sexual manual, which the author believes is helpful in the maintenance of a healthy marriage. The author points out the therapeutic and transformative effects of employing erotic sentiment (*yinqing* 淫情)[315] in a marriage, which could change a shrew into a virtuous wife. This was a different viewpoint than that of other novels which presented the shrew as an unemotional, crude, and animalistic woman. *Guwangyan* presents the sexual and psychological reasons that go into making a woman become a shrew. Cao Qujing illustrates the transition of one couple, Jia Wenwu 贾文物 and Ms. Fu 富氏, to demonstrate his interpretation of a woman's jealous and violent behavior. Ms. Fu is ten years older than her husband, Jia Wenwu. In the earlier stages of their marriage, Ms. Fu was portrayed as a shrew who would beat her husband severely when he seduced their maids. In view of the fact that Ms. Fu's sexual needs were not satisfied by her husband, she treated him and his parents in a shrewish way. The transition happens when a Daoist master gives some special medicine to Jia Wenwu which could enlarge his penis and strengthen his sexual capabilities. The master explains

[314]The first song lyric in chapter 1of *Rulin waishi* is: Men in their lives go on different ways; Generals, statesmen, saints and even immortals begin as ordinary people. Dynasties rise and fall, mornings change to evenings; winds from the river bring down old trees from a former reign; And fame, riches, rank may vanish without a trace. Then aspire not for these, wasting your days; but drink and be merry, for who knows where the waters carry the blossom cast over them? *The Scholars* (Beijing: Foreign Language Press, 2004), 3.

[315] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.15, 1803.

to Jia that it was very dangerous if one could not satisfy one's wife, since "the nature of the *yin* is suspiciousness, [women] believe that men show less affection to their wives when they love others. If a woman has this mind set, she will become rude and jealous." (陰性多疑，以為男子之心移愛於他人，故在他身上情薄，此心一起，悍而又至於妒)[316] Jia Wenwu takes the medicine to enlarge his penis and serves his wife completely. Ms. Fu changes her attitude towards her husband and her husband's teenage lover, even encouraging her maids to sleep with her husband. Ms. Fu becomes an exemplary wife of a Confucian polygamous family. This couple shows the importance of erotic emotion, demonstrating the interactive relationship of sex to love. The novel shows that the best way to cure the behavior of a shrew is to satisfy her erotic desires. When a shrewish woman obtains sexual satisfaction she will turn into a good wife.

In summary, I have demonstrated how the author explores the two aspects of Daoist thought within a marital relationship. Both literati scholars and common merchants can attain a harmonious marriage through the practice of Daoism. Yet, *Guwangyan* demonstrates a profound apprehension of late Ming period politics and the author worried about how to produce a narrative balance within the family unit when the dynasty was declining. These are some of the main concerns in the latter part of this novel.

6.4 Dynastic Fall and Family Continuity

In this section, I will introduce how the author portrays family unification and stability within a larger social landscape. *Guwangyan* shows that due to military disasters,

[316] Ibid.

political struggles, the emperor's incapability, and officials' internal fighting, the family system was being threatened. In order to maintain a harmonious family, literati officials needed to withdraw from their government positions. Through paralleling episodes of a scholar's political retreat and family reunions, *Guwangyan* emphasizes that one possible way of surviving amid social chaos is to live a reclusive life. Furthermore, in this fictional turbulent world, the author believes, the local gentry community could help support the idealistic household that reflects a mixture of Daoism and Confucianism. The narrative pendulum swings between a realistic description of the social chaos and an idealistic depiction of family stability. The contrast between the realistic and idealistic tones of the narrative not only demonstrates the author's uncertainty and anxiety about the relationship between family and state, but it also inspires readers to explore their individual interpretation of the novel.

In Tina Lu's analysis of the late Ming and early Qing period short stories, she mentions two ways of presenting the dynamic relationship between a family reunion and a dynastic fall. One approach is her belief that the decline of the state is directly related to the uncertainty of the family reunion. In late imperial vernacular fictions, the dynastic collapse forced many couples to be separated and a reunion of the couple became unthinkable. When the Ming Dynasty fell in 1670, the aftermath created stories about the separation of family members indirectly due to the loss of dynastic order. Lu points out that the early Qing period collections *Zuixing shi* 醉醒石 (The Sobering Stone, late 1640s) and *Doupeng xianhua* 豆棚閒話 (Idle Talk under the Bean Arbor, c.1668) contain no stories about separated families reuniting. It was no longer conceivable to put the lost world back together again. This destruction of the family is a direct result of the fall of

the state. In contrast to this, other literary texts use the military and political crisis of the state as an opportunity for the reunion of a family. “Shengwo lou” 生我樓 (The House of My Birth) in Li Yu’s *Shi’er lou* collection and “Luanli” 亂離 (Chaos and Separation) in Pu Songling’s *Liaozhai zhiyi* demonstrate the author’s creativity in portraying a family reunion during the state crisis.[317] Similar to Li Yu and Pu Songling’s exploration of the possibility of a family reunion within the dynastic fall, Cao Qujing, in *Guwangyan,* is interested in exploring family cohesion in a dynastic crisis.

Before mentioning how the novel explores ways of maintaining family stability and continuity, it is indispensable to introduce the large political and military landscapes drawn by Cao Qujing. Starting in chapter 16 through to the end of *Guwangyan*, the geographic setting of the narrative becomes much broader than in previous chapters. Once Zhong Qing had passed the civil service examination and planned to take the capital exams and obtain a government position in Beijing, Zhong Qing, his family and friends in Nanjing had more opportunities to explore other parts of the empire. Several episodes are situated in Nanjing, Beijing, and in the water traffic through the Grand Canal. Readers have a concrete picture of the political corruption and resulting struggle during the Chongzhen period, which was the last regime of the Ming dynasty. Simultaneously, the narrator introduces the military troops of Li Zicheng that inhabited several provinces in China. Li Zicheng’s soldiers frequently kill the residents of entire cities, rape the women, and plunder the villages. In chapters 21 and 22, *Guwangyan* broadly demonstrates the violence of the Li Zicheng rebellion. When Li attacks Fengyang county

[317] Tina Lu, *Accidental Incest, Filial Cannibalism, & Other Peculiar Encounters in Late Imperial Chinese Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center; Distributed by Harvard University Press, 2008).

he and his solders continue to rape women. His men force family members to watch their daughters or wives being raped by his soldiers. The novel covers the era when Ming military officials, peasant rebellion troops, local Ming loyalists, and the Manchu military were allied as one force. The latter part of *Guwangyan* presents a panoramic picture of a declining royal court as well as violent military battles detailed with vital information concerning times and locations relative to the political events. Within such a turbulent society, it is fortunate that Zhong Qing, Mei Gen, and their friends have stable households and by joining together via inter-marriage they are able to support each other through the social chaos.

Chapter 16 is the most representative chapter in *Guwangyan* demonstrating the parallels between political withdrawal and family reunion. The main settings of chapter 16 are two capitals of Ming dynasty: Beijing, Nanjing, and the Grand Canal, which is the most important waterway between the north and south. Several important cities that border the Grand Canal such as Qingjiang pu 清江浦 (Jiangsu province), Wangjia ying 王家營(Jiangsu province) and Zhangjia wan 張家灣 (Beijing) frequently appear in this chapter.[318] Readers get a clear picture of how the southern scholars, mainly from the Jiangnan areas, travel north to the capital city for their political duty and later return to their southern hometowns where they retreat or retire. The novel introduces the critical transportation centers where traveling officials go to rent a boat or switch to horseback after boating. These transitional traffic centers become places where current or resigned officials exchange conversation, venting their frustration, anxiety, and opinions

[318] On the importance and administration of the Grand Canal in the Ming dynasty, please see, Timothy Brook, *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China* **(**Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), Introduction, 1-8.

concerning politics. This chapter demonstrates how, during the Chongzhen period, the political situation becomes more and more turbulent and the traffic of officials around the Grand Canal is simply a reflection of this unstable court. Three officials experience political frustration and return to Nanjing from Beijing. One is Zhong Qing who submits a proposal to the Chongzhen emperor suggesting the emperor change the supervision policy within the military troops. The Chongzhen emperor gets extremely upset by the proposal and ousts Zhong Qing from his position. Another official, Guan Jue 关爵, attempts to support Zhong Qing by criticizing Chongzhen's behavior as rude and compares him to other notoriously violent emperors, King Jie of the Xia Dynasty 夏桀 (1728–1675 BCE) and King Zhou of the Shang Dynasty 商紂 (1075–1046 BCE). Guan Jue loses his official title and returns to his hometown. The third official, Cheng Guoxiang 程國祥, who in the past had obtained help from one of Guan Jue's ancestors, so wants to show his support for Guan that he resigns his position. The three officials are regarded by people as upright and honest officials (*qingguan* 清官) who had worked in public positions for many years, but had not saved much money because their lack of corruption. Both Guan Jue and Cheng Guoxiang have no property and live in poverty after they lose or resign their positions. These faithful and honest officials find it hard to serve the government or support the emperor. Travelling via the Grand Canal, Zhong Qing, Guan Jue, and Cheng Guoxiang return to their southern hometown from the capital city. If the reader regards the state as a corporal body, the traffic on the Grand Canal is implicitly presented to resemble the main artery of the body. When these honest officials can no longer maintain their duty and consciously withdraw from their positions, the illness of the political body of the Ming Empire becomes serious.

In comparison to the political frustration in the state center, the life in retreat from an official position actually becomes an opportunity for Zhong Qing to encounter the reunion of a family. During his travels home from Beijing to Nanjing, he encounters one family reunion and the establishment of a new family. Zhong Qing's concubine, Dai Mu 代目, is reunited with her family. Dai had been sold to Qian Gui's family when she was a little girl and became Qian's maid. She had no connection with her parental family for many years. When Zhong Qing begins to look for a boat returning to Nanjing, the boat company manager surprisingly discovers that Dai Mu is his long lost daughter. Thus Dai Mu has an opportunity to be reunited with her parents and grandparents. At the same location, Zhong Qing meets Ms. Xi 郗氏, a woman he had saved from suicide in chapter 9. Ms. Xi is thrilled to reencounter her old benefactor and introduces him to her second husband and their children. Even though Ms. Xi is not Zhong Qing's actual family member she treats Zhong with great respect and regards him as a brother. Throughout his travels home, Zhong Qing witnesses the reunion of his concubine's family and the reestablishment of his quasi-sister's family. This association between the withdrawal from an official office and family stability is repeated in later chapters. In chapter 21, Jia Wenwu also has an opportunity to be promoted to an official in the military due to his charity during a rebellion. Jia accepts the official title but refuses to embrace his official duties. His preference is to stay in Nanjing and enjoy his family life. Zhong Qing's best friend Mei Gen also quits his official position after obtaining a degree. Almost all the main male characters in *Guwangyan* consciously choose to stay in the Jiangnan area to maintain their ties to local community rather than get involved in the political struggles of Beijing. Through crossing marriage relationships, the families of Huan E, Tong Zida, Jia

Wenwu, and Zhong Qing establish a strong kinship bond, becoming a stable social community in contrast to the breakdown of the larger political and social orders.

Several main characters in *Guwangyan* not only change the power balance in their own household but also become avid supporters of the stability of marriage within their local community. Chapter 20 introduces several family reunions relevant to Huan E who helped re-stabilize the fragmented family. One specific case demonstrates how the author explores the power of the local elite to lend support to the marital relationship. Ms. Qu 屈氏 and her husband were once the children of literati officials. After Ms. Qu's parents-in-law pass away, her husband gets involved with gambling and loses the family respectability. When Huan E meets with Ms. Qu, she has been sold by her husband to one of his tenants. Huan E thinks of a helpful plan to rescue her. He first contacts the local magistrate to close the gambling house. Huan E then gives some money to Ms. Qu and her husband to buy basic food and living resources. He also buys back the clothes that Ms. Qu has previously sold to the pawnshop. Huan's kindness and generosity give Ms.Qu and her husband a feeling of having been appreciated. They assume that Huan E will sleep with Ms. Qu as compensation. However, the unexpected element of this story is that even though Huan E often visits their house, gives them money, food, and clothing and has some intimate conversations with Ms.Qu, he does not want to sleep with her. As the narrator points out, Huan E treats Ms.Qu very amiably but does not cross any boundaries. (待這屈氏十分親厚，只是不及於亂)[319] At dinner one night, they drink some wine with their food. Ms.Qu gives herself to Huan E, but is surprised to find that Huan E has contained his desires for her, even though his physical desire almost makes him lose

[319] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.20, 2498.

control. He explains his intentions to remain pure. He simply wishes to help her and does not desire her body. Their friendship continues because Huan E believes Ms. Qu's husband still has a future, and he does not want to humiliate him. Ms. Qu is very touched by Huan E's explanation, and she admits that she wanted to show appreciation to him by offering her physical body, yet his explanation clarifies their relationship, which means they should not cross any boundaries. She plans to regard Huan E as a father figure. Huan accepts her proposal and introduces Ms. Qu and her husband to his family members.

This episode represents the transformation of Ms. Qu and Huan E's relationship from a possible extramarital affair to one of an adopted father and daughter. The narrator continuously praises Huan E's character and decision. As I have noted previously, the social background of this episode is chaos. The emperor, peasant rebellion troops, and officials could not create a regulated, peaceful society. Even though it is a turbulent society (*luanshi,* 亂世), Huan E keeps a calm and regulated mind. Huan E is a good example of survival within turbulence. The author uses the mutual sentiment that exists between a father and daughter to legitimate their intimate gender interaction. In addition, another interpretation of the father and child relationship from conventional Chinese culture is implied in the episode. Local officials are generally regarded as parents of the people. They are called "parent officials" (*fumu guan*, 父母官). When Huan E turns into the adopted father of Ms. Qu, the implication is that he could be regarded as a local official who does not fully perform conventional duties. When several local families obtain help from Huan E and stabilize their families, Huan E actually behaves like an exemplary official. Huan E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wen Wu continue to help one another. It is evident that in their mutually connected group, they could evade both the officials'

corruption and Li Zicheng's troops. In a period when plenty of families suffered death, rape, and fragmentation, the author attempts to offer another alternative space that could possibly allow local gentry families to survive as well as maintain Confucian values.

Ultimately, Cao Qujing attempts to provide a relatively isolated community composed of the main characters of the novel to illustrate the disjuncture between family and state. The state has failed, but the family unit continues. The narrative demonstrates that retreating from a chaotic social life may be one way to maintain family stability which in turn echoes the Daoist pursuit of a detached way of living. In comparison to *Yesou puyan* the male protagonist establishes a harmonious polygamous family that in turn affects the politics and provides a stable state. Cao Qujing demonstrates a realistic portrayal of the declining dynasty. The continuity and stability of the family only exists in his imaginary gentry community.

CODA

This dissertation offers a broad reading of *Guwangyan* and systematically demonstrates how to interpret the textual body, corporeal body and politics of the novel. This dissertation illustrates that the textual body is aesthetically organized and, likewise, incorporated with a moral concern. Cao Qujing adopts the karmic retribution to help incorporate his moral system into the novel. The phenomenon involving crimes of desire (*se* 色), lasciviousness (*yin* 淫), and chaos (*luan* 亂) existed in previous dynasties and will continue on after the Ming dynasty.

Guwangyan is concerned with the dichotomy between desire and lust. The concept of desire is closely related to *qing*, which can be largely related to romantic sentiment (*enai* 恩爱), appreciated sentiment (*enqing* 恩情) or even sexual sentiment (*yinqing* 淫情). Consequently, according to the novel a harmonious, conjugal relationship is the best way to reflect these desires. The concept of lust is seen as closer to physical intercourse between two sexual partners without mutual sentiment. *Guwangyan* represents a world that is filled with the chaos of desire and lust. When the male characters get married to their lovers or establish the *yin-yang* balance within their households, the desire is stabilized and channeled into marriage. However, this stabilization of desire within the household does not solve the problem of lust and licentiousness in late Ming society. The characters that are obsessed with lust deserve a karmic penalty, and a state that is controlled by an immoral emperor and his officials is destined to decline.

The narrative structure of the novel is divided into three parts. The first part reflects *yin-yang* imbalances involving desire, lust and chaos as totally jumbled, and the fictional world is filled with negative *yin* energy. The second part of this novel reflects the transitional process by which the main characters establish sexually harmonious families. As soon as the male characters reestablish their authority within the family, their shrewish wives turn in to model wives, therefore representing positive *yin* energy. Near the end of the second part, *yin-yang* balanced families are established within the four main families, and desire is incorporated into conjugal sentiment. However, the stabilization of desire could not change the chaos of the existing lust and political corruption. The last part of this novel demonstrates the fate of its evil characters, who cannot control their desires and end up with death as their punishment. It appears that the text does not pay attention only to the decline of the Ming dynasty. The licentious and chaotic lives of corrupt political figures repeat in future dynasties. The characters do not change the fate of the falling dynasty, yet the Confucian values and morals are maintained in a harmonious local gentry community. In addition to the narrative structure, my dissertation explores the importance of characterization and character type in the novel. Body, sex and desire play pivotal roles in depicting the complexity of the characters. This dissertation demonstrates how the author utilizes *yin-yang* symbolism in depiction of the character's gender identity, social status and in representation of their complexity, interiority and duplicity. I propose that although *Guwangyan* demonstrates a broad spectrum of unnatural and illicit sexual behaviors, it is the power of chastity, faithfulness, and loyalty that are the most significant concern of the narrative. The

narrator continuously pushes readers to figure out the virtuous characters' moral pursuits within a decadent dynasty.

Furthermore, this dissertation provides an analysis of the two important thematic concerns of *Guwangyan*, which are masculinity and family. The representation of masculinity in *Guwangyan* can be comparatively analyzed with the contemporary work, *Yesou puyan*. Both novels emphasize the importance of orthodox, heterosexual marriage within the confirmation of male heroic identity. *Yesou puyan* portrays a Confucian superhero that has six wives and establishes a harmonious polygamous family that helps lead him to an official position in a fictional Ming empire. *Guwangyan* also portrays a Confucian scholar who has a faithful wife and demonstrates his talent in a government position. However, in comparison to the superhero in *Yesou puyan*, the main male characters in *Guwangyan* demonstrate more frustration, transformation and development. Zhong Qing, the Confucian hero in *Guwangyan*, gets help from his friend Mei Gen and becomes an honest legal official. Unfortunately, the late Ming corrupt bureaucratic system convinces him to give up his political ambitions. He instead chose a Daoist reclusive way of life. In the beginning, other main characters, Huan E, Tong Zida, and Jia Wenwu are portrayed as henpecked husbands who are suppressed by negative *yin* energy at home. *Guwangyan* shows how they obtain more power from sexual medicine or religious masters that in turn help them reestablish the *yang* authority in their homes. *Guwangyan* demonstrates a literary exploration of channeling the desires of homosexual relationships into the orthodox heterosexual marriage. My last point relating to *Guwangyan* is that the concept of Daoism entered late into the imperial literati's life. I suggest that *Jin Ping Mei*, *Guwangyan* and *Honglou meng* reflect three different opinions

of how to define sexuality and desire from the perspective of religious beliefs. *Jin Ping Mei* mainly focuses on the decadent power of lust and desire. The entire household of Ximen Qing is destroyed by the uncontrollable desires of both male and female protagonists. The Confucian idea of connecting the self, household and state is reflected in *Jin Ping Mei*. *Guwangyan* and *Honglou meng* can be regarded as the texts that present solutions to the chaotic human desires described in *Jin Ping Mei*. *Guwangyan* provides the answer from Daoist ideas by depicting the body, corporeal pleasure and the therapeutic power of sex in the vernacular narrative. Cao Qujing presents a fiction where the main characters enjoy sex within the boundaries of happy marriages and emphasizes that the constructive power of desire is inseparable from the sentiment. *Honglou meng* provides a solution from the perspective of Buddhism that explores the practice of spiritual love in the fictional world. I propose *Guwangyan* presents the idea of a utopian world where families can enjoy a *yin-yang* harmony, very much in contrast to the chaos of the late Ming political society. Therefore the two worlds in *Guwangyan* are the fantasized, harmonious households and the chaotic late Ming society.

With the development of the print industry in the Ming-Qing period, vernacular novels were circulated around the entire state and readership became greatly expanded compared to earlier times. One important concern of novelists and literati critics at that time was how to avoid "mis-reading" and hopefully guide readers to access the "right" reading. During that time it was common to have a novel mis-interpreted. The author of *Guwangyan*, Cao Qujing, also mentions three ways of reading his novel. He divides future readers into three groups. The first group is the literary reader who can appreciate the connection of the narrative sections and the contrastive representation of the

characters. The second group is the curious reader who can access the moral message presented in the novel. They are not ideal, but acceptable. The third group of readers is those who think the novel is vulgar and should save their time by not reading it.[320] Cao Qujing understood perfectly that "misreading" was inevitable and some people would very likely "misread" his work as nothing more than an erotic novel. Zhang Zhupo also mentions the potential good readers for *Jin Ping Mei*, According to Zhang Zhupo concerning *Jin Ping Mei*, he pointed out that anyone who doesn't know how to write a literary work (*buhui zuowen* 不會做文) should not read *Jin Ping Mei* since they probably could not fully understand the intentions of the author and aesthetic innovation of the novel. The good reader would enjoy the literary value of the novel and could give a critical and moral judgment to the characters.[321] An erotic novel can be understood in an anti-erotic way by a good reader. Both Cao Qujing and Zhang Zhupo understood that the novels could be misunderstood. Readers might be obsessed with the detailed descriptions of sexuality or the vulgar language. They hope through offering an appropriate guide to reading, the aesthetic value of these novels could be retained.

Cao Qujing understands the value of *Jin Ping Mei* and uses the traditional tool of adopting sexuality to help develop the characters and present the political crisis in his fictional writing. Apparently, Cao Qujing regards himself as the *zhiji* and appropriate reader of *Jin Ping Mei.* Yet, Cao Qujing was nervous about future readers of his novel. Although at the beginning of *Guwangyan* he hopes that he could find those readers who would understand the true essence of his book, by the final chapter, he adopted a first

[320] Cao Qujing, *Guwangyan* , ch.1, 67.

[321] The detailed discussion of late Ming and Qing reading of *Jin Ping Mei* can be found in Naifei Ding, *Obscene Things : Sexual Politics in Jin Ping Mei* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002).

person voice to acknowledge the author's bitterness and frustration in finding those appropriate readers. In the "Self Preface" of *Guwangyan*, Cao Qujing claims that

> Everything can be absurd to others within the entire universe. Alas, I wrote the book. Who does not regard it as preposterous? I have to name it "nonsense words". The people who understand my heart (*zhixinzhe* 知心者) will decide absurd or not absurd.
>
> 蓋宇宙之內，彼此無不可以為妄。嗚呼！況予之是書，孰不以為妄耶？故不得不名之妄言也。然妄乎不妄乎，知心者鑒之耳.[322]

In this brief announcement Cao Qujing provides a rhetorical question. He confirms that the concept of absurdity is comparative and anything can be regarded as preposterous from some perspective. His book could be nonsense too. Whether future readers can discover sense from his non-sense words depends on future readers' capability of reading his heart. Simultaneously this announcement also reflects his anxiety that his novel would be mis-interpreted. At the close of the novel, the author averts his focus to the self-satisfaction of writing rather than pursuing the ideal reader. Cao Qujing writes "I know that the story is real, so I compose this volume(s) in order to entertain the readers. Yet, few readers trust it and more readers criticize it. I have to claim that this is a book of nonsense words. I have another eight lines, cannot be called as poems, yet can also be called preposterous words. (予固知此事鑿鑿，故著成一帙，以娛觀者之目。但信之者少，非之者眾，故不得不為之妄言也。) [323] Cao Qujing adds a poem at the ending of his novel:

[322] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.1, 65.
[323] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.24, 3048.

In order to pay for the gentlemen who understand me, my heart is only given to the heaven.

When awake I felt extreme sorrow for the vernacular thing, when I was drunk I had more new ideas to add to the story.

I am excited to talk aloud about the argument of Liu Zhou 劉晝 (550-577),[324] and I am sad to sing the song of Ning Yu 寧俞(770-476 BC).[325]

The nonsense words are just more discussion by others, but I feel comfortable staying in the nest of my own heart.

為報諸公識我麼，我心惟只與天那。
醒觀世俗傷心重，醉著新編入意多。
興到高談劉子論，悶來豪放寗生歌。
妄言一任他人議，且自優遊安心窩。[326]

This poem represents the contrast between the author's friends who can understand what's in his heart and the readers who might have various opinions of his novel. The author believes that there are some readers who do really understand him and ultimately, his heart is communicable with heaven. His novel involves his sorrow concerning current sensual issues and fantasized innovation. The last two lines of this poem reflect the author's casual attitude—readers may decide for themselves whether they should take his stories of the supernatural seriously. They also register the author's indifference about the reception of his work. Cao Qujing wants to emphasize that the novel allows the

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[324] Liu Zhou 劉晝 (550-577), also called Liu Zi 劉子, was a writer of the Northern Qi 北齊 during the Southern and Northern dynasties. He is claimed to be the author of the *Liuzi* 劉子, a book of ten volumes.

[325] Ning Yu 寧俞 (770-476 BC) was a high level official in the state of Wei 衛 during the Spring and Autumn period.

[326] Cao, *Guwangyan*, ch.24, 3048.

possibility of reading and (mis)reading. Either way, he has already found comfort and satisfaction through his writing. My own writing offers a new reading of *Guwangyan* and invites the future reading and misreading of the text.

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