THE *QI* MONISTIC VISION IN LATE IMPERIAL CHINESE LITERATURE

by

JINSU KIM

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Student: Jinsu Kim

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This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the the Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures by:

Maram Epstein	Chairperson
Luke Habberstad	Core Member
Ina Asim	Core Member
Ning Ma	Core Member (The University of Minnesota)
Dong Hoon Kim	Institutional Representative

and

Andrew Karduna	Interim Vice Provost for Graduate Studies

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Division of Graduate Studies.

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Jinsu Kim

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This dissertation examines the material and corporeal configurations of the moral self in the Chinese literary tradition from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Unlike the modern Western understanding of morality as an abstract valence produced by the interiority of a rational self, the Chinese fictional narratives of this period exhibit a shared propensity for exteriorizing morality in the material and corporeal realms.

In terms of intellectual history, this physio-moral representation marks a reaction against the established earlier metaphysical system, known as Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism, which divided the cosmos between a transcendental, purely moral reality and a material counterpart susceptible to moral corruption. The narratives that I identify as illustrating this new monistic worldview reject dualism and present a physical world that is morally self-complete, in which the corporeal and the material regulate the moral order through their inherent mechanisms.

The late imperial promotion of corporeality and materiality is indebted to a philosophical paradigm shift, later called *qi* monism. *Qi* monism challenged the earlier dualistic model by claiming that the phenomenological world possessed an intrinsic moral capacity. The monistic narratives that I examine go beyond being mere fictional adaptations of a Confucian discourse. They appropriate Buddhist and Daoist elements and

shape them into a syncretic vision.

The *qi* monistic vision as a literary concept challenges the current scholarly approach that reduces subjectivity to an inner psychic state. This dissertation argues that a holistic conception of Chinese subjectivity, in which the moral, the material, and the corporeal are inseparable, was more prevalent in late-imperial fiction than current scholarship recognizes.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Jinsu Kim

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, East Asian Languages and Literatures, 2021, University of Oregon
Master of Arts, Chinese Literature, 2012, Seoul National University
Bachelor of Arts, English Language and Literature and Chinese Language and Literature, 2009, Seoul National University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Late Imperial Chinese Fiction
Intellectual History of China

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, 2015-2021

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Graduate Dissertation Fellowship, Oregon Humanities Center, University of Oregon, 2019

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To my beloved parents.

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CHAPTER I

PHILOSOPHICAL *QI* MONISM AND *QI* MONISTIC VISION

This dissertation examines fictional representations of the *qi* monistic worldview. Emerging in the sixteenth century, a group of fictional texts exhibit a shared tendency to depict the world as a summation of *qi*. More specifically, the texts exhibit at least three qualities: First, they share a new outlook on the phenomenal world as the only horizon of being, without postulating anything exterior to it. The world operates according to its own inherent mechanism that denies any existence of a force that transcends the empirical world. Second, this self-complete ordering of the world consists of a series of interplays between affective personalities and material substances. An individual's affective activities—both sentimental and corporeal—and the world's material movements—both potential and actualized—influence one another in mutual reciprocations. *Qi* mediates the reciprocations via its physical traversal between and symbolic value-conversion of the two agents.[1] Third, the spontaneous ordering of the world necessarily entails sustainability in moral terms. Affective and material agents participate in the morally-oriented cosmos, with their intrinsic moral potentials. The affective body regulates an individual's inappropriate desires, reshapes moral dispositions, and invites moral

[1] The semantic boundaries of *qi* range from "energy and matter" to "psychic, emotional, spiritual, numinous, and even 'mythical'" (Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985], 181). In its practical usages, *qi* refers to "a complete integration of material and spirit" either in their mutual collaboration or in tension (François Jullien, *Procès ou création: une introduction à la pensée des lettrés chinois* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1989], 151). For more discussions of the meaning of *qi*, see Fukui Fumimasa 福井文雅, "Seiyō bunken ni okeru 'ki' no yakugo 西洋文献における「気」の訳語," in Onozawa Seiichi 小野沢精一, Fukunaga Mitsuji 福永光司, and Yamanoi Yu 山井湧 eds. *Ki no shisō: Chugoku ni okeru shizenkan to ningenkan no tenkai* 気の思想—中国における自然観と人間観の展開 (Tokyo: Tōkyō Daigaku Shuppankai, 1978), 557-567.

practices. At the same time, the material constituents of the world move to maintain and recover the moral order by reacting to human activities, providing them with or depriving them of corresponding values. By "*qi* monistic vision," the key term in my study, I refer to these fictional attempts to construct the morally self-complete cosmos through the conflation of the affective and material agents.

Undoubtedly, the *qi* monistic vision as a shared thematic awareness in late imperial narratives relates to the *qi* monist idea that appeared in the history of Confucian philosophy.[2] Retroactively assigned various names by modern historians of thought—including "*qi* learning" (*qi xue* 氣學), "*qi* philosophy" (*qi zhexue* 氣哲學), "*qi* discourse" (*qi lun* 氣論), "the discourse of *qi* as the origin" (*qi ben lun* 氣本論), "the discourse of *qi* as the noumenon" (*qi benti lun* 氣本體論), "the monism of principle and *qi*" (*li qi yiyuan lun* 理氣一元論), and "*qi* monism" (*qi yiyuan lun* 氣一元論)—this stream of late imperial Confucian philosophy emerged in the sixteenth century in opposition to earlier dualist outlooks of the Cheng-Zhu 程朱 and heart-mind schools. These schools divided the cosmos into transcendent noumena such as principle (*li* 理) and heart-mind (*xin* 心), which are purely moral, and their phenomenal counterpart, *qi*, which is susceptible to moral corruption in its engagement with human affect. Instead, *qi* monism proposes an

[2] Scholarly consensus indicates Zhang Dainian's 張岱年 (1909-2004) *Zhongguo zhexue dagang* 中國哲學大綱 (*An Outline of Chinese History*; written in 1936; revised and published by Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan in 1958) as the beginning of the twentieth-century research on the *qi* monistic idea. Zhang modifies the traditional binarism of Confucian tradition as principle learning (*li xue* 理學) and heart-mind learning (*xin xue* 心學), trisecting it by adding *qi* learning to the existing two. For the history of the studies of *qi* monist thought in twentieth-century China, see Guo Qiyong, ed., *Dangdai Zhongguo zhexue yanjiu (1949-2009)* (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2011), 201-213. For Western works from a similar period, Alfred Forke's (1867-1944) *Geschichte der neueren chinesischen Philosophie* (*History of Modern Chinese Philosophy*) shows one of the earliest occurrences of the term "monism." Describing Ye Ziqi 葉子奇 (fl. 1378) and Luo Qinshun 羅欽順 (1465-1547), Forke uses the term, "realistic monists" (*realistische Monisten*). Alfred Forke, *Geschichte der neueren chinesischen Philosophie* (Hamburg: Cram, de Gruyter & Co., 1964), 332.

idea of the monistic world that has its origin and driving force in the self-generative and self-regulating capacities of *qi*.[3]

In order to make a distinction between *qi* monistic representation in fiction narratives and the philosophical discourses of *qi* monism, I use the term "vision" for the former. This choice has to do with a cross-ideological nature shared by *qi* monistic narratives. The texts examined over the following three chapters demonstrate a heretofore unrecognized discussion of the *qi* monistic idea, one that existed outside the Confucian boundary of *qi* monist discourse. Apart from and aligned with the Confucian outlook, writers of fiction developed their own *qi* monistic discourses, incorporating ideas from Buddhism, Daoism, and popular beliefs, and thus negotiated with Confucian norms. Therefore, my term "vision" here implies that the *qi* monistic discourses in fiction are by no means reducible to Confucian formulations. Rather, this vision embraces ideological diversity, exploring a broad spectrum of late imperial designs of the cosmos, not confined to a single ideological system.

The term "vision" answers to two possible criticisms my research here might invite. The first such criticism might call into question the identity of the present project as a literary study: would *qi* monistic narratives not simply be a fictional annotation or

[3] In this dissertation, I make a distinction between *qi* learning and *qi* monism. "*Qi* learning" generally refers to the neo-Confucian approval of *qi* as an original substance, while, in using "*qi* monism," I delimit a more specific tradition of thought that defines *qi* as a phenomenal substance, complete in and of itself. By this definition, *qi* monism does not include Zhang Zai's 張載 (1020–1077) thought that partially endorses the noumenal state of *qi*. For more about the transcendent nature of Zhang Zai's *qi*, see Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, *Xinti yu xingti* 心體與性體, vol.1 (Taibei: Zhongzheng shuju, 1968), 459-506. Mou argues that Zhang Zai's concepts of spirit (*shen* 神) and vacuity (*xu* 虛), which he uses in defining *qi*, move his *qi* away from the phenomenal realm. Irene Bloom reads Zhang Zai's transcendentalism from the aspect of Luo Qinshun's understanding. This essay claims that Luo Qinshun understood Zhang Zai as a dualist; for example, Bloom identifies the Supreme Vacuity (*tai xu* 太虛) as a transcendent noumenon, equivalent to Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130-1200) principle. Irene Bloom, "On the 'Abstraction' of Ming Thought: Some Concrete Evidence from the Philosophy of Lo Ch'in-shun," in William Theodore De Bary and Irene Bloom, eds. *Principle and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 89-90.

supplement to the philosophical question of *qi* monism? And, therefore, would a study of the *qi* monistic vision not be merely a variation of the philosophical investigations, only made distinct by its focus on fictional narratives? The cross-ideological concern of the *qi* monistic vision answers any such skepticism by marking out a new third territory unclaimed by either philosophical *qi* monism or its dualist predecessors. Compared to *qi* monism as a Confucian philosophy that mainly developed discourses on the source of morality, the *qi* monistic vision as a narrative discourse covers broader categories across a larger number of topics. It not only expresses the moral concerns of philosophical *qi* monism—e.g., how the cosmic moral principle operates in the material world—but also addresses the interplay between human affect (as an embodiment of *qi*) and the material world (as another embodiment of *qi*). Most distinctively, the *qi* monistic vision describes the real world in history. Unlike the universal discourse of philosophical *qi* monism, *qi* monistic narratives sketch out the ways in which humans as moral agents affect and are affected by specific historical and cultural contexts. In these ways, the *qi* monistic vision supplements the lack of *qi* monism as a Confucian discourse, which is confined within its ideological and genre boundaries.

In contrast to the first potential criticism, the second stems from a possible over-emphasis on the embracive nature of the *qi* monistic vision: could it not be said that the representation of *qi* in these texts, rather than engaging a philosophical problem, merely resolves a question universally found in all fiction of how to represent the body and material objects in a narrative form? In fact, this study moves beyond material and corporeal embodiments of *qi* in order to show that fictional texts worked to represent objects as morally self-sufficient. In other words, the *qi* monistic vision deals not just

with a strategy to resolve problems of narrative, but, more importantly, a representation of a moral order. This thematic concern with moral order is at the heart of the *qi* monistic vision. The affective and material desires of humans that impair the initial moral and material order of the cosmos also recover it.

Nevertheless, the *qi* monistic vision has an inherent tension that makes it unable to ever be completely free from such criticisms. In particular, its obvious thematic affinity with philosophical *qi* monism means that however vehemently one might advocate the exclusive representational value of the vision, it remains fundamentally inseparable from philosophy. This is true at least in the practical sense that philosophical *qi* monism makes clear the theoretical boundaries of the issues in *qi* monistic narratives. For such an issue, for example, to where moral capacity is located, philosophical *qi* monism offers a valid theoretical arena to draw on. This is all the more true of other salient concepts posited by narratives including nature (*xing* 性) and affect (*qing* 情). Philosophical *qi* monism vividly maps out the intellectual terrain underlying these concepts, fixing the vision at the interface of literature and philosophy.

The convoluted relationship between the fictional *qi* monistic vision and philosophical *qi* monism constitutes the overall concern of this introductory chapter. I will first give an overview of philosophical *qi* monism, focusing on factors that make *qi* monism definable as an intellectual stream in the Confucian tradition: its criticisms of previous neo-Confucian traditions, the key concepts with which *qi* monism establishes its system of thought, and the trajectory of its internal development. Then, I will introduce the essential narrative mechanism of the *qi* monistic vision, discussing how this narrative vision appropriates philosophical discourses of the *qi* monistic world and what

contemporary cultural transformations incubated the narrative vision.

In the following three chapters, I will read late imperial fictional narratives that feature the mechanism of the *qi* monistic cosmos. These narratives come from differing periods (the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, respectively), ideologies (Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, respectively), and sub-genres (the long novel, classical tales, and the medium-length novel, respectively). Despite their differences, these fictional texts share common depictions of a self-sufficient moral universe wherein corporeality and materiality act as major participants and mediators.

In Chapter 2, I analyze the house motif employed by *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅, late sixteenth-century) in the context of Buddhist soteriology. This chapter argues that the house signifiers in the text imbue the body and money with moral capacity in order to pave the way for the redemption of the central protagonists. As prescribed by conventional ethics, corporeal and material sources often induce characters to engage in corruption. However, these same sources also promote redemptive rebirths, since they allow corrupted characters to accrue wholesome karma through their occasional expenditures in financing houses for others and as accommodating their reincarnations through pregnancy, which recasts the female body as a salvific house-space. In the midst of institutionalized transgressions and stringent karmic punishment, money and bodies reveal a soteriological thematic layer in their engagement with houses.

Chapter 3 examines two Daoist-themed classical tales, “Qing’e” 青娥 and “Wang Cheng” 王城 from Pu Songling’s 蒲松齡 (1640-1715) collection *Strange Tales from Liaozhai* (*Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異, 1740). Each story showcases its protagonist’s unvirtuous disposition, obscenity and idleness, respectively. Through their narrative

developments, in which the typically unvirtuous characters not only realize their mundane wishes but also ultimately accomplish their moral transformations, the two texts reclaim bodily dispositions as having a positive potential. The underlying Daoist valorization of spontaneous affects as a natural state theoretically props up the stories' moral rationale. This Daoist tenet accounts for the causal connection between pursuits of desires and the protagonists' seemingly undeserved happy endings. Daoist logic highlights the characters' natural dispositions as the cause of their narrative rewards and imbues these two Daoist stories with an alternative narrative ethics in which the body becomes the source of a moral reparation.

Chapter 4 observes the moral representation of the body in Wu Jingzi's 吴敬梓 (1701-1754) *The Unofficial History of the Confucian Scholars* (*Rulin waishi* 儒林外史, c.1771 to 1779). Unlike the hermeneutic traditions for reading this novel that emphasize the text's satirical descriptions of corrupted Confucian scholars, my interest lies in how this novel brings the Confucian theme of good nature into a bodily dimension. Two humoral motifs, phlegm and tears, integrate this concern. Phlegm informs and preempts characters' excesses beyond the boundary of due desire and tears express characters' visceral ritual sentiments, especially spontaneous sympathy for the deceased and the bereaved. By means of these moral-humoral mechanisms, this novel relocates so-called good nature from an abstract inculcation of transcendent principle to the body's own moral capacity.

In Chapter 5, I shift my focus to a discursive dimension, with a particular interest in how to understand interiority in relation to the *qi* monistic vision. First, I will overview three influential studies on *qing* carried out during the past few decades in English-

language scholarship. The scholarly tendency to engage with *qing* as a discourse of interiority confirms the extent to which the *qi* monistic vision serves to expand existing views on late imperial narratives. Following this, I will read Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) famous story "Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" (*Du Shiniang nu chen baibao xiang* 杜十娘怒沉百寶箱). This brief reading of a *qing* narrative will demonstrate that, in the late imperial context, so-called interiority was imagined as consisting of multi-layered strata necessarily inclusive of corporeal and material realms.

Philosophical *Qi* Monism:

Reinterpretation of *Mengzi* and Three Inquires of *Qi* and Morality

There could be little disagreement with the assertion that *Mengzi* was one of the most influential texts for late imperial China. The philological passion of the seventeenth century facilitated an unprecedentedly wide range of scholarly debates on *Mengzi*, both philological and philosophical. As a result, along with the overwhelming proliferation of publications, *Mengzi* enjoyed a distinguished intellectual status that surpassed even the increased attention given to the other Four Books (*si shu* 四書) in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.[4] While philological investigations into *Mengzi* emerged in various forms, ranging from reorganizing the biography of Mencius to redefining the meanings of characters used in the text, a shared underlying concern in these varied attempts propelled

[4] Representative works includes Yan Ruoju's 閻若璩 (1636-1704) *An Investigation of the Dates of Mengzi's Birth and Death* (*Mengzi shengzu nianyue kao* 孟子生卒年月考, 1693), Zhou Guangye's 周廣業 (1730-1798) *Four Investigations on Mencius* (*Mengzi si kao* 孟子四考, 1790), Cui Shu's 崔述 (1740-1816) *Veritable Records of Mencius* (*Mengzi shishi lu* 孟子事實錄, 1821), and Jiao Xun's 焦循 (1763-1820) *The Correct Meanings of Mengzi* (*Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義, 1825). For the details of each of these works, see Liu Jinhui 劉瑾輝, *Qing dai Mengzi xue yanjiu* 清代孟子學研究 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxuan chubanshe, 2007), 221-297.

the late imperial *Mengzi* boom to reconstruct the Confucian tradition. In the collective debate to recover Confucian thought from the Han 漢 dynasty (207 BCE-220 CE), largely as a reaction to the "anti-intellectualism" represented by Yangming 陽明 learning, *Mengzi* offered an ideological arena for this wave of revisionist revivalism through its prominent exploration of the topics of metaphysics and human nature.[5]

Given this general attention during the late imperial period, it is no surprise that *qi* monists often chose *Mengzi* as a common textual venue for their discourses. When they sought to modify existing intellectual traditions, this canonical text was believed to provide sanctioned ground upon which they could build. Especially in the development of their major arguments on the relationship between *qi* and morality and on the moral propensity naturally inherent to the phenomenal self, they found a valid source of authority that would buttress their revisionist concerns in such renowned chapters of the book as "Gongsun Chou 公孫丑 I," which advises the nurturing of *qi* for moral cultivation, and "Gaozi 告子 I," which deals with the issue of the inherent goodness of human nature. Huang Zongxi's 黃宗羲 (1610-1695) *Master's Discourse on Mengzi* (*Mengzi shishuo* 孟子師說, 1680), Wang Fuzhi's 王夫之 (1619-1692) *Discourse on Reading the Great Collection of Commentaries on Mengzi* (*Du Mengzi daquan shuo* 讀孟子大全說, revised 1665) and Dai Zhen's 戴震 (1723-1777) *Evidential Exegesis on the Meanings of Words in the Mengzi* (*Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* 孟子字義疏證, 1777) are

[5] Ying-shih Yu, "Some Preliminary Observations on the Rise of Qing Confucian Intellectualism," *Chinese History and Culture, Volume 2: Seventeenth Century Through Twentieth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 5.

emblematic of the late imperial *qi* monist engagement with *Mengzi*.[6] Under the banner of reading the "genuine" intention of the sage, the authors justified their new theories of moral-metaphysics and human nature within the Mencian conceptual frame.

In fact, reasoning by means of exegesis on classical texts suggests an ideological self-awareness behind the classicist cause of *qi* monists. As the authors above imbued their own discourses with the sage's aura, this necessarily evoked the matter of orthodoxy—did their thoughts reflect the essence of Confucianism? Those traditional writers were fully aware that writing commentary involves an act of locating oneself in the genealogy of orthodoxy or even creating a new orthodoxy. In this light, the textual vestments of *Mengzi* with which they dressed their thoughts were clearly intended to draw on a discursive power beyond being a mere textual source on which to passively rely in justifying their claims. Indeed, the closing passage of Huang Zongxi's work baldly reveals this ambition. Huang embeds himself into the trajectory of the "transmission of *Dao*" (*dao tong* 道統) that he observes within the *Yi Jing* 易經-framed cycle of the cosmic virtues through *yuan* 元, *heng* 亨, *li* 利, and *zhen* 貞:

> Emperors Yao and Shun are the *yuan*, King Tang is *heng*, King Wen is *li*, and Confucius and Mencius are *zhen*. If we were to make judgments about later worthies: Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 and the Cheng brothers are *yuan*, Zhu Xi and Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 are *heng*, Wang Yangming 王陽明 is *li*, and Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周 is *zhen*. Who will be the [next] *yuan* after *zhen*?
>
> 堯、舜其元也，湯其亨也，文王其利也，孔、孟其貞也。若以後賢論，周、

[6] See Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲, *Mengzi shishuo* 孟子師說, in *Huang Zongxi quanji* 黃宗羲全集, vol.1 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1985); Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo* 讀孟子大全說, in *Chuanshan quanshu* 船山全書, vol.6 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1996); and Dai Zhen 戴震, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng* 孟子字義疏證. *Dai Zhen quanji* 戴震全集, vol.1 (Beijing: Qinghua daxue chubanshe, 1991).

程其元也，朱、陸其亨也，姚江其利也，蕺山其貞也，孰爲貞下之元乎?[7]

Despite its rhetorical framing of the question, the final sentence implies the author's assertion. The fact that Huang was a prominent student of Liu Zongzhou narrows down the "*yuan* after *zhen*" to none other than Huang himself.[8] In other words, this claim about the transmission of *Dao* not merely confirms an ideological tradition to which Huang sees himself as belonging but also includes a claim to the legitimacy of his own thoughts as Confucian orthodoxy. Huang envisions the beginning of another new cycle of the Confucian *Dao* 道 in himself.

Huang's self-assertion as a transmitter of *Dao* reflects the discursive identity that *qi* monists tried to establish. They seriously believed and claimed that they were forerunners who were going to found an unprecedented era in the history of Confucianism starkly distinguished from that of their dualist predecessors. The persistent criticism from *qi* monists of the dualistic ideas of the Cheng-Zhu and heart-mind schools props up their strategy for creating a recognizable scholastic identity. When the *qi* monists, including Huang, condemned their dualist predecessors as having been heavily affected, if not contaminated, by unorthodox thoughts from Buddhism and Daoism, this signaled a clear ideological break, marking the great transition of the Confucian paradigm that was just beginning with themselves.

I will trace the theoretical development of *qi* monism below, focusing on the three major inquiries that Huang Zongxi, Wang Fuzhi, and Dai Zhen address in their commentaries of *Mengzi*: first, how they relocated the relationship between principle and

[7] Huang Zongxi, *Mengzi shishuo*, 7.84:166.

[8] Huang Zongxi, *Maengja saseol* 맹자사설, trans. Lee Hyekyung 이혜경 (Paju: Hangilsa, 2011), 516.

qi; second, how they resituated the source of morality inherent to the heart-mind of a phenomenal self by moving the source of morality from a transcendent realm to the phenomenal dimension of the heart-mind; and third, how they integrated the two arenas of the phenomenal heart-mind, sensory perception, and moral recognition to understand the heart-mind as a holistic institution of moral reasoning. The first two issues mainly explain the inquiries of seventeenth-century *qi* monists, Huang Zongxi and Wang Fuzhi, whereas the third touches upon the thought of Dai Zhen, an eighteenth-century *qi* monist. This historical span of *qi* monism shows that *qi* monism is not so much a unitary system of thought as an evolving discourse.

The First Inquiry: Anchoring Principle in Qi

The phrase "one *qi*" (*yi qi* 一氣) clearly articulates the ideological foundation and pursuit of seventeenth-century *qi* monism. For those *qi* monists who criticized the dualism of the Cheng-Zhu and heart-mind schools for dividing the cosmos into transcendent substance and phenomenal entities, thereby failing to posit a complete unity of the self and the cosmos, the phrase "one *qi*" arranges an exclusively circumscribed symbolic space that furnishes their alternative holistic cosmos.[9] Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130-

[9] In its origin, the concept of "one *qi*" is traceable as far back as *Zhuangzi* 莊子. *Zhuangzi* uses the term as it describes the inherent connection of beings and their material and spiritual circulation. An example comes from the "Knowledge Roams North" (*Zhi bei you* 知北游) chapter. As he speaks of life and death as formal variations of *qi*, Zhuangzi integrates his assertion as "one *qi*": "The myriad things are the One. As much of what we find beautiful is deemed daemonic and precious, as much of what we find ugly is deemed foul and rotten. The foul and rotten is transformed back into the daemonic and precious, the daemonic and precious is transformed back into the foul and rotten. Hence it is said: "'Pervading the world there is only the one *qi*.' This is why the sage values the One" (萬物一也，是其所美者為神奇，其所惡者為臭腐; 臭腐復化為神奇，神奇復化為臭腐。故曰: 『通天下一氣耳。』聖人故貴一). Wang Xiaoyu 王孝魚, ed., *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 22:733. Translation from *Chuang-tzu: The Inner Chapters*, trans. A. C. Graham (Indianapolis and Cambridge, MA: Hackett, 2001), 160. For the

1200) view is illustrative of the context in which *qi* monists employ "one *qi*" as a critical intervention. For example, Zhu Xi describes the instantiation of the world with "one principle":

> In the universe, there is only one principle. Heaven receives it and thereby becomes heaven, earth receives it and thereby becomes earth. Likewise, each of all the creatures born between heaven and earth receives it and takes it as their nature [that makes each such and such]."
>
> 宇宙之間，一理而已。天得之而為天，地得之而為地。而凡生於天地之間者，又各得之以為性。[10]

In contrast to Zhu Xi's claim of "one principle" as the foundation of the world, Wang Fuzhi designates "one *qi*" as the essence of the world:

> The entanglement of heaven and humans is [by] none other than the one *qi*. Since *qi* in its state of being good is called principle, outside of *qi* there is no such principle that is isolated and reliant upon nothing.
>
> 天人之蘊，一氣而已。從乎氣之善而謂之理，氣外更無虛托孤立之理也。[11]

The juxtaposition of these two texts articulates two interventions Wang makes from the original context of Zhu Xi. Perhaps most notable is the change from Zhu Xi's "one principle" to Wang's "one *qi*." In an identical context that introduces the single and foremost ("none other than" *er yi* 而已) clause, Wang deploys his "one *qi*" in the place of Zhu Xi's "one principle." The next sentence reifies the meaning of this replacement: in

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historical development of the concept of *qi*, see Zhang Liwen 張立文, ed., *Qi* 氣 (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 1990).

[10] Zhu Xi 朱熹, "Du Daji 讀大紀," in *Zhuzi daquan* 朱子大全, vol. 70 (Taipei: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 5.

[11] Wang Fuzhi, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo*, 10.2:1052.

contrast to Zhu Xi's world where it is the "one principle" that endows entities with substantiality—in other words, where things "receive the principle and thereby become" themselves—Wang's world of "one *qi*" highlights the mutual "entanglement" (*yun* 蘊) of phenomenal entities.[12] The word *yun*, referring to the intertwined shape of overgrown grass, suggests an interlaced image of beings. This becomes clearer in its contrasting pairing with the word "isolated" (*guli* 孤立), with which Wang criticizes the transcendental nature of Zhu Xi's principle. Wang's world of "one *qi*"—to be exact, the principle of the monistic world, the "entanglement"—does not grant anything "isolated" a privileged status, and even rejects principle, because "*qi* in its state of being good" (*qi zhi shan* 氣之善) produces a spontaneous order of the cosmos without relying on a superior moral-metaphysical source.

Another phrase common in the repertoire of *qi* monism, "the principle of *qi*" (*qi zhi li* 氣之理), further evinces the concept of inherent order. The assertion of "one *qi*" necessarily entails the problem of where to locate the ultimate cause that generates and regulates the movement of *qi* once belief in absolute principle is discarded. For this, the *qi* monists found a breakthrough in relocating principle from being a singular entity to a quality implicit in entities. In other words, principle no longer functions as an *a priori*

[12] The tradition of *qi* learning attributes the concept of *yun* to Zhang Zai. The first words of *Zheng meng* 正蒙 which integrate his idea of the world presents an ideological archetype of this concept that Wang borrows in his statement above: "That which the Great Harmony calls *Dao* embraces the mutually constitutive process of floating and sinking, rising and falling, and motion and rest. It is the origin of the process of fusion and intermingling, of overcoming and being overcome, and of expansion and contraction" (太和所謂道，中涵浮沉、升降、動靜、相感之性，是生絪縕、相盪、勝負、屈伸之始). In his commentary to *Zheng meng*, Wang interprets "fusion and intermingling" (*yin yun* 絪縕) as "being originally so before the Great Harmony is divided [into *yin* and *yang*]" (太和未分之本然), namely, the potential of the spontaneous dynamics of primordial *qi*. Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, *Zhangzi Zhengmeng Zhu* 張子正蒙注, *juan* 1, *Chuanshan quanshu* 船山全書, vol.12 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1996), 15. Translation modified from Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), 500.

force that brings about order but is reduced as the order of things *per se*. Wang affirms this changed status of principle in its relationship with *qi*:

> Principle is none other than the principle of *qi*. That *qi* manifests in an appropriate way is principle. Principle does not precede [*qi*], while *qi* does not follow [principle].
>
> 理即是氣之理，氣當得如此便是理，理不先而氣不後。[13]

Obviously, Wang's claim, "principle does not precede [*qi*], while *qi* does not follow [principle]" constitutes a complete rejection of Zhu Xi's dualist hierarchy of principle and *qi*, as when he says "in light of origin, it is deemed that principle precedes [*qi*] while *qi* follows [principle as its origin]" (推上去時，卻如理在先，氣在後相似).[14] Wang disapproves of this so-called "principle is prior to *qi*" (*li xian qi hou* 理先氣後) framework, an established core idea in the neo-Confucian outlook. Instead, Wang reconstructs principle as a phenomenal entity retroactively reorganized through the operation of *qi*.[15] He argues, "How can there be so-called principle apart from [*qi*]? Principle refers to *qi* manifesting in order (*li*)" (天下豈別有所謂理，氣得其理之謂理也).[16] Although Wang sometimes employs the term "presider" (*zhu zai* 主宰 or, simply, *zai* 宰), which dualists use to emphasize the transcendent status of principle, its connotation in Wang's *qi* monistic context is not so much a transcendent ruler as it is an

[13] Wang Fuzhi, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo*, 10.2:1052.

[14] Li Jingde 黎靖德 (fl. 1263) and Wang Xingxian 王星賢 eds., *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, *juan* 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 3.

[15] Translation for *li xian qi hou* is from Ming-huei Lee, *Confucianism: Its Roots and Global Significance*, ed. David Jones (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2017), 57.

[16] Wang Fuzhi, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo*, 10.6:1058.

inherent process. The passage in which Wang explains the anthropomorphized concept once again in terms of "the principle of *qi*" clarifies this changed status of principle as a "presider":

> The empty and numinous presider is equipped with all principles. That which are principles originally imply that principle rules over *qi*—that principle rules over *qi* refers to the orderly arrangement of *qi*. Therefore, when [it is said that] principle rules over *qi*, such principle exists only by depending on *qi*. This is why speaking of principle while discarding *qi* fails to access principle [in its genuine sense].
>
> 虛靈之宰，具夫眾理，而理者原以理夫氣者也 (理治夫氣，爲氣之條理)，則理以治氣，而固托乎氣以有其理。是故舍氣以言理，而不得理。[17]

As Wang's argument exemplifies, the principle of *qi* monism is not a distinct agent but a state inherent to *qi*. It represents an order displayed in the phenomenal movement of *qi*.

The "principle of *qi*" is as provocative in its moral implications as in its metaphysical subversion because it redefines principle to shift the *a priori* moral ideal to an empirical good. This idea that the source of morality lies not beyond but within the empirical realm must have been strange, especially to those who held the cardinal Confucian virtues of benevolence (*ren* 仁), righteousness (*yi* 義), propriety (*li* 禮), and wisdom (*zhi* 智) as transcendental sources of morality that could exist even outside of human practices. Huang's extensively demonstrated concern with the empirically reconstructed good reflects this situation. In his *Mengzi* commentary, Huang grapples with the problem over a considerable number of passages. His main question on this matter is this: If principle no longer exists as the transcendent substance, how can we

[17] Wang Fuzhi, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo*, 3.5:923. Huang Zongxi's following statement echoes Wang's thought above: "A presider is not outside of [*qi*'s] operation in flux, but is the operation orderly arranged" (主宰不在流行之外，即流行之有條理者). Huang Zongxi, *Mengzi shishuo*, 1.9:61.

define it with regard to the quotidian realm of human activity? Or, simply put, where can we see and grasp the phenomenal morality?

His commentary on *Mengzi* 4A:27 illustrates his concern. Reading a passage from *Mengzi* that states, "the reality of benevolence is serving parents. The reality of righteousness is to follow older brothers" (仁之實，事親是也。義之實，從兄是也), Huang singles out the recurring word *shi* 實, and recasts it as "reality," and finds that the phenomenal reality of moral virtues referred to by the term is at stake in the sage's intention:

> Benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and music are all empty terms. When humans are born and fall to earth, there are only parents and siblings. Because [everyone] is equipped with a piece of this inseverable *qing* from birth, this is called reality (*shi*) and, as a result, those terms benevolence and righteousness eventually came to exist. … Earlier Confucians often reversed logic, thereby resulting in making principle and *qi* two discrete things."
>
> 仁、義、禮、智、樂，俱是虛名。人生墜地，只有父母兄弟，此一段不可解之情，與生俱來，此之謂實，於是而始有仁義之名。… 先儒往往倒說了，理氣所以為二也。[18]

The word "reality" encapsulates Huang's argument in this passage. In contrast to the "empty names" (*xu ming* 虛名) of "the earlier Confucians," Huang argues, the specific empirical sphere is the only container for morality. The family illustrates this dynamic: one is born into cardinal relationships with parents and siblings, and these primary human relationships have a *qing* that supports Huang's moral reality.

From the perspective of intellectual history, Huang's emphasis on "reality" has a

[18] Huang Zongxi, *Mengzi shishuo*, 4.27:101-102.

conceptual lineage traceable to Zhu Xi's earlier interpretation of the same word.[19] In his commentary on the above passage from *Mengzi*, Zhu Xi reads *shi* as "fruit," by which he highlights the externalization, visualization, and phenomenal realization of moral principle. This by no means signifies that Zhu Xi endorses the phenomenal nature of the moral virtues. Conversely, his stress lies in arguing that empirical good is no more than a manifestation of the transcendental ideal. Huang's reinterpretation of *shi* is, therefore, mainly focused on undermining the transcendent source of good that Zhu Xi presupposes:

> "As far as I think, the word *shi* here is that as we say "empty and reality," not that of "flower and fruit." The [concepts of] benevolence and righteousness are empty (*xu*) and [the acts of] serving parents and following older brother are real (*shi*). Benevolence and righteousness are invisible, whereas to serve parents and to follow older brother are visible. … How can there be such floral beauty [as Zhu Xi says]?"
>
> 愚按，此「實」字乃是虛實之實，非華實也。蓋仁義是虛，事親從兄是實。仁義不可見，事親從兄始可見。… 何華采之有?[20]

Huang's discussion of empirical good is echoed in his commentary on Mengzi 6A:6, in which Mencius identifies the moral qualities of the heart-mind—pity and

[19] The specific passage goes as following: "when the word *shi* is mentioned vis-à-vis name, it refers to the *shi* as we say 'name and reality.' When it is mentioned vis-à-vis principle, it refers to the *shi* of 'the fact of an event.' When it is mentioned vis-à-vis flower, it refers to the *shi* of 'flower and fruit.' The word *shi* here [in the passage of *Mengzi*] is not the *shi* of 'name and reality' and 'the fact of an event' but indeed the *shi* of 'flower and fruit.' The empirical manifestations (*shi*) of benevolence in its original sense is nothing but serving parents, and is extended to loving others and benefit things, which is none other than the benevolence. The empirical manifestations (*shi*) of righteousness in its original sense is nothing but following older brothers, and is extended to being loyal to the ruler and being respectful to the elderly, which is no other than the righteousness. To serve parents and to follow brothers are the empirical manifestations (*shi*) of benevolence and righteousness, and to extend [these virtues] is the floral beauty of benevolence and righteousness" (「實」字，有對名而言者，謂名實之實；有對理而言者，謂事實之實；有對華而言者，謂華實之實。今這實字不是名實、事實之實，正是華實之實。仁之實，本只是事親，推廣之，愛人利物，無非是仁。義之實，本只是從兄，推廣之，忠君弟長，無非是義。事親從兄，便是仁義之實；推廣出去者，乃是仁義底華采). *Zhuzi yulei*, *juan* 4, 1333.

[20] Huang Zongxi, *Mengzi shishuo*, 4.27:102.

commiseration, shame and dislike, respectfulness and reverence, and the sense of right and wrong—with the four cardinal Confucian virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. Huang reaffirms his thesis of the phenomenal good by arguing that such perceivable affective states of the heart-mind as those Mencius points to are the only grounds on which we can discuss morality.[21] In critiquing the way the Cheng-Zhu school dichotomizes moral nature into transcendental nature (*xing*) and phenomenal affect (*qing*) and projects the four virtues and moral states of the heart-mind onto each state, Huang emphatically maintains that the so-called moral nature is inseparable from its affective states:

> In fact, Mencius's words are clear and simple. Because the manifestations of pity and commiseration, shame and dislike, respectfulness and reverence, and the sense of right and wrong are named as benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, nature [represented by these four virtues] is invisible once apart from *qing* [exemplified by the former mental states]. And because benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are the names retroactively coined, [Mencius] thus says "benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are rooted in the heart-mind." If benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom existed as separate sources [of morality] prior to pity and commiseration, shame and dislike, respectfulness and reverence, and the sense of right and wrong, then [Mencius] would have said that the heart-mind is rooted in benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. Therefore, the two words, nature and *qing*, cannot be divided. This is the claim that principle and *qi* unite as one.
>
> 其實孟子之言，明白顯易，因惻隱、羞惡、恭敬、是非之發， 而名之為仁義禮智，離情無以見性。仁義禮智是後起之名，故曰「仁義禮智根於心」。若惻隱、羞惡、恭敬、是非之先，另有源頭爲仁義禮智，則當云心根於仁義禮智矣。是故「情性」二字，分析不得，此理氣合一之說也。[22]

[21] The original text of *Mengzi* is "The mind of pity and compassion is benevolence, the mind of shame and dislike is righteousness, the mind of respectfulness and reverence is propriety, and the mind that knows right and wrong is wisdom" (惻隱之心，仁也; 羞惡之心，義也; 恭敬之心，禮也; 是非之心，智也). *Mengzi*, ed. Wan Lihua 萬麗華 and Lan Xu 藍旭 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 245. Translation modified from Irene Bloom, *Mencius*, ed. Philip J. Ivanhoe (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 124.

[22] Huang Zongxi, *Mengzi shishuo*, 6.6:136.

As illustrated here, Huang's monist claim approves no arena of morality outside our affective experience. To postulate another source of morality other than the phenomenal is simply nonsense, Huang maintains, if not evidence of the impact of Buddhist transcendentalism.[23]

Wang Fuzhi develops Huang's affective states of the heart-mind as the phenomenal site of morality by conjuring up the long-deprecated concept of desire (*yu* 欲). Wang posits that desire, one of the apparent forms of affect, grounds morality in the phenomenal dimension and thus completes principle in its monistic reincarnation. Wang argues for the moral engagement of desire through his example of ritual. At odds with the longstanding Confucian belief that desire is a threat to ritual, Wang makes the rather subversive claim that desire ontologically and epistemologically enables ritual:

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[23] Elsewhere, Huang criticizes the proximity of Cheng-Zhu moral transcendentalism to Buddhist thought: "Li Jianluo wrote *The Collection of Words on the Goodness of Human Nature* in which he says, 'To mention only the four [states of the heart-mind that Mencius mentions] such as the heart-mind of pity and commiseration, and so on, cannot completely define nature, because nature is hidden inside.' The old sayings of earlier Confucians are all like this. Accordingly, those who seek nature, without exception, seek it beyond human life, ultimately arriving at where 'the path of the heart-mind is cut off' and being compelled to regard enlightenment as the *ad quem*. Zhu Xi's [claim of] 'sudden unimpeded penetration' is also not immune from falling for this [unorthodox] shortcut. Buddhists say, 'a [transcendent] being is prior to heaven and earth, formless and soundless in its origin. Able to be the master of myriad phenomena, it does not wane over the course of four seasons.' [The claims of earlier Confucians] are just meant to be this, and that is how the boundary between Confucianism and Buddhism became murky. On what basis can we see nature, other than the four sprouts [of the moral states of the heart-mind]? The terms benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom came into being after the [manifestation of] four sprouts. It is not that benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom existed internally [being hidden] before the four sprouts. [The logicians (*ming jia* 名家) who posit] 'a chicken has three legs' and 'a servant has three ears' say "three" in addition to two legs and two ears to denote an [additional] agent who operates them [beyond them]. How would it be different from this if one seeks a [transcendent] thing from the emptiness and privileges it beyond the four sprouts?" (李見羅著道性善編:「單言惻隱之心四者，不可竟謂之性，性是藏之於中者。」先儒之舊說皆如此。故求性者，必求之人生以上，至於「心行路絶」而後已，不得不以悟爲極，則即朱子之「一旦豁然貫通」亦未免墮此蹊徑。佛者云「有物先天地，無形本寂寥；能為萬象主，不逐四時凋。」，恰是此意，此儒佛之界限所以不清也。不知舍四端之外何從見性？仁義禮智之名，因四端而後有，非四端之前先有一仁義禮智之在中也。「雞三足」、「臧三耳」謂二足二耳有運而行之者，則為三矣。四端之外，懸空求一物以主之，亦何以異於是哉). Huang Zongxi, *Mengzi shishuo*, 2.6:69.

> Even though ritual is so pristine that it is a proper norm of heavenly principle, it must reside in human desire to appear. … There is no discrete principle existing apart from desire.
>
> 是禮雖純爲天理之節文，而必寓於人欲以見 … 終不離欲而別有理也。[24]

Obviously, Wang's view of ritual rejects the established neo-Confucian dualism that prescribes "clarifying heavenly principle, and extinguishing human desire" (明天理，滅人欲).[25] Wang's choice of "desire" to argue for the phenomenal base of ritual spells out his antipathy to another transcendentalist rival, Buddhism. In the passage subsequent to the one cited above, Wang opposes the Buddhist doctrine that maintains the need to purge desire, and instead insists on the inevitability of desire for human ethics:

> That principle exists apart from desire is a belief held only by Buddhists. If one dislikes and abandons the material, this will undermine the cardinal human relationships.
>
> 離欲而別爲理，其唯釋氏爲然。蓋厭棄物則，而廢人之大倫矣。[26]

The "law of phenomenon" (*wu ze* 物則) indispensable for "the cardinal human

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[24] Wang Fuzhi, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo*, 8:2, 911.

[25] The passage that contains the saying of Zhu Xi is as follows: "The thousand words of the sages and worthies are nothing but understanding heavenly principle and extinguishing human desire. Because heavenly principle is bright, one originally does not need to learn it. Human nature is bright in its natural state like a precious pearl submerged under turbid water that its brightness is not seen. Yet, once the turbid water is eliminated, the precious pearl will be bright as it was before" (聖賢千言萬語只是教人明天理，滅人欲。天理明，自不消講學。人性本明，如寶珠沉溷水中，明不可見；去了溷水，則寶珠依舊自明). *Zhuzi yulei*, *juan* 12, 207. John Jorgensen finds the rhetorical similarity between the present passage by Zhu Xi and the passage of the *Nirvana Sutra* that alike tropes human nature to a pearl hidden in muddy water, and insists the Buddhist influence on Zhu Xi's thought in the passage. John Jorgensen, "The Radiant Mind: Zhu Xi and the Chan Doctrine of Tathāgatagarbha," in John Makeham, ed., *The Buddhist Roots of Zhu Xi's Philosophical Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 47-49.

[26] Wang Fuzhi, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo*, 8:2, 911.

relationships" (*da lun* 大倫) here specifically refers to affective manifestations that actually generate ritualized relationships. A representative affect, sexual desire enables conjugal relationships, and this in turn generates other relationships, e.g., between parents and children and between siblings, which serve as the actual ground of cardinal ethics, such as filial piety and fraternal love. This desire-generated ethics completes Wang's moral monism. By means of desire, moral virtues exist only in the realm of the material, and the quotidian cardinal relationships become the manifestation of principle.

The Second Inquiry: Locating Morality in the Heart-Mind of Humans

Despite their moral defenses of affect and desire, *qi* monists still needed to struggle with a remaining quandary: how to secure the sustainability of the phenomenal morality of the heart-mind. This question becomes more critical when we take into account the neo-Confucian tradition that long stigmatized the phenomenal dimension of the heart-mind. Commonly termed as *renxin* 人心 ("the heart-mind of humans"), this phenomenal faculty of the heart-mind in its neo-Confucian definition was limited to sensory and cognitive functions. As for the intrinsic moral function of the heart-mind, a discrete moral organ called *daoxin* 道心 was identified. Beyond a functional distinction, this binary framework implies a moral hierarchy. While *renxin* is morally unstable due to its susceptibility to sensory stimuli, *daoxin* as the locus of moral cognition is superior to *renxin*.

Zhu Xi's view is representative. His account of the well-known discourse on *renxin* and *daoxin* that appears in *The Guwen Documents* (*Guwen shangshu* 古文尚書) incarnates the paradigmatic view of Neo-Confucianism. Later known as "The Sixteen-

Character Transmission of the Heart-mind" (*shi liu zi xinchuan* 十六字心傳), the canonical statement of the "Plan of Yu the Great" (*Da Yu mo* 大禹謨) chapter of the *Documents* goes: "*Renxin* is precarious. *Daoxin* is subtle. Have absolute refinement and singleness of purpose. Hold fast the mean"
(人心惟危，道心惟微，惟精惟一，允執厥中). Zhu Xi projects the asymmetric neo-Confucian framework of *renxin* and *daoxin* onto this statement:[27]

> The heart-mind refers to the awareness and cognition of human beings. It is that which presides from the center and resonates with external stimuli. If we speak of that which issues forth from form and *qi*, then we call this *renxin*. If we speak of that which issues forth from right-mindedness and principle, it is called *daoxin*. *Renxin* is vulnerable to being biased and has a hard time being impartial, thus it is insecure. [By contrast,] *daoxin* has difficulty being clarified and is easily obscured, thus it is subtle. … When *daoxin* is the master in constant action and *renxin* follows its commands, the insecure becomes secured, while the subtle becomes obvious.
>
> 心者，人之知覺，主於中而應於外者也。指其發於形氣者而言，則謂之人心，指其發於義理者而言，則謂之道心。人心易私而難公，故危; 道心難明而易昧，故微。… 道心常為之主，而人心聽命焉，則危者安，微者著。[28]

Considering the general influence of Cheng-Zhu ideas on later intellectual developments, the received distinction of *renxin* and *daoxin* was avoidable when the seventeenth-century *qi* monists tried to incorporate the two realms of the heart-mind and establish *renxin* as its one and only realm. Under the situation in which Cheng-Zhu

[27] Translation modified from Benjamin A. Elman, "Philosophy (*I-li*) Versus Philology (*K'ao-cheng*): the *Jen-hsin Tao-hsin* Debate," *T'oung Pao* 69, no. 4/5 (1983), 177. In this article, Elman introduces the hermeneutic history of this passage in detail in My quotation of Zhu Xi's commentary above is also indebted to this article.

[28] Cai Chen 蔡沉, *Shu jizhuan* 書集傳, in *Zhuzi quanshu waipian* 朱子全書外篇, eds. Zhu Jieren 朱傑人, Yan Zuozhi 嚴佐之, and Liu Yongxiang 劉永翔, *juan* 1 (Shanghai: Huadong shifan daxue chubanshe, 2010), 27.

thought attributes moral capacity exclusively to *daoxin*—the "master" of the heart-mind—*qi* monists, including Wang Fuzhi and Huang Zongxi, attempted to revise *renxin* as a moral institution by demonstrating how the cognitive and sensory functions of the heart-mind are engaged with morality.

Qi monists found a solution in the way that Cheng-Zhu itself defines *renxin*. Accepting its existing definition as the psyche's cognitive and sensory functions, they put morality inside the radius of the quotidian operation of *renxin*. The following statement by Wang Fuzhi declares this conceptual reconstruction of *renxin* and *daoxin*: "*Daoxin* by no means separates from *renxin* to appear separately" (道心終不離人心而別出).[29] By reducing *daoxin* from its privileged status as an organ that embodies the sublime morality to being merely one of the functions of the phenomenal heart-mind, *renxin*, Wang erases the longstanding dichotomy of *renxin* and *daoxin*.[30]

Huang's predicate "empty and numinous" (*xu ling* 虛靈) is consonant with Wang's incorporation of *daoxin* into *renxin*. Huang readjusts the *daoxin* of the earlier binary view, which had been used to highlight the morally transcendent nature of the heart-mind, to his own reconstruction in which he emphasizes the ability of moral cognition attributed to *renxin*. The "empty and numinous" describes the moral capacity newly given to *renxin* as the single heart-mind. Words from his commentary to *Mengzi* 6A:11, "Benevolence is [the product of] *renxin*" (仁人心也), illustrate a typical usage of the "empty and numinous." In this statement on *Mengzi*, Huang captures the sage's non-

[29] Wang Fuzhi, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo*, 8.23:946.

[30] The *qi* monist incorporation of *renxin* and *daoxin* differs from Wang Yangming's 王陽明 (1472-1529) project. Wang Yangming's heart-mind monism emphasizes that *renxin* and *daoxin* share the same locus, the heart-mind, but maintains the moral transcendence of *daoxin*. For Wang Yangming's heart-mind monism and its reverberations, see Elman, "Philosophy (*I-li*) Versus Philology (*K'ao-cheng*)," 190.

dualistic conceptualization of *renxin* and describes its faculty of moral cognition as being "empty and numinous":

> Humans are humans because there is no other heart-mind except for pity and commiseration, shame and dislike, respectfulness and reverence, and the sense of right and wrong. … Therefore, [Mencius] said "seek for the lost heart-mind" instead of necessarily saying "seek for the heart-mind of principle and righteousness"; he also said "one has lost the original heart-mind," but had no need to say "one has lost the heart-mind of principle and righteousness," for the heart-mind is principle. The words of Mencius are thus obvious. Why then did later [dualist] Confucians misapprehend *renxin* and *daoxin*, only to bifurcate them, regarding the properties of the heart-mind as limited to empty and numinous awareness, while locating principle in heaven and earth and the myriad things? [As a result,] only after exhausting principle does it become the *daoxin*, otherwise the empty and numinous awareness will end up as *renxin* and nothing more. They did not understand the endowed inner heart-mind and took it as the empty and numinous awareness which is nothing but [the work of the alleged] *daoxin*, and that *daoxin* is the original heart-mind of *renxin* only because of its subtlety is it considered precarious.
>
> 蓋人之為人，除惻隱、羞惡、辭讓、是非之外，更無別心。… 故言「求放心」，不必言「求理義之心」; 言「失其本心」，不必言「失其理義之心」，則以心即理也。孟子之言，明白如此，奈何後之儒者，誤解人心道心，歧而二之，以心之所有止此虛靈知覺，而理則歸之天地萬物，必窮理而纔為道心，否則虛靈知覺，終為人心而已。殊不知降衷而爲虛靈知覺，只此道心，道心即人心之本心，唯其微也故危。[31]

According to Huang, Mencius had only mentioned the heart-mind because he believed that the single heart-mind is the site of both sensory perception and moral cognition. In reference to the sage's words, Huang claims that Zhu Xi's expression "the heart-mind of principle and righteousness" is redundant. There is only one heart-mind. Huang argues the sage never invented a discrete site of moral cognition such as *daoxin*. This holistic capacity of the heart-mind that Huang finds in Mencius's text underlies his claim that

[31] Huang Zongxi, *Mengzi shishuo*, 6.11:141.

"the heart-mind is principle."[32] Insofar as the heart-mind is the sole site of the moral ability of the human, principle as the entirety of morality is located in no other place than in the heart-mind. The heart-mind—to be more exact, *renxin*—thus embodies principle.

Like Huang, Wang Fuzhi also uses "empty and numinous" to refer to the capacity of the heart-mind for moral cognition. Wang makes use of a canonical grounding for his argument about "the innately good heart-mind" (*liangxin* 良心) of *Mengzi* 6A:8. The Mencian term, Wang suggests, signals the sage's approval of the moral capacity of *renxin*:

> Only by mentioning the heart-mind of benevolence and righteousness, [the heart-mind] can be [called] *liangxin*. (To speak of "good" distinguishes [*liangxin*] from a crude [heart-mind] and clarifies [*liangxin*] as being in opposition to an unvirtuous heart-mind). While simply mentioning the heart-mind would indicate no more than such a numinous object, [the heart-mind] can be understood as being good only after being predicated with benevolence and righteousness. The heart-mind is virtuous because it is empty (it does not rely on [other substance] yet can be relied on), is numinous (it has cognitive potential and recognizes both good and evil), is unclouded (it can accurately remember; in general, those that can accurately remember are unclouded), and is thus equipped with various principles (it is not principle by itself but can be equipped with principle) while responding to myriad events (the gains and losses it responds to are not fixed).
>
> 必須說個仁義之心，方是良心 (言良以別於楛，明有不良之心作對)。蓋但言心，則不過此靈明物事，必其仁義而後爲良也。心之爲德，只是虛 (未有倚，然可以倚)、 靈 (有所覺，不論善惡皆覺)、不昧 (能記憶親切，凡記憶親切者必不昧)，所以具眾理 (未即是理，而能具之)，應萬事者(所應得失亦未定)。[33]

[32] While this statement is clearly reminiscent of the well-known thesis of Wang Yangming, Huang presents the heart-mind as embodying principle due to its intrinsic propensity of "empty and numinous awareness." This stance rejects Wang Yangming's dualist position that identifies the heart-mind with transcendent principle. Another declaratory statement by Huang that "the heart-mind is *qi*" (心即氣也) further clarifies the nature of his heart-mind as distinguished from that of Wang Yangming. Explaining the "flood-like *qi*" (*haoran zhi qi* 浩然之氣) of Mengzi 2A:2, he writes: "principle is invisible but is seen in *qi*. [Likewise] human nature is invisible but is seen in the heart-mind. The heart-mind [therefore] is *qi*" (理不可見，見之於氣，性不可見，見之於心。心即氣也). Huang Zongxi, *Mengzi shishuo*, 2.2:60.

[33] Wang Fuzhi, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo*, 10:19, 1077. Comments in parentheses are by Wang.

Wang's "heart-mind of benevolence and righteousness" represents the manifestation of the cognitive function of the heart-mind. By its embracive ("empty") and morally sensible ("numinous") qualities, the cognitive heart-mind enables one to recognize both moral and amoral principles in numerous potential situations ("equipped with various principles").[34]

In addition to the critical appropriation from neo-Confucian dualism, the *qi* monist emphasis on the moral cognition of the heart-mind in its late imperial context implies another ideological tension with the theory of "consciousness-only" (*wei shi* 唯識) in Buddhist idealism. This Buddhist tenet maintains that all phenomena are essentially an illusion made by the cognitive activity of the heart-mind even while the heart-mind is also equipped with the moral faculty to recognize the illusive nature of phenomena.[35] Despite the clarity of the theoretical reference that the Buddhist heart-mind offers to the cognitive faculty of *renxin*, *qi* monists who claimed the status as legitimate heirs of orthodox Confucianism could not directly admit the unorthodox influence of Buddhism.

Huang's interpretation of Mencius's "nurturing *qi*" (*yang qi* 養氣) illustrates the

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[34] Fu Xihong 傅錫洪 holds that *ling* 靈 refers to the active quality of *qi*, especially in its involvements in psychic and spiritual movements. While *ling* is coterminous with *shen* 神 in that they both represent mystical objects and phenomena, *ling* highlights the psychic aspect when compared with *shen*, which highlights the potential of transformation. Fu Xihong 傅錫洪, "Song *dai lixue guishen lun de xing cheng—yi* Zhuzi *'yinyang zhi ling' de guannian wei zhongxin* 宋代理學鬼神論的形成—以朱子"陰陽之靈"的觀念為中心," *Zhongshan daxue xuebao* 中山大學學報, 2018, no.5.

[35] For the Buddhist "consciousness-only" theory and its Chinese adaptation, I referred to Katsura Shōryū 桂紹隆, "Yuishiki to Yugagyō 唯識と瑜伽行" and Yoshimura Makoto 吉村誠, "Chūgoku Yuishiki Shisōshi no Tenkai 中國唯識思想史の展開," in Katsura Shōryū 桂紹隆, Saitō Akira 斎藤明, Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘, and Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士, eds., *Yuishiki to Yugagyō* 唯識と瑜伽行 (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2014).

tension between the unnamed unorthodox influence and his struggle to escape from such influence. Fully aware that his emphasis on the moral recognition of the heart-mind might suggest a Buddhist influence, Huang makes explicit that his concept of moral cognition of the heart-mind is distinct from that found in Buddhist idealism. The "nurturing *qi*" that embraces the prototype of the Confucian heart-mind in its evident engagement with the phenomenal source (*qi*) of morality, Huang insists, has little in common with the Buddhist heart-mind that reduces the myriad into void:

> There is only one *qi* filling heaven and earth and engendering humans and other creatures. Because humans are endowed with this *qi* and thus born, the heart-mind is the numinous place of *qi*. This is so-called, "the perceiving *qi* is on high" [as when *Liji* 禮記 says "The body and the animal soul go downwards; and the perceiving *qi* is on high" (體魄則降，知氣在上)]. When the substance of the heart-mind operates in flux, the operation has an orderly arrangement—this is its nature. … To nurture *qi* is to nurture the heart-mind. Although saying "to nurture the heart-mind" sounds hard to grasp, saying "to nurture *qi*" conveys [such images as] dignified deeds and the breathing during morning and daytime, which are definitely apprehensible and practicable. With [its doctrine of] "clarifying the heart-mind in order to find the [Buddha] nature," Buddhism could not take *qi* as actual and accordingly could not help but trace back to the source of the actual *qi*. The so-called "original appearance," "before birth by parents," and "the road of speech coming to an end and the path of the heart-mind being cut off" are all like this. When Buddhists investigate these topics for meditation, they obstruct the flow of *qi*. While they seek the heart-mind and nature apart from *qi*—I do not know what heart-mind they try to clarify and what nature they try to find.
>
> 天地間只有一氣充周，生人生物。人稟是氣以生，心即氣之靈處，所謂知氣在上也。心體流行，其流行而有條理者，即性也。… 養氣即是養心。然言養心猶覺難把捉，言養氣則動作威儀，旦晝呼吸，實可持循也。佛氏「明心見性」，以無能生氣，故必推原於生氣之本，其所謂「本來面目」，「父母未生前」，「語言道斷，心行路絕」，皆是也。至於參話頭，則壅遏其氣，使不流行。離氣以求心性，吾不知所明者何心，所見者何性也！」[36]

[36] Huang Zongxi, *Mengzi shishuo*, 2:2, 60-61. The phrase "體魄則降，知氣在上" is from the "Li yun" 禮運 chapter of *Li Ji* 禮記. Wang Meng'ou 王夢鷗, ed., *Liii jinzhu jinyi* 禮記今註今譯, vol.1 (Taibei: Taiwan Shangwu yinshuguan, Minguo 67 [1978]), 293. My translation of this phrase is modified from James Legge, *Sacred Books of the East*, volume 28, part 4, *The Li Ki*, 1885. https://ctext.org/liji/li-yun. Accessed January 22, 2021.

Those phrases from the last two sentences, that Buddhists "obstruct the flow of *qi*" and "seek the heart-mind and nature apart from *qi*," represent Huang's criticism of Buddhist idealism. From Huang's *qi* monistic perspective, "to nurture the heart-mind" is possible by means of "nurturing *qi*." Because *qi* relates to those methods for nurturing the heart-mind such as "dignified deeds and breathing during morning and daytime," such Buddhist ways that "seek the heart-mind and nature apart from *qi*" are not only empty but also futile in Huang's view. This does not simply represent Huang's theory of moral self-cultivation. Huang's concern in this passage lies in a more fundamental matter—what the essence of the heart-mind is. Huang mentions "to nurture the heart-mind" in order to assert the heart-mind is nothing but *qi*, and this heart-mind as *qi* demarcates Huang's heart-mind from the Buddhist heart-mind as an abstract spirit. In other words, in Huang's understanding of the heart-mind, "to nurture the heart-mind" requires "nurturing *qi*," a highly concrete, material, and—therefore—phenomenal process, because the heart-mind itself is *qi*. To nurture *qi* has no mystical method that transcends the phenomenal.[37]

The fact that nurturing the heart-mind as *qi* includes moral cultivation summarizes a major theoretical accomplishment of seventeenth-century *qi* monists. If one can develop

[37] The *qi* monist definition of the heart-mind as *qi*, however, cannot justify claims that *qi* monism is a sort of materialism—specifically, Marxist materialism. Supporting the distinction between the two, for example, François Jullien points out that *qi* embraces the potential state prior to its material manifestation and that the human mind is also regarded as a kind of material manifestation. His reading of Wang Fuzhi's thought concludes that *qi* in Wang's thought is not so much materialistic as it is anti-idealistic. In Wang's term, *qi* monism means "priority of the objective over the subjective, of being over thought, of nature over spirit." Jullien, *Procès ou création*, 153. For his comparison of *qi* monism and materialism, see 139-156. Jullien's differentiation of the concept of *qi* from the Marxist notion of materialism contains his criticism of Marxist interpretations of *qi* widely conducted in the Chinese scholarship of the twentieth century. As a forerunner of this paradigm, Zhang Dainian creates correspondences between the major concepts of *qi* learning—including "material manifestation" (*shi* 實), "to exist" (*you* 有), "things" (*wu* 物), "forms of material manifestation" (*qi* 器), "phenomenon" (*xiang* 象), and *qi*—and the phenomenal reality of Marxist materialism. See his *Zhongguo zhexue dagang*.

moral ability by training the heart-mind, the heart-mind has no need to postulate a discrete, *a priori* moral organ such as the *daoxin* as posited by Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucians. Instead, as Huang's claim "to nurture the heart-mind" suggests, moral development is carried out through the movement of the heart-mind, namely, in the course in which the heart-mind is engaged with *qi*, and the engagement is properly regulated. At this point, seventeenth-century *qi* monists including Huang Zongxi and Wang Fuzhi find a way to incorporate *renxin* and *daoxin*. By establishing the heart-mind as a self-cultivatable system in its phenomenal movements, *qi* monists combine the two different kinds of heart-mind of Cheng-Zhu thought, namely, one phenomenal and sensory and the other transcendent and moral, into one single heart-mind as *qi*.[38]

The Third Inquiry: Incorporating the Two Realms of the Heart-Mind

Dai Zhen's work follows the accomplishments of his seventeenth-century predecessors. Although the seventeenth-century *qi* monists brought *daoxin* into the phenomenal domain of *renxin*, the binary conceptualization of the heart-mind still remained: they explained the heart-mind as having two functional realms—the affective and sensory realm and the moral-intellectual realm—and held that these discrete realms assume different roles: one functions for sensory perception and the other for moral cognition. Dai theorized a monolithic model of the heart-mind in which the two

[38] Huang Junjie 黃俊傑 also accounts for the paradigm shift from Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism to the seventeenth-century's *qi* monism with focus on "nurturing *qi*," especially its relationship to "understanding discourses" (*zhi yuan* 知言), featured in *Mengzi* 2A:2. According to Huang Junjie, Zhu Xi grasps "understanding discourses" as a result of the investigation of principle (*qiong li* 窮理) and claims "understanding discourses" precedes "nurturing *qi*," while Huang Zongxi regards "understanding discourses" as a process inseparable from "nurturing *qi*." See "Zhuzi dui Mengzi zhiyan yangqi de quanshi ji qi huixiang 朱子對孟子知言養氣的詮釋及其迴響," Qinghua xuebao 清華學報 18.2 (1988): 305-343.

functional realms are integrated. He reshaped the earlier model of the moral-intellectual realm as relating to the empirical world through the mediation of the affective and sensory realm. In this holistic design, Dai reestablished the moral-intellectual realm not just as a part of *renxin* but also as being functionally connected to other various phenomenal qualities of the heart-mind.

Dai begins his project by interrogating the definition of the canonical term *li* 理, and, at the same time, reshuffles the way in which the heart-mind is related to the newly defined *li*. His redefinition of *li* in the first passage of his *Mengzi* commentary provides the major premise for his overall argument:

> *Li* designates the minute subtleties that must be distinguished according to kind when [something] is examined; thus it is called "distinguishing pattern." With regard to the physical substance of things one speaks of "skin texture," of "capillary passages," and of "structural pattern" ([*Wen li* is] also called *wen lü*, since *li* and *lü* are mutable when spoken) [Comments in parentheses in the original]. As [things] are given differentiation, they have order and are not confused. This is called orderly arrangement [*tiao li*]. … The *Doctrine of the Mean* says: "Closely examining the patterns, one is able to make distinctions." The "Record of Music" says, "Music penetrates the patterns of human relationships." Writing his commentary, Zheng Kangcheng (Zheng Xuan 鄭玄; 127-200) says, "*li* is to differentiate." In the preface to his *Explanation of Words and Elucidation of Characters*, Xu Shuzhong (Xu Shen 許慎; 58-148) says "[The inventor of the script] knew that [from the traces of birds and animals] patterns and order can be distinguished." What the ancients called *li* was never the same as what latter-day Confucians called principle.
>
> 理者，察之而幾微必區以別之名也，是故謂之分理；在物之質，曰肌理，曰腠理，曰文理 (亦曰文縷。理、縷，語之轉耳); 得其分則有條而不紊，謂之條理。… 中庸曰:「文理密察，足以有別也。」樂記曰:「樂者，通倫理者也。」鄭康成注云:「理，分也。」許叔重說文解字序曰:「知分理之可相別異也。」古人所謂理，未有如後儒之所謂理者矣。[39]

[39] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1:1, 151. For the translations of Dai's work in this chapter, I refer to Ann-ping Chin and Mansfield Freeman, *Tai Chen on Mencius: Explorations in Words and Meaning, a Translation of the Meng Tzu Tzu-I Shu-Cheng, with a critical introduction* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990), and John Woodruff Ewell, "Re-inventing the Way: Dai Zhen's *Evidential*

Dai's redefinition of *li* as differentiation between entities and the ensuing sense of pattern this creates demonstrates the radical way his *qi* monism upends the Cheng-Zhu metaphysics of "one principle" (*li yi* 理一). More generally known as "one principle and its divergent manifestations" (*li yi fen shu* 理一分殊), this dualist concept proposes that principle is indivisible in its essential substance even while it takes on various phenomenal manifestations.[40] In subsequent passages, Dai opposes this noumenal definition of principle in Cheng-Zhu metaphysics.[41] He argues that the earlier definition of principle as an abstraction of phenomena is not only far from the concrete reality of things but is also easily distorted by those who insist their mere opinions derive from principle. The recurring phrase that identifies Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucians who regard principle "as if it were a thing received from heaven and endowed in the heart-mind" (如有物焉，得于天而具于心) integrates Dai's criticism on the dualistic view of the "one principle." The following passage illustrates the critical context in which Dai uses this phrase:

Commentary on the Meanings of Terms in Mencius (1777)" (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1990). In cases where I need to reveal the syntax of the original Chinese text in a more literal way, I have modified their translations and used my own. Translation of this passage modified from "Re-inventing the Way," 119-20.

[40] For further explanation of the Cheng-Zhu's definition of *li yi fen shu*, see Irene Bloom, "On the 'Abstraction' of Ming Thought," 95-96.

[41] Yu Ying-shih argues that Dai's definition of *li* reflects a paradigmatic turn in Neo-Confucianism from the tradition of *Dao wenxue* 道問學 (following the path of inquiry and study) to the tradition of *zun dexing* 尊德性 (honoring moral nature). Yu differentiates Dai's *li* that requires "a gradual cognitive process" on "internal texture of things" from Zhu Xi's principle that requires "the moment of sudden enlightenment" on the one universal principle embracing all the principles of myriad things. Yu interprets Zhu Xi's principle in terms of *li yi fen shu*, and finds Dai's innovation in reversing Zhu Xi's thought of *li yi*. My interpretation of Dai's *li* as *fen shu* replacing Zhu Xi's *li yi* builds upon Yu's analysis. See Yu Ying-shih, "Dai Zhen and the Zhu Xi tradition," in Josephine Chiu-Duke and Michael S. Duke, eds., *Chinese History and Culture*, vol.2 (New York: Columbia University Press), 52-53.

> People of former times [prior to the emergence of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism] knew that one's personal opinions could not be called principle, but people today refer to principle lightly. Of those who consider principle "as if it were a thing received from heaven and endowed in the heart-mind," there is no one who does not take his own opinion to be principle. Now if people simply rely upon their own opinions, they will be erroneous. If people seek after their *qing*, they will be right. Zigong asked, "Is there one teaching that one can follow throughout one's life?" The master replied, "Is it not empathetic consideration (*shu*)?" What you do not want, do not impose on others." … Were one to discard *qing* and search for principle, this so-called principle would be nothing but an opinion.
>
> 昔人知在己之意見不可以理名，而今人輕言之。夫以理為「如有物焉，得于天而具于心」，未有不以意見當之者也。今使人任其意見，則謬; 使人自求其情，則得。子貢問曰:「有一言而可以終身行之者乎？」子曰:「其怒乎！己所不欲，匆施于人。」… 苟舍情求理，其所謂理，無非意見也。[42]

Including this passage, the contexts where Dai claims that Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucians regard principle "as if it were a thing received from heaven and endowed in the heart-mind" reveals Dai's thought: Principle is not that which one apperceives based on an individual intuition of transcendent truth but is that which one can retroactively organize from one's concrete experiences of phenomenal objects. *Qing* represents this empirical truth that replaces the abstract "one principle." As illustrated by the passage cited above, Dai designates one's own *qing* as one of the most immediate phenomenal reality from which truth emerges: "If people seek after their *qing*, they will be right." Obviously, Dai's claim of *qing* as a ground of phenomenal truth necessarily invites potential criticism that would then identify *qing* as being more susceptible to possible prejudice than principle would be in the Cheng-Zhu sense. The "empathetic consideration" (*shu*) emerges to resolve this quandary. By understanding others' *qing*, or, more specifically, by thinking

[42] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.5:155. Translation modified from *Tai Chen*, 75, "Re-inventing the Way," 122-123, and Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Three Streams: Confucian Reflections on Learning and the Moral Heart-Mind in China, Korea, and Japan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 55-56.

about the reciprocity between the impacts that one's *qing* will have on others and the impact that others' *qing* will have on oneself, one can find a proper way to realize one's *qing*. This reciprocal understanding enables principle in "divergent manifestations." Given that every human directly and concretely feels *qing* in emotional and affective movements of the heart-mind, it is qualified to be an embodiment of the "divergent manifestations" of principle. At the same time, *qing* can manifest a universal—yet still phenomenal—moral principle through "empathetic consideration." Under the conditions of moral regulation, *qing* also relates to principle. By this dual logic—being a phenomenal affect and involving moral principle—*qing* satisfies Dai's initial definition of *li* as the divided (*fen* 分), the distinguished (*bie* 別), and *an* order like the "pattern" emerging in phenomenal entities.[43]

Dai further develops the same structure of logic in arguing the moral ability of the heart-mind. While he espouses the earlier *qi* monist idea that principle manifests in the intrinsic affective desire of the heart-mind, Dai extends the arena where *qing* or affective desire engages morality from the individual-focused category of the heart-mind to an interpersonal domain, an empathetic function of the heart-mind through which one understands others' *qing*. *Qing* is not only one's affective desire, by this definition, but more importantly one's affective understanding of others' emotions. In order to make a rationale for this affective ethics, Dai recontextualizes his earlier metaphysical connotation of principle—a phenomenal and empirical order produced from division and distinction among entities. He brings the definition into an ontological realm, suggesting

[43] Despite such a conceptual discontinuity between earlier definitions of *li* and Dai's new definition, I refer to Dai's *li* as principle as well for the purpose of the continuity in translation. Equally frequently, I also refer to it as order and a moral order depending on context.

that the division and distinction among humans—to be more exact, the fact that humans have *qing* in their individually divided and distinct beings—serves as a premise for the empathetic consideration of others:

> When I gauge [the response of] others by my own [responses], principle will become clear. The principle of heaven refers to the principle that is divided on the basis of what is natural. The principle that is divided on the basis of what is natural means this: gauging others' *qing* by my own so that there is fairness in every [action].
>
> 以我絜之人，則理明。天理云者，言乎自然之分理也; 自然之分理，以我之情絜人之情，而無不得其平是也。[44]

Through intersubjective understanding, Dai asserts, one can regulate one's own desire, creating moral order between individuals. Dai does not ask how *qing* necessarily results in empathy for others ("gauging others' *qing* by my own") nor, eventually, moral order ("fairness"). Affective understandings of others' *qing* in his logic is deemed to be naturally derived from the thesis that every individual exists being "divided" as an *other* to other people.

In fact, the relationship between *qing* and moral principle can only be understood in the overall structure of Dai's philosophy, especially his argument concerning the heart-mind. Passages subsequent to his argument about the emergence of order on the phenomenal ground of *qing* make manifest that such a moral-epistemology is a result of Dai's monolithic understanding of the heart-mind. In other words, as an individual understands others' *qing* on the basis of one's own affective function of the heart-mind, they ultimately attain the moral order by projecting their own *qing* into its universality

[44] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.2:152. *Tai Chen*, 70.

and thereby controlling themselves. Dai calls each functional division of the heart-mind that constitutes this mechanism—that is, the affective function and moral reasoning of the heart-mind—respectively as blood-and-*qi* (*xue qi* 血氣) and heart-mind awareness (*xin zhi* 心知):

> Flavors, sounds, and colors reside in things but are received by my blood-and-*qi*; principle and righteousness reside in affairs but are received by the heart-mind awareness. Blood-and-*qi* and heart-mind awareness have their own inherent abilities: the mouth is able to distinguish flavors, the ear to distinguish sounds, the eye to distinguish colors, and the heart to distinguish with regard to principle and righteousness.
>
> 味也、聲也、色也在物，而接於我之血氣; 理義在事，而接於我之心知。血氣心知，有自具之能：口能辨味，耳能辨聲，目能辨色，心能辨夫理義。[45]

Beyond articulating the discrete functions of the heart-mind, Dai's focus on blood-and-*qi* and heart-mind awareness also shows that they form an integrated system of the heart-mind. Sensory data obtained through blood-and-*qi* serve as materials for the moral and epistemological judgment of heart-mind awareness. Dai refines his argument with an old analogy about the relationship between the heart-mind and senses:

> The faculties of the ear, eye, nose, and mouth may be likened to the duties of the minister; and the faculty of the heart-mind to the responsibilities of the ruler. The minsters offer their abilities and the ruler judges whether administrations of the ministers are right or not. Principle and righteousness are nothing else; when [the heart-mind's judgment of the actions of the senses] discern whether something is right or not is appropriate, this is called principle and righteousness. However, this is not that the heart-mind puts forth an opinion on [actions of the senses] to being right or not. If the heart-mind puts forth an opinion on [actions of the senses] to be right or not [without depending on the specific materials given by the senses], how would this be different from arbitrary tyranny? Therefore, with regard to

[45] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.6:155. *Tai Chen*, 76 and "Re-inventing the Way," 126-127.

> affairs and things, it is not the case that apart from the affair or thing there is a separate principle and righteousness. "Where there is a thing, there must be a norm," and according to the norm one rectifies the thing. This is all there is to it. With regard to the human heart-mind, it is not that there is a separate principle received (from heaven) and endowed in the heart-mind.
>
> 耳鼻口之官，臣道也；心之官，君道也；臣效其能而君正其可否。理義非他，可否之而當，是謂理義。然又非心出一意以可否之也，若心出一意以可否之，何異強制之乎! 是故就事物言，非事物之外別有理義也；「有物必有則」，以其則正其物，如是而已矣。就人心言，非別有理以予之而具於心也。[46]

In this analogical framework in which a rational ruler judges the actions of his minsters on the basis of the result of their actions, the actions of the minsters are a necessary condition of the ruler's judgment. Likewise, heart-mind awareness carries out its moral-epistemological function only on the grounds of the sensory data received by blood-and-*qi*. Heart-mind awareness neither exerts an "arbitrary tyranny" by "putting forth an opinion" nor depends on a transcendent revelation received and endowed from heaven. Taking *qing* as an example, one's sensory responses to exterior objects—e.g., "flavors, sounds, and colors"—serve as the grounds for heart-mind awareness to reason the same responses of others and regulate one's own affective drives. In this way, the two functional realms of the heart-mind are interconnected at a single stage.

Dai confirms this integrated mechanism of the heart-mind in his advocacy of desire. Just as Wang Fuzhi and Huang Zongxi did, Dai denies the "non-desire" (*wu yu* 無欲) that represents the Cheng-Zhu thesis of self-cultivation under the rationale that it is

[46] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.8:158. *Tai Chen*, 80 and "Re-inventing the Way," 140-141. *Xunzi* exemplifies a prototype of such anatomical imagination of the heart-mind that circulated before the Han dynasty: "The heart-mind dwells in the central cavity so as to control the five faculties—this is called one's heavenly ruler" (心居中虛以治五官，夫是之謂天君). *Xunzi*, ed. An Xiaolan (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2007), 112. Translation modified from Eric L. Hutton, *Xunzi: The Complete Text* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016), 176.

not only impossible but is also contaminated by Buddhist doctrine.[47] Instead, he promotes "lessening desires" (*gua yu* 寡欲):

> Mencius says, "To nourish the heart, there is nothing better than to lessen the desires." He understood that desires cannot be eliminated, (and so advocated) only "lessening them."
>
> 孟子言「養心莫善於寡欲」，明乎欲不可無也，寡之而已。[48]

From Dai's view, the neo-Confucian stigmatization of desire, including that of Zhu Xi, results from an incomplete understanding of principle, not to mention human nature.[49] Because human beings have desire as a natural condition and principle only emerges out of phenomenal conditions, Dai insists, principle necessarily involves desire as an embodiment of the human beings' phenomenal existence.[50] Therefore, Dai argues, the purpose of cultivation should not be to eliminate desire but to control it. In the next passage, following his citation of Mengzi's recommendation of "few desires" above, he relates the regulation of desire to principle:

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[47] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.10:159-161 and 3.8:192. I already introduced Wang Fuzhi's criticism of "non-desire" above in my argument of the first inquiry of *qi* monism. Wang Fuzhi, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo*, 8:2, 911. Huang Zongxi also pays attention to "few desires," differentiating it from "non-desire." Huang Zongxi, *Mengzi shishuo*, 7.80:164.

[48] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.10:159. "Re-inventing the Way," 146.

[49] Zemian Zheng refutes Dai's criticism of Zhu Xi in three points. First, unlike Dai's assertion, Zhu Xi conditionally approves desire. What Zhu Xi objects is its excess. Second, Zhu Xi does not categorically dichotomize desire and principle. Like most of Neo-Confucians, Zhu Xi admits that principle can reside in daily activities. Third, Zhu Xi does not completely exclude desire from principle. Zhu Xi thinks that principle can manifest in desire. See Zemian Zheng, "DAI Zhen's Criticism and Misunderstanding of ZHU Xi's Moral Theory," *Dao* (2015) 14, 440-441.

[50] Kwong-loi Shun compares Dai Zhen's perspectives on desire to that of Xunzi. Shun argues that Dai believes the heart-mind has an inherent ability to discern principle, while Xunzi confines the capacity of the heart-mind in its understanding of ethical requirements. See Kwong-loi Shun, "Mencius, Xunzi, and Dai Zhen: A Study of the *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*," in *Mencius Contexts and Interpretations*, ed. Alan K. L. Chan (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), 233-240.

> Yu directed the rivers so that they moved through places with no obstacles. He did not block off their streams for fear of overflowing banks. As for blocking off streams for fear of overflowing banks, engineers who put forward such theories are actually cutting off the source of the rivers. This is analogous to putting a stop to desires or having no desires. … Heavenly principle refers to desires being restrained, not overly indulged. Therefore, [when it is said that] desires cannot be satisfied without end, it does not mean we cannot have them. To have desires but at the same time to monitor them so that they neither exceed nor fall short of [appropriate] *qing*—can one say that this is not in accord with heavenly principle?
>
> 禹之行水，行其所無事，非惡汎濫而塞其流也。惡汎濫而塞其流，其立說之工者且直絕其源，是遏欲無欲之喻也。… 天理者，節其欲而不窮人欲也。是故欲不可窮，非不可有；有而節之，使無過情，無不及情，可謂之非天理乎![51]

In sum, the phenomenal alignment of blood-and-*qi* and heart-mind awareness comprises an essential part of Dai's reconstruction of the *qi* monistic heart-mind. The sensory and affective functions of blood-and-*qi* provide an epistemological ground on which an individual can think of others' desire and thereby reflect upon their own. By means of this adjustment of the relationship between the discrete realms of the heart-mind, Dai completes his monolithic model of the heart-mind as a key aspect of the phenomenal existence of the human. This monolithic heart-mind marks the point where seventeenth-century *qi* monists, even in their phenomenal establishment of *daoxin*, could not reach.

Dai's redefinition of principle further distinguishes his achievement from that of

[51] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.11:162. *Tai Chen*, 86. "Re-inventing the Way," 158. Dai's analogy of flood unequivocally includes an objection against Zhu Xi. In his well-known analogy of different states of the heart-mind, Zhu Xi uses an analogy of flood: "The mind is water; nature is the principle of the water. Nature is maintained because the water is still; *qing* begins to flow due to the movement of the water; desire is the flow of the water that begins to flood" (心譬水也; 性，水之理也。性所以立乎水之靜，情所以行乎水之動，欲則水之流而至於濫也). Li Jingde 黎靖德 and Wang Xingxian 王星賢, eds., *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, *juan* 5 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 97. Translation modified from Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fiction Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 28.

his seventeenth-century predecessors. When the earlier *qi* monists defined principle as a result of the affective function of the heart-mind, their rationale was teleological. For example, affective desire ends up serving humanity, as in Wang Fuzhi's argument referenced above that sexual desire motivates conjugal and thereby other cardinal relationships, thus incubating human ethics. Far from this, Dai's definition of principle directly derives from the function of the heart-mind. A moral order manifests when the heart-mind operates in its affective and moral-epistemological functions, such as "gauging others' *qing* by my own." In this way, Dai reestablishes principle not as *the* moral order that corresponds to an abstraction of phenomenal morality but instead as *a* moral order that manifests in each operation of the heart-mind in every actual situation of daily lives.

Qi Monistic Vision:

Narrative Scheme, Expansion of *Qi* Monism, and Cultural Background

Having sketched out some of the philosophical issues at stake in *qi*-monist intellectual history, I now turn to its impact on fiction. In my discussions of fictional texts, I use *qi* monistic vision to refer to the fictional appropriations of and engagement with the philosophical approval of phenomenal morality. *Qi* monistic narratives frequently affirm phenomenal morality by highlighting the way in which the body and money are related to morality: the body and money facilitate religious redemptions, bring about the moral transformations of characters, and serve as substitutes for characters' moral lack. These physio-moral ideas—the prefix "physio-" encompasses both the corporeal and the material in my usage—serve as fictional incarnations of philosophical *qi* monism.

Key to this system of narrative adaptation of philosophical *qi* monism is the concept of value exchange between moral qualities and material objects. I term this concept "transvaluation." The traditional understanding of *qi* asserts that the amorphous physio-moral entity is in constant flux from one place to another with its intrinsic capacity to be transformed and transferred to another entity. Based on this perspective, *qi* monistic narratives invent an outlook in which the cosmos forms a macroeconomic market network wherein the different qualities of values are intersected and exchanged. Fiction narratives use the imagined cosmic market as a causal apparatus. As *qi* travels through the material and corporeal and the affective and moral, its different manifestations are not converted in an arbitrary fashion but rather in a certain prescribed way that sustains the physio-moral homeostasis of the world. In this world, a character's affective, corporeal, or economic activities, traditionally conceived as releases of *qi*, affect nearby *qi*-flow, and, as the character circulates through the fictional world, their influence is extended to a larger geographic space, sometimes even up to the bounds of the entire state. In the long run, a micro-individual scale movement of *qi* can result in reciprocations on the macro-cosmic level. The principle of transvaluation, then, conditions the cosmic reciprocation to an individual's moral and material expenditures of *qi*.

Consequently, the concept of the good in this morally self-complete world refers to more than an individual's ethical achievement. Instead, the transvaluative formulation of the fictional world highlights the cosmic infinity of the connective order or the connection *per se* that maintains the system of value conversion. Oft-cited by philosophical *qi* monists, an axiomatic passage from *Xici zhuan* (繫辭傳) in *Book of*

Changes (*Yi jing* 易經) indicates the underlying notion of the interconnected cosmos. This canonical passage employs the good as a predicate for the incessant exchange of various *qi*-forces: "[The alternation of] *yin* and *yang* is called *Dao* and what ensues from it is goodness" (一陰一陽之謂道，繼之者善也).[52] By this logic of linkage and successive generation, the *qi* monistic vision defines the good in metaphysical rather than moral terms. The good is, for example, beyond the virtuous acts and mentality that lead one to becoming a sage, a Buddha, or an immortal; it is the cosmic process as a whole in which such virtues are registered, calculated, and eventually converted into moral currencies.

The cosmic good that transvaluation brings is crucial for understanding the representation of order in *qi* monistic narratives. Although human activities, especially those caused by excessive desires, may sometimes disturb the harmonious movement of *qi*, the cosmos recovers its earlier harmony through the spontaneous mechanism of transvaluation. To be more specific, (1) the persistent movement of *qi* transvalues the moral to the material and corporeal, (2) deprives unvirtuous people of material and corporeal values corresponding to their moral failings or returns such virtues to virtuous people, and (3) thereby recovers an initial state in which various *qi*-forces constitute a

[52] *Zhouyi yizhu* 周易譯注, trans. Huang Shouqi 黃壽祺 and Zhang Shanwen 張善文 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 538. Wang Fuzhi elucidates this passage in his commentary as follows: "The Supreme Ultimate was initially an O, mingled as one, and it could not be named principle. Only after it evolved into the phase of 'what ensues from it is goodness,' the two modes became the four phenomena which in turn became the eight trigrams and sameness and differentiation [among things] became evident with the order [among them] being manifested, did the designation 'principle' come to exist. From the transformation of *qi*, humans were born, and from the birth of humans, nature was formed. After the transformation of *qi*, the reality of principle became obvious and thus the designation of *Dao* was also made" (太極最初一 O，渾淪齊一，固不得名之爲理。殆其繼之者善，爲二儀，爲四象，爲八卦，同異彰而條理現，而後理之名以起焉。氣之化而人生焉，人生而性成焉。繇氣化而後理之實著，則道之名亦因以立). Wang Fuzhi, *Du Mengzi daquan shuo*, 10.3:1110. I referred to JeeLoo Liu's translation in "Wang Fuzhi's Philosophy of Principle (*Li*) Inherent in *Qi*," in John Makeham, ed., *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 362.

complete equilibrium. This inherent resiliency of the cosmos explains the good described by the passage from *Xici zhuan* quoted above.

Although this causal concept, which connects human activities and their results, may evoke the traditional idea of cosmic correspondence called *gan-ying* 感應, its transvaluation maps out a more refined and extended model of cosmic correspondence. First, this transvaluation entails complex devices employed in the conversion of values. Rather than postulating a direct connection between the cosmic order and human activities, transvaluation designates a series of nexuses in which one value is converted to another. Organic mechanisms such as market principle, metabolism, and natural phenomena exemplify the conceptual categories that function to convert values. The multiple transvaluating nexuses in combination constitute a self-regulatory system of the cosmos. Second, unlike the cosmic correspondence that highlights human agency, transvaluation does not necessarily involve human agency. Human agency, especially free will, is undoubtedly a significant factor that affects the cosmic movement of *qi*. In the majority of cases, an individual's moral decisions and immoral desires trigger the movement of *qi*. However, the macro-cosmic drama of transvaluation does sometimes eclipse and bypasses human volition. What matters is the connection itself. The free will of humans is meaningful insofar as it takes part in this cosmic connection. Despite its obvious concern with human ethics, transvaluation exceeds the conceptual boundary of humanity.

The imagination of transvaluation in the *qi* monistic vision integrates narrative appropriations of the central idea in philosophical *qi* monism. The physio-moral mechanism of transvaluation locates moral virtues as a part of the phenomenal movement

of *qi*. Parallel to Wang Fuzhi and Huang Zongxi's *qi* monistic claims in their philosophical discourses, *qi* monistic narratives no longer present moral virtues as abstract concepts severed from the concrete materiality of the phenomenal world but instead designate them as agents that participate in the cosmic process of value conversion. Regardless of how sublime they might be, this phenomenal chain of value conversion defines moral virtues as an embodiment of *qi*.

In addition to this physical transformation of moral values, transvaluation in a reverse direction also matters. The moral signification of material and corporeal values all the more clearly reveals a twin nature shared by the *qi* monistic vision and philosophical *qi* monism. As the transboundary conversion of values reconceptualizes materiality and the body as being exchangeable with moral values, both materiality and the body assume a new status as loci in which moral values reside, appear, and even originate. This moral reinstatement exactly corresponds to the aim of philosophical *qi* monism. In the same way that *qi* monists released *qi* from its existing status as morally inferior to the transcendent moral noumenon, as defined by Cheng-Zhu dualism, the transvaluative system of *qi* monistic narratives reestablishes materiality and the body—phenomenal manifestations of *qi*—as being conversible to moral values, and, therefore, as possessing moral potential themselves.

Of course, the *qi* monistic vision does not completely overlap with the conceptual boundary of philosophical *qi* monism. As mentioned above, the moral concern of the *qi* monistic vision goes beyond the Confucian ethics of philosophical *qi* monism. The good caused by the alternation of *yin* and *yang* cannot be equated with the good that accomplishes the ethical vision of Confucianism. However, these two points at least, the

phenomenal concretization of moral virtues and the moral projection of materiality and the body, are enough to demonstrate conceptual affinities between the *qi* monistic vision and philosophical *qi* monism.

Despite these analogies, we cannot infer a direct relationship between the *qi* monistic vision and philosophical *qi* monism. Although it is plausible enough to reason that literati writers would have been affected by their contemporary thinkers and vice versa, proving a direct influence between the two groups is hardly possible in those cases in which both the *qi* monistic vision and philosophical *qi* monism were in formative phases without widespread recognition. Finding a connection between a specific *qi* monistic narrative and a philosophical discourse of *qi* monism is even more difficult in such cases as *Jin Ping Mei*, whose author is unknown.[53] This situation is completely different from, for example, that of Wu Jingzi's 吴敬梓 (1701-1754) for whom we can trace the engagements between the author and philosophical thinkers.[54] Without such an affirmative case, we have no grounds for on which to make such connections, save for conceptual affinities between texts of the fiction and philosophy genres.

A broader perspective on the overall cultural transformation of the late imperial period may resolve problems resulting from the attempt to find an ideological source of the *qi* monistic vision in a direct relationship with philosophical *qi* monism. Cultural

[53] Andrew H. Plaks offers an overview of existing hypotheses on the authorship of *Jin Ping Mei*. See Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel=Ssu ta ch'i-shu* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 56-65. David T. Roy's "Introduction" for his translation of *Jin Ping Mei* supposes a historical assumption on its implied author in relationship with the Xunzian theme found in the novel. David T. Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei, Volume One: The Gathering* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), xvii-xliii.

[54] Stephen J. Roddy, *Literati Identity and Its Fictional Representations in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 63-73; Shang Wei, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 44-52. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 4.

references, ranging from the socio-economic to the scientific, draw the contours of a collective mentality reflected in fiction narratives, invalidating the need for accurate information about authors or their biographical connections to *qi* monists. Further, universal cultural references are useful in explaining the syncretic ideas of the *qi* monistic vision that go beyond Confucian ideology of philosophical *qi* monism. Along with late imperial culture in general, which cannot be pinned down to any one specific ideology, other ideological traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism constituted parts as significant as Confucianism in the thematic spectrum of *qi* monistic narratives. As *Jin Ping Mei,* which I will analyze in Chapter 2, and the stories from *Liaozhai zhiyi* that I will read in Chapter 3 exemplify, Buddhist and Daoist narratives also emphasize moral roles for the material and corporeal manifestations of *qi*, and, more importantly, these non-Confucian narratives reinforce their concerns with physio-morality through syncretic reconciliations with Confucian ethics. To grant the *qi* monistic vision a more extensive boundary outside philosophical *qi* monism, therefore, enables varied approaches to the broad thematic spectrum of the *qi* monistic vision. Cultural issues during the late imperial period—or at least the two that I will briefly describe below—demonstrate the concurrent formation of major concepts of the *qi* monistic vision outside the literary field. Respectively related to economy and cosmology, these cultural issues depict the shift in the collective outlook that the *qi* monistic vision is rooted in.

Most obviously, the concept of equivalent exchange points to an unignorable cultural source of the *qi* monistic vision—the market. Underlying the transvaluative mechanism of *qi,* the concept of equivalent exchange, or to be more exact, the concept of networks that facilitate an indefinite chain of equivalent exchange supports the notion

that the formation of the fictional idea of *qi* monism is inseparable from the growth of the real economy and market networks in the late imperial period. Historians have long discussed the economic development that appeared in China from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries.[55] A group of historians have even staked out a new period division, "early modern," based on the rapid social change triggered by this extensive economic growth.[56]

Among academic discourses of the socio-economic development of this period, Cynthia J. Brokaw's research on ledgers of merit and demerit (*gong guo ge* 功過格) is highly suggestive of a relationship with the *qi* monistic vision. These ledgers present a historical referent for the conjunction of the market concept and morality as featured in fiction narratives. Brokaw maintains that the ledgers, originally a self-disciplinary record of good and bad deeds used in Buddhist and Daoist traditions, became widespread in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.[57] At the center of the popularity of the ledgers was a self-made figure, Yuan Huang 袁黃 (1533-1606), who attributed his rise in status to a result of merit accumulation.[58] Yuan's use of ledgers illustrate that the popularity of the ledgers are related to the increased social mobility of his times. Brokaw argues that the

[55] For the growth of the market economy in this period, see Richard von Glahn, *The Economic History of China: From Antiquity to the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 395-347.

[56] William T. Rowe provides a succinct overview of scholarly debates on the division of this period, including his claim for the "early modern." See William T. Rowe, China's Last Empire: the great Qing (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2009), 1-10.

[57] Cynthia J. Brokaw, *The Ledgers of Merit and Demerit: Social Change and Moral Order in Late Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 3-27. Tadao Sakai offers a succinct account for the ledgers from the aspect of the impact of Wang Yangming's thought on popular ideology. See Tadao Sakai, "Confucianism and Popular Educational works," in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, ed. Wm. Theodore de Bary (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 341-362.

[58] Brokaw, *Ledgers*, 108.

ledgers suggested a moral guideline for upward mobility for those lower in status, offering a moral justification for those who were established.[59]

While Brokaw's focus mostly lies in how the ledgers reflected socio-economic change, my concern is more with the quantification of morality that the ledgers presuppose. Parallel to the representation of morality in *qi* monistic narratives, the ledgers present a homogeneous notion that moral value is measurable and thus exchangeable in a symbolic market. Criticism of the ledgers more clearly articulates this unity of morality and symbolic capital. Brokaw describes how the Confucian literati were opposed to the use of ledgers under the rationale that they made the pursuit of the good as something like profit seeking.[60] As this anti-market moral concern indicates, the efficacy of the ledgers relies on the identification of moral pursuit with capital accumulation in the market. The transvaluation of *qi* monistic narratives appropriates this identification of the moral and capital. Transvaluative thought imagines the cosmos as an enormous ledger and the cosmic moral principle as economic justice.

It is more pertinent to my argument about the *qi* monistic vision that the Confucian literati who opposed the quantification of morality nevertheless held a belief that morality is a factor in the operation of the material mechanism of *qi*. Brokaw finds examples of this material conceptualization of morality in two Donglin 東林 affiliates, Gao Panlong 高攀龍 (1562-1626) and Chen Longzheng 陳龍正 (1585-1645), summarizing their thoughts as follows:

[59] Brokaw, *Ledgers*, 108-109 and 226-227.

[60] Brokaw, *Ledgers*, 124 and 207.

> Since man's actions and words were all *qi*, they 'moved' or influenced the *qi* of the universe, creating ghosts and spirits (also made of *qi*) who 'responded' automatically to these actions and words. Man was able to 'move' *qi* only if his actions and words were perfectly sincere, if they were straight from the mind.[61]

Elaborating their understanding of such a *qi*-driven cosmos, Brokaw writes that Gao and Chen believed that "good men could transform the customs and even the weather of their communities through the purification of their *qi*."[62] It is noteworthy that those who were against the market symbolism of the moral ledgers still comprehended the moral cosmos as an enormous market. Although they did not quantify moral virtues as Yuan Huang did, the cosmos was still a network of the transvaluation of *qi*. Given that the transvaluative imagination of *qi* monistic narratives does not simply mean placing different qualities of values on a homogeneous plane but ultimately aims at a chain of their circulations, the thoughts of Gao and Chen touch upon the most salient point of the *qi* monistic vision: it is a system of circulation in which human *qi* "moves" spirits whose essence is also *qi*, which in turn triggers another *qi* of nature—e.g., the weather.

Whether an imaginary engagement with market capital or the *qi*-driven cosmos, these material conceptualizations of morality as explained by Brokaw correspond to the representation of morality in the *qi* monistic vision. These thoughts surrounding the ledgers show the existing associative connections linking morality, capital, and *qi*.

It might be possible to take a similar approach to the relationship between the emergence of the *qi* monistic vision and transformations in contemporary cosmological notions. *Qi* monistic narratives may arise from various genres and diverse ideological

[61] Brokaw, *Ledgers*, 144.

[62] Brokaw, *Ledgers*, 154.

pursuits, but they nevertheless share in common a certain type of cosmological model, which I introduced above as a closed system regulated by organic relationships among entities. This shared view of the world suggests the existence of a universal cosmology prior to narrative imagination. In other words, such a closed, organic cosmos in fictional narratives might reflect a common understanding or a broader reconstruction of the cosmos shared by the people of the era.

Indeed, a cosmological transformation identified by John B. Henderson explains the possibility of the general impact from the broader culture on the *qi* monistic vision. In his research on the development of Chinese cosmology, Henderson argues that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries witnessed a radical turn in the view of cosmos. For example, Wang Fuzhi questioned correlative thought, the foundation of Chinese cosmology, and criticized the idea of a geometrically shaped and partitioned cosmos.[63] Henderson quotes Wang's words:

> The cosmos does not have this sort of regularity; only what has been constructed by human effort has it. What is round and can therefore be measured with a compass, and what is square and can therefore be measured with a carpenter's square, are all man-made artifacts. Natural living things are not like this.[64]

Late imperial criticisms on earlier cosmology culminate in the denial of the five phases (*wu xing* 五行). More and more scholars rejected "systems of correspondence based on

[63] Henderson presents four "basic modes of correlative thought": (1) the correspondence between man and the cosmos, (2) the correspondence between the heavens and the dynastic state and imperial bureaucracy, (3) the Five Phases, and (4) the system of *Classic of Change* (*Yi jing* 易經). John B. Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 2-28.

[64] Henderson, *Chinese Cosmology*, 178.

the five phases for their (1) unclassical provenance, (2) numerological disarray, and (3) lack of accord with physical reality."[65] Henderson quotes Wang Fuzhi once again:

> The five elements were natural materials produced by heaven for nourishing the people; to make good use of them is the way of the prince. … But from the Han era, scholars did not investigate [this matter], and indiscriminately drew in the sayings of numerologists, pairing [things that were] unconnected. [These scholars] thus did not understand the purport of the "Great Plan." (Hongfan 洪範)[66]

These two criticisms by Wang Fuzhi above point to a rupture in established cosmology. As Henderson argues, such long-established paradigms, represented by a geometrically ordered cosmos and its correlative projection onto earthly creatures, were in decline.

Two points of the cosmological transformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries come into special concern for my argument about the *qi* monistic vision: One is that the earlier correlative view of the cosmos and human world had begun to be challenged. The other is that, accordingly, the notion of a partitioned and categorized cosmos was not as influential as it had been before. Against the backdrop of the decline of the old cosmology, the *qi* monistic vision offered an alternative model. Based on the concept of the indefinite flow, the transformation and generation of *qi*, the *qi* monistic vision connects the cosmos and the human world no longer as a binary parallel but as an integrated continuum with no ontological hierarchy between its constituent parts. This fictional cosmology clearly attests to a shift in the conceptualization of the essential mechanism of the cosmos from a fixed and pre-programmed order of the noumenal

[65] Henderson, *Chinese Cosmology*, 183. For examples of the pentamerous thought based on the five phases, see Marcel Granet, *La pensée chinoise* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1968), 218-228. Granet offers a variety of examples found from pre-Han and Han texts that categorize the world into five elements.

[66] Henderson, *Chinese Cosmology*, 180.

cosmos to a material dynamics that connects the human world to that which lies beyond it in a single homogeneous view. In tandem with contemporaneous cosmological transformations, the *qi* monistic vision thus established another discourse; it introduced a new source for the generation of moral and material order: the everyday world.

In sum, the economic conceptualization of morality reflected in the ledgers of merit and demerit and the challenge to dualistic cosmology demonstrate that the *qi* monistic vision is a product of historical circumstances. In addition to the reconstruction of late imperial Confucianism raised by philosophical *qi* monism, such extensive cultural changes in the sixteenth through eighteenth centuries explain why the *qi* monistic vision as a new form of narrative discourse could be created in this particular era. In line with traditional thought in China that prescribes writing as a vehicle that conveys *Dao* 道, the *qi* monistic vision puts forth a world that links the moral to capital and heaven to the human world. Granted, the fictional world of *qi* monistic narratives is not simply reducible to a literary reflection of contemporary social and cultural discourses. The representational quality exclusive to literature embodies the *Dao* of the changing historical reality in its unique discursive modes, including linguistic symbolism and narrative composition. By means of these literary qualities, the *qi* monistic vision pioneers its own discursive realm, differentiated from all other contemporary discourses.

CHAPTER II

HOUSE OF DE/REGENERATION: THE PHYSIO-MATERIAL SOTERIOLOGY OF *JIN PING MEI*

The *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* (*The Mahāyāna Sutra of the Store of the Thus Come One*) exemplifies a narrative tradition in Mahāyāna Buddhism that features a house as a chronotope. This sutra, which propagates the Mahāyāna tenet that "all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature," uses a house to illustrate how such universal Buddha-nature exists. The simile conveyed by a first-person narrator, referred to as Buddha, begins as follows:

> [I]t is as if in the earth beneath a storeroom in the house of some poor person, under a covering of earth seven fathoms (*puruṣa*) deep there were a great treasure, full of money and gold, [of the same] volume as the storeroom. But the great treasure—not being, of course, a sentient being, given [its lack of] a mental essence—[could] not say to the poor [man]: "O man, I am a great treasure, but [I am] buried [here], covered under earth." [In his] mind the poor man, the owner of the house, would consider [himself] poor, and even though [he] walked up and down directly above the [treasure], he [could] not hear of, know of, or perceive the existence of the great treasure beneath the earth. … [T]hen the Tathagata appears in the world and manifests *(saṁprakāśayati)* a great treasure of such [buddha] qualities among the bodhisattvas. The [bodhisattvas] then acquire confidence in that great treasure of [buddha] qualities and dig [it] out.[1]

As Michael Zimmerman points out, this simile is replete with contrasting images: the poverty of the owner of the house and the treasure hidden beneath his house; the ignorance of the owner as to his actual wealth and the treasure being aware of but unable

[1] Michael Zimmermann, *A Buddha Within: The Tathāgatagarbhasūtra—The Earliest Exposition of the Buddha-nature Teaching in India* (Tokyo: The International Research Institute for Advanced Buddhology, Soka University, 2002), 120-122.

to tell of the wealth; and the present in which the owner suffers from his poverty and the future in which he will discover the treasure as he is enlightened by Buddha.[2] The house emerges as a nexus of these opposites. It belongs to aboveground space and therefore stands for worldly life while containing in its "storeroom" the treasure, spiritual potential. In this parable that weaves together the worldly and the transcendent, the natures of the house, mundanity and containability, underpin the house trope. Being concerned with both mundane space and supra-mundane spirituality, the house embodies the otherwise contradictory thesis of Buddhahood inherent to a mundane being.

In addition to the spatial representation of truth, the house analogy also lays out the soteriological horizon in temporal terms. The result described by the ending of the parable recasts the temporal state of the inconsistent present in which the owner possesses but has not yet discovered the treasure. With the final excavation of the treasure (that is, Buddhahood), the poor present of the owner is inherently connected to the delayed wealth in the future. The key in this delay lies in the fact that the treasure is known to the whole of the story-world and to the readers' but knowledge of it is kept from the owner of the house. This epistemological duality produces a twofold temporality that embraces the present impoverished state and future wealth of the home owner.

Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘 correctly spells out this temporal synthesis of two incompatible tenses. He employs Jacques Derrida's notion of *différance* in explaining Buddhahood as a "preoccupancy" of the future redemption.

> From Buddha's aspect, Buddhahood is Buddha as it is, an already completed outcome. However, per the Buddha's insights, since Buddha entails the act of

[2] Zimmermann, *A Buddha Within*, 37.

> preoccupying, the future result of all sentient beings, all sentient beings always embrace a difference, *différance*—a delay of the result, Buddha—of the Buddhahood, a Buddha within themselves, equivalent to the Buddha's act [of the preoccupancy].[3]

This crisscrossing of tenses—or, to follow Shimoda's appropriation of Derrida, the *différance*—establishes the house as an emblem of Buddhist existentialism. In light of the ultimate message of this parable that "all sentient beings possess Buddha-nature," the house as both a locus of mundane life and the redemptive "treasure" accommodates the dual tense between the present and the future, the time of both and neither.

The poor man's house perfectly anticipates the way in which *Jin Ping Mei* figures houses in its Buddhist thematization.[4] Like the poor man's house on the ground, the houses in *Jin Ping Mei* form the spatial background of mundane life in their most immediate level. A house delineates a space where characters realize their desires, which in turn defines the space in moral terms. Ximen Qing's 西門慶 house, a major setting of this novel, illustrates the moral inflection of the house. Corresponding to its owner's insatiable desires, the enormous size of the house stages Ximen Qing's unremitting pursuits of his desires. Each unit of the gigantic house occupied by one of his wives reflects the segmentation of his desires, which constitute the entirety of his mundaneness altogether. In addition to this spatialized moral analogy, the house motif covers a more

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[3] Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘, "Nyoraizō-Busshō shisō no aratana rikai ni mukete 如来蔵・仏性思想のあらたな理解に向けて," in *Nyoraizō to busshō* 如来蔵と仏性, eds. Katsura Shōryū 桂紹隆, Saitō Akira 斎藤明, Shimoda Masahiro 下田正弘, and Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士 (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2014), 30.

[4] The Chinese primary source cited here is Xiaoxiao sheng 笑笑生, *Jin Ping Mei* 金瓶梅 (Liu Bendong 劉本棟, ed., Taipei: Sanmin shuju, 2015). Liu's edition is based on the Wanli 萬歷 edition, known as *Jin Ping Mei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話. To distinguish this from the Chongzhen 崇禎 edition containing Zhang Zhupo's 張竹坡 (1670–1698) commentary, I indicate the Wanli edition as *Jin Ping Mei cihua* hereafter.

extensive thematic arena in its semiotic engagements with the desires of characters. For example, the text overlaps those architectural events that occur in Ximen Qing's house, including its renovation, enlargement, and remodeling, with the process in which his desires grow. This parallel between the house's structural extensions and the expansions of Ximen Qing's desire clarifies a thesis suggested by this novel: to build a house is to construct the architecture of one's desire. This architectural-moral narrative thesis illustrates how *Jin Ping Mei* envisions a single world that consists of the material and the affective in mutual association.

Inevitably, Ximen Qing's ever-increasing desires trigger retributions, unfolding the second narrative role of the house motif in *Jin Ping Mei*: the house, not only a literal space but also a semiotic whole of desire represented by the space, involves the karmic result of desire as well. Consistent with the construction events referenced above, retribution is carried out in the analogical form of structural changes to a house, albeit in the opposite image: destruction. Most characteristic of such destruction is the collapse of the body, an analogical parallel to the collapse of a house. As I will argue below in my observation of the case of Li Ping'er 李瓶兒, the reciprocation of her improper desire with the collapse of her own body constitutes a leitmotif of the architectural-moral narrative. The deadly events resulting from karmic retribution reaffirm the interconnective poetics of this novel. The retributive events place the individual and the moral cosmos on a par with one another and also connect the material, the corporeal, the affective, and most of all, the moral on a single symbolic plane.

The interconnective perspective of differing layers of truth invites a multi-layered temporality. For example, at the point of the present, the karmic reciprocation of a

character's desire occurs through collapsing house symbols. This retributive collapse of the present summons up as its cause transgressions committed by the character in the past. Moreover, when past transgressions entail a house-related event, such as the renovation, enlargement, or remodeling of a house, the present reciprocation as carried out through collapses of a house and a house symbol retroactively defines the meaning of the house from the past: Such a renovation, enlargement, or remodeling of a house is none other than the seed of present destruction. The seed of destruction has already *been* there since the construction of a house. The construction as a cause of destruction contains its own negation within itself.

These two moments of karmic logic—a past transgression and present punishment—are not yet sufficient to fully draw out the gravitas of the house motif in *Jin Ping Mei*. Like the poor man's treasure in the *Tathāgatagarbhasūtra* which is coexistent and concomitant with his poverty, the house analogy of *Jin Ping Mei* shapes a soteriology unfolded on the other side of quotidian moral crimes and their ensuing retribution. For example, When Ximen Qing purchases a house for his friend in need, this benevolence creates a store of karmic capital that will be used for the next-life houses of his beloved family members. Likewise, the female body, often represented as a womb-house, serves this soteriological theme. In particular, Wu Yueniang 吳月娘, Ximen Qing's formal wife, provides an immediate place for his rebirth as Xiao'ge 孝哥, Ximen Qing's posthumous son who will redeem his father's evil karma.

Still, these events and symbols involving the soteriological use of houses are not apart from the dissipation of the protagonist Ximen Qing. His purchase of a house for a friend occurs in the midst of his extravagance and mercenary avarice. Also, the female

body mostly emerges in the context of Ximen Qing's sexual indulgence and eventually becomes a locus of his punitive death, the cause of which is excessive sexual expenditure. The soteriological vision of the novel is present in both the mundane desire of the present and expected correlative karmic retribution of the future. When Ximen Qing consummates his unbridled desire and therefore incurs retribution for it, the soteriological future is seated therein as a part of both the desire and the retribution. No less than it is spatial, therefore, the house is also a temporal analogy. It embodies how diversified temporalities are entangled in their mutual references.

It is likely that I need to explain my usage of *soteriology*. In a strict sense, Buddhist soteriology is defined as liberation from or the transcendence of *samsara*. In Buddhist doctrine, one can escape from *samsara* and achieve liberation by attaining enlightenment and thereby becoming a Buddha.[5] However, *Jin Ping Mei* extends the boundary of soteriology into broader terms, including the accumulation of wholesome karma that is "conducive to furthering one's progress on the path to enlightenment."[6]

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[5] Paul Williams, Anthony Tribe, and Alexander Wynne, *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to The Indian Tradition* (London; New York: Routledge, 2012), 2.

[6] Paul Williams, et. al., *Buddhist Thought*, 206, note 33. The "wheel of life" (*bhāvacakra*) or the "six realms of rebirth" (*liudao lunhui* 六道輪迴), one of the key doctrines of Buddhism, posits that beings transmigrate to one of the six realms of gods, humans, titans, ghosts, animals, or hell depending on their karma in life. Among these, rebirth as a human being holds a particular significance in soteriological terms. Paul Williams et. al. argue "the Buddhist tradition holds that nirvana can be obtained only from the human realm, or a god realm above the human." (Paul Williams et. al., *Buddhist Thought*, 78) Human rebirth includes redemption, albeit incomplete, in the sense that it hints at the possibility of nirvana still being within the samsaric wheel. An example is from a story about Monk Junti 均提, written in *Great Skillful Means Sūtra on the Buddha's Repayment of Kindness* (*Da Fangbian Fo Bao'en Jing* 大方便佛報恩經). The Buddha summarizes the history of Junti's samsara: "The white dog at that time is the present Monk Junti. Due to his insult of a virtuous monk [as the monk's chanting voice being more braying than dogs barking], Junti fell into an evil path of rebirth. However, he sought to correct his earlier error, feeling ashamed and repenting with a vow. As a result, he met a good friend [who saved himself]. Because he met a good friend, he could be atoned for his sins and be born as a human. Later when he met the Buddha, Junti could end his passions" (爾時白狗者，今均提沙彌是。由過去世毀罵賢聖，墮在惡道。由尋能改，慙愧懺悔，發誓願故，得遇善友。遇善友故，罪畢得出生於人中。遇佛世尊，即得漏盡). "Lun yi pin 論議品," *Da Fangbian Fo Bao'en Jing* 大方便佛報恩經, in *Taishō shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新脩大藏經, ed. Takakusu Junjirō

This wholesome karma involves some of the typical moral motifs employed in this novel: one's good deeds in life, the offsetting of one's evil karma by their own or another's good deeds, and redemption by a noble spirit.

Chapter 100 integrates the soteriology of this novel. The penultimate episode in this chapter describes the remnants of the Ximen household fleeing to escape from the Jin 金 troops. They stay a night at the Temple of Eternal Bliss (*Yong fu shi* 永福寺) on the way. Restless during the night, Xiaoyu 小玉, Wu Yueniang's maidservant, sees Chan master Pu Jing 普靜 reciting the sutras and praying for souls. The text follows Xiaoyu's eyes and then describes the Chan master's prayer from an omniscient point of view:

> The old master Pu Jing … addressed himself reverently to the Buddha and recited a spell for dispelling enmity, intended to: rescue the incarcerated souls, free them from old resentments, clear impediments in their way, so they could be reincarnated, without any remaining residues. … [the master says to the ghosts he prayed for] "The potency of this sacred text, redeems one from his evil karma. Each of you may be reincarnated, if you harbor no further enmity."
>
> 這普靜老師 … 禮白佛言世尊解冤經咒，薦拔幽魂，解釋宿冤，絕去挂礙，各去超生，再無留滯。…「仗此經力深，薦拔諸惡業。汝當各托生，再勿將冤結!」[7]

Slightly after the master utters his words, ghosts appear one by one and express their gratitude to him. The words of each ghost repeat the same structure: (1) their name in their previous life, (2) the cause of their death, (3) the phrase "thanks to the master's

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高楠須次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭, vol. 3, no. 156 (Tokyo: Taishō Shinshū Daīzōkyō Kankōkai, 1960-1979), 142.

[7] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 100:1328. Translation modified from David T. Roy, *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei, Volume Five: The Dissolution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 410-411. For the translations of *Jin Ping Mei* in this chapter, I use Roy's translation. In cases where I need to refer to the original Chinese text in a more literal way, I have modified Roy's translations and used my own.

deliverance" (*mengshi jianba* 蒙師薦拔), and (4) the place of their reincarnation and their name in their reincarnated life.[8] The master's "deliverance" here is rephrased in more specific terms in the subsequent scene, in which the master talks to Wu Yueniang about the deliverance of her husband, Ximen Qing: "I will now undertake to lead him to salvation [by taking his posthumous son as well as his reincarnation, Xiao'ge] as my disciple. As the saying goes: should a single son leave the home to be ordained, nine generations of one's ancestors will ascend to heaven. This will also have the benefit for your late husband of compensating for his evil karma, so that he too may achieve reincarnation" (今我度脫了他去，做了徒弟。常言:「一子出家，九祖升天!」你那夫主冤愆解釋，亦得超生去了).[9]

What I mean by *soteriology* is the collective thematic concern with the redemption of sinful souls, embodied here by all these Buddhist prospects. In the sense that they are prospects, they may not be destined for the definite attainment of liberation. Yet they point to a tendency that drives morally defective characters toward redemption of evil deeds from their previous lives.

The Tantric Gate or the Sexual Body as a Soteriological Channel

Tantric Buddhism provides a theoretical prism for the synthesis of conflicting

[8] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 100:1329. *Plum*, 5:411-412. As an example, Li Ping'er says, "I am Li Ping'er, the wife of Hua Zixu and concubine of Ximen Qing, who died from a case of acute metrorrhagia. Thanks to the master's deliverance, I have been reincarnated in the Eastern Capital as the daughter of Commander Yuan" (妾身李氏。乃花子虛之妻，西門慶之妾，因害血山崩而死。蒙師薦拔，今往東京城內袁指揮家，托生為女去也). *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 100:1329. *Plum*, 5:412.

[9] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 100:1331-1332. *Plum*, 5:417.

moral visions that the house in *Jin Ping Mei* fulfills with its Buddhist language.[10] Branched off from Mahāyāna Buddhism, this esoteric teaching is characterized by its active embrace of the body and bodily desires as a means of liberation.[11] Tantric Buddhism identifies liberation with the realization of the non-duality (*advaya*) that transcends all phenomenological differences, including the sacred and the secular, the bodily and the spiritual, and even passions and awakening itself. From this perspective, the body and its mundane properties are not in the way of but are instead in service of awakening the ultimate oneness.[12] Tibetan Buddhism heavily influenced by Tantric Buddhism is distinguished in its positing of the embodied awakening of the non-duality through sexual union.[13] Its sexual rite, known as *yab-yum* ("father-mother" in Tibetan), is a trenchant example. It is believed that each procedure of the rite not only symbolically but also actually realizes the cosmic unity in the immediate body of participants. Bernard Faure describes the sexual practice as following:

> During the act, the practitioner must concentrate on his *bodhicitta*, a term that in Mahāyāna refers to a psychic and mental state, the "thought of awakening," but that is used here in a more specific sense, to designate the semen. The thought of awakening (*bodhicitta*) is identified with the *bindu*, the "drop," that is, the product of the fusion of the seed (*sukla*, the "white," semen = *upāya*) with the ovum (*rakta*, the "red," the menses = *prajñā*). The *bindu* is the egg, the germ, just as the

[10] Following Hugh B. Urban's claim that no example showing Tantrism as a consistent movement or established school is found before the modern, this chapter prefers the terms Tantric tradition and Tantras rather than Tantrism. As to the meaning and history of the Tantra, see Urban, *Tantra: Sex, Secrecy, Politics, and Power in the Study of Religion* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 23-43.

[11] Lindsay Jones, ed., *Encyclopedia of Religion* (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 13:433.

[12] Bernard Faure, *The Red Thread: Buddhist Approaches to Sexuality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), 48; *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 13:8993.

[13] *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 13:1157 and 13:8993.

thought of awakening is the germ of a new being.[14]

The body, which Buddhist ethics often designates as a source of passions, here is not in contradiction with liberation. Instead, the sexual body serves as a site that maps onto Buddhist soteriology. The body by itself carries out the unity of beings divided, as represented by the fusion of the "seed" and ovum. The "germ of a new being," the token of awakening (*bodhicitta*) as well as the awakening *per se*, is thus born. The main narrative of this rite in which the specific bodily union leads to an ultimate enlightenment represents the monistic thought that underlies Tantric Buddhism. As the Tantric body nullifies the conventional bifurcation of the sacred and the secular and achieves the awakening in its most secular performance, what this rite shows is that the awakening is not from without. It comes from within the body, the immediate form of a being.

In *Jin Ping Mei*, Ximen Qing's name presents an exact thematic correspondence to the Tantric idea of awakening through sexuality.[15] His bisyllabic surname Ximen 西門, literally "west gate," orthographically puns with *hai* 閪, meaning "vagina" in Yue 粵 dialects.[16] This, in combination with his given name, Qing 慶, which literally means

[14] Faure, *The Red Thread*, 50.

[15] The history of Chinese Buddhism supports the possibility that the author of *Jin Ping Mei* was exposed to the Tantric tradition. Since the import of Tibet Buddhism into the inner land along with the Mongol conquest of Tangut Xia in the early thirteenth century, Tibetan lamas in their amicable relationships with Mongol and Ming emperors transferred "the secret teaching of supreme bliss" (*yan die er fa* 演揲兒法), also known as "the practice in pairs" (*shuang xiu fa* 雙修法), to the emperors. The Zhengde 正德 Emperor's (1491-1521) construction of a detached palace exemplifies the naturalization of Tantric practice in Ming. The Emperor was known to perform Tantric sexual practices in this place named *Bao fang* 豹房 (the "leopard house"). Weirong Shen, "Tibetan Buddhism in Mongol-Yuan China (1206–1368)" and "Tantric Buddhism in Ming China" in *Esoteric Buddhism and the Tantras in East Asia*, eds. Charles D. Orzech, Henrik H. Sørensen, and Richard K. Payne, Handbook of Oriental Studies, Section 4, Volume 24 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 539-549; 550-560.

[16] Feng Tianlie 馮田獵, *Yueyu tongyin zidian* 粵語同音字典 (Xianggang: Donglian xuegongshe, 1974), 48.

"celebration" and has also been conventionally understood as punning on *qing* 情 ("affective desire"), completes the puns embedded in the name Ximen Qing: "the celebration of the vagina" or "the *qing* of the vagina." From the view of the multi-layered narrative of this novel, this suggestive reference to the protagonist's name cannot simply be taken as sexual innuendo. Considering that the female body and the vagina in particular facilitate Ximen Qing's redemptive rebirth, the allusive name encapsulates the novel's soteriological narrative beyond his carnal indulgence. The "vagina gate" that Ximen Qing's surname suggests is even more significant in light of my argument here that the house motif incorporates the soteriology of *Jin Ping Mei*. By presenting the female body as an architectural structure that includes a gate, Ximen Qing's name once again performs a synthesis of the karmic horizons: the "vagina gate" as a house-space that Ximen Qing enters into invites the desire of Ximen Qing as a lecherous character, carries out the corollary retribution for the desire, and envisions a rebirth for him that is to be mediated through the house of the female body.

This discursive synthesis of the house narrative sheds light on where *Jin Ping Mei* exceeds the boundaries of existing "folly-consequences" hermeneutics.[17] This synthetic reading challenges Confucian narrative ethics, the dominant framework of English-speaking academia on this novel. Katherine Carlitz, who is representative of this tendency vehemently refutes the possibility of a Buddhist theme, asserting that the novel is "built on a firm Confucian base" and that it mainly reflects the idea in *The Great Learning* (*Da xue* 大學) that emphasizes "the importance of earthly government, the

[17] Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), 59-68.

force of the ruler's example, and the parallel between the family and the state."[18] Though his assertions are not quite as vigorous as Carlitz's, Andrew H. Plaks shares a similar stance in that he highlights the thematic influence of Neo-Confucianism. Even in his conditional acknowledgment of the role of Buddhism—such as in the embodiment of retributive thought—the ethics of self-cultivation is key to his neo-Confucian reading.[19] Another advocate of Confucian hermeneutics, David T. Roy, slightly veers away from Plaks by relating the novel's themes to *Xunzi* 荀子. Roy focuses on the representation of moral failings and their results, defining this novel as a portrait of the evil nature of human beings.[20] In line with Carlitz's Confucian realism, Roy seconds her claim that this novel is a fictional reportage about the "irresponsible rulers" of the times.[21] The Tantric idea that presents the body as a soteriological channel extends the karmic transgression-and-punishment framework shared by these scholars to a paradigm that includes the final redemptive phase. The "folly-consequences" hermeneutics undoubtedly tap into major thematic concern of this novel, and I will also follow the hermeneutics in arguing the house motif is extensively involved in the representation of desire and retribution. On top of these Confucian lenses, the Tantric representation of the body also reveals yet another soteriological layer beyond the binary hermeneutics of transgression and punishment.

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[18] Katherine Carlitz, "Codes and Correspondences in *Jin Ping Mei*," *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)* 8, no.1 (1986): 8.

[19] Andrew H. Plaks, *The Four Masterworks of the Ming Novel=Ssu ta ch'i-shu* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 158.

[20] Roy, "Introduction," *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei, Volume One: The Gathering* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), especially see xxiv-xxxii.

[21] Roy, "Introduction," xxxii.

Prior to the confirmation of redemption by the Chan master Pu Jing in Chapter 100, the house-narratives prefigure redemption.

In this chapter, I will trace the karmic and redemptive histories of Li Ping'er and Ximen Qing, with a focus on house-related events that involve them. I will first take up the case of Li Ping'er, focusing on Chapters 13 and 61. The former describes the transgression of Li Ping'er's inappropriate relationship with Ximen Qing and the arrival of karmic force accompanied by her immanent death, which will be my main object of analysis over the following two sections. In my reading of the novel's soteriological vision, the latter chapter is of particular importance because it embeds within the grim shadow of retributive death the prospect of Li Ping'er's new house for her reborn self. The final two sections examine the karmic history of Li Ping'er's male counterpart, Ximen Qing. My focus in these sections is on events occurring within the novel's fourth decade, spanning Chapters 30 to 39. New houses featured in these chapters are problematic because, as in Li Ping'er's case, they envision his retributive death and redemptive rebirth even from this early point in the narrative. Those houses that Ximen Qing purchases in his heyday carry out the temporal synthesis by bringing the future of retribution into the present of desire, which is in turn layered by the womb-house that anticipates his eventual reincarnation.

This transtemporal strand running through house-narratives constructs the *qi* monistic world of *Jin Ping Mei*. As house-related events traverse the different karmic realities of desire, retribution, and redemption, they piece together the different realities in phenomenological orders exemplified by money and the body. Despite potential evils that they may bring about, money and the body create causality for a redemptive rebirth.

Moral reconstruction is carried out not by an intervention of transcendent forces but in accordance with the intrinsic karmic economy. Moral transgressions cause the destruction of a house, household, and eventually the body as the house of a being, whereas a benevolence shown in the construction or reconstruction of another's house ensures the reconstruction of one's own house and body in one's next life.

The transvaluation of house-evoking signifiers adapts the religious doctrine of karma to causality as a narrative scheme. The law of karma, in its original Buddhist context, tallies one's inner motives and one's acts of good and evil. Thus, the concept of karma inherently involves a moral entity, whether visible or invisible.[22] Transvaluation as a causal principle in narrative, inclusive of the representation of moral motives and practices, more broadly encompasses symbolic conversions of moral and practical dispositions. In other words, this sort of transvaluation speaks to the entirety of symbolic manipulations in which a text links moral acts to material signifiers and correlates morally encoded objects with their corporeal equivalents, thus establishing a causality between moral decisions and their amoral results in both literal and figurative associations. The house is a representative locus of the symbolic manipulation in the transvaluative narrative of *Jin Ping Mei*. Varied house-related signifiers are involved in karmic events in the storyworld and establish causality between moral acts and physio-material phenomena. In this sense, the house emblematizes a narrative figuration of the *qi* monistic vision in *Jin Ping Mei*. It translates the karma of Buddhist doctrine into a narrative causality that accounts for moral, physical, and spiritual events in a single phenomenal mechanism.

[22] Bruce R. Reichenbach, "The Law of Karma and the Principle of Causation," *Philosophy East and West* 38, no. 4 (1988): 399-408.

The Reconstruction of the Body in Destruction

The Broken Tile

The reciprocal structure of the two Double Yang Festivals, featured in Chapters 13 and 61, embodies the moral causality of *Jin Ping Mei*. Each of these two seasonal events are landmarks in Li Ping'er's transgressions and her retribution, forming a thematic correspondence that traditional commentators termed "parallelism at a distance" (*yao dui* 遙對).[23] During the first festival, Li Ping'er deceives her husband Hua Zixu 花子虛 and enters into an extramarital relationship with Ximen Qing; during the second festival, she suffers from an excessive discharge of blood that leaves her comatose. While both of these events center around Li Ping'er's body, death is another element they share in common. As a death occurs subsequent to each festival chapter, the recurrence of death makes the moral implications of the structural and thematic parallelisms between the two Double Yang Festivals more explicit: Chapter 14, which follows the narration of the first festival, describes Hua Zixu's death, while in Chapter 62, right after the second festival, Li Ping'er dies. With regard to these impending deaths, the festive mood of each sequence appears quite ironic. It appears all the more so in light of the traditional *yin-yang* cosmology. In contrast to the conventional implication of death as an epitome of *yin* energy, the text arranges the two deaths adjacent to Double Yang Festivals that stand for the apogee of *yang* energy. However, the juxtapositions of festive and deadly events do not necessarily mean an intersection of the contradiction as the term irony implies. If the

[23] For examples of the "parallelism at a distance" in late imperial fiction genre, see Zhang Shijun 張世君, "Ming Qing *xiaoshuo pingdian zhangfa gainian xi* 明清小說評點章法概念析," *Jinan xuebao* 暨南學報 (*Renwen kexue yu shehui kexue ban* 人文科學與社會科學版) 26, no. 3 (2004), 83-84.

seasonal return of the Double Yang Festival and the accompanying alternation of *yin* and *yang* are symbolic of the inevitability of nature, Li Ping'er's death and its calendrical correspondence to that of Hua Zixu reference the inevitability of the karmic rule.

In this causal correspondence of the two Double Yang Festivals, the house serves as a major locus of Li Ping'er's transgression and punishment. Especially those events and symbols related to house destruction connect the thematic pair of Li Ping'er's sexual transgression and her death. The first destruction occurs in Hua Zixu's house. The initiation of the illicit relationship between Li Ping'er and Ximen Qing that occurs during the first Double Yang Festival marks a rupture to the Hua Zixu's household, and this moral rupture leads to the actual destruction of Hua Zixu's house as his entire estate is incorporated into the Ximen household by means of Li Ping'er's scheme. The other destruction falls upon Li Ping'er's body. Just as she initiates the destruction of Hua Zixu's house, she suffers the destruction of her womb-house.[24] This destruction even leads to her death. The motif of tiles (*wa* 瓦), a constituent element of a house, is central to the causality of these instances of house destruction. Having semiotic linkages to both Hua Zixu's house (as a part of the wall) and Li Ping'er's body (as an orthographic resemblance to her name, *ping* 瓶 and as a material analogy to her ceramic quality, a vase), tiles place one instance of actual destruction at the first Double Yang Festival and a symbolic instance of destruction at the second. Tiles inscribe the architectural-morality implied by the two festival events.

[24] Traditional Chinese medicine refers to the womb as "womb-palace" (*bao gong* 胞宮) or "child palace" (*zi gong* 子宮). The notion of the fetal abode at the womb-house emerges as early as in *Huangdi Neijing* 黃帝內經. Yi-Li Wu, *Reproducing Women: Medicine, Metaphor, and Childbirth in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010), 92-97.

The first emergence of the tile motif in Li Ping'er's karmic history is traced back to the night of the first Double Yang Festival. After sending Hua Zixu out to the pleasure quarters in accordance with his own wishes, Li Ping'er has her maid receive Ximen Qing over the house wall as has been previously plotted. Ximen Qing, in an appropriation of the traditional custom of the Double Yang Festival day in which one "climbs to a high place" (*deng gao* 登高), indeed climbs to a high place, the top of the wall. From that night on, their assignations become routinized, and Li Ping'er contrives signals. "Whenever Hua Zixu was safely out of the way, a maidservant on this side would look over the wall and give a surreptitious cough as a signal, or first throw a piece of tile [over the wall]" (但子虛不在家，這邊使丫鬟立牆頭上，暗暗以咳嗽為號，或先丟塊瓦兒).[25] The "piece of tile" (*wa er* 瓦兒) here, which is to be thrown over the wall by the maid, contains a present advent of the retributive future: the thrown tile will be broken when it falls to the ground.

Indeed, the text prefigures the karmic result of this tile-tossing in the voice of Pan Jinlian 潘金蓮, a would-be competitor of and figural parallel to Li Ping'er.[26] In Chapter 2, in response to Wu Song's 武松 warning that she behave herself while he is out on a business trip to the Eastern Capital, Pan Jinlian expresses her displeasure by hysterically remarking that "if you throw a brick into the air, it will come down to earth every time" (丟下塊磚兒，一個個也要著地).[27] This saying generally means that some behavior will

[25] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 13:147. *Plum*, 1:267.

[26] Andrew Plaks finds figural parallels between Li Ping'er and Pan Jinlian, in terms of the death of a previous husband, being the sixth in family order, and occasional mutual sympathies. Plaks claims that the two women are "a composite object of Ximen Qing's desire" (Plaks, *The Four Masterworks*, 111-113).

[27] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 2:24. *Plum*, 1:46.

be paid for with consequences; therefore, in the scene in which she utters it, the phrase implies that Wu should be held responsible for his own words. Pan Jinlian's words do bear out as Pan Jinlian herself ironically suffers the consequences of her transgressions. Contrary to Wu's warning, Pan Jinlian indulges her sexual appetite with Ximen Qing and even kills her current husband Wu Da 武大. As a result, she will pay with her life in the distant future.

This is also true of Li Ping'er who, like Pan Jinlian, betrays her husband and eventually leads him to his death. The text foreshadows Li Ping'er's future repayment by featuring tiles that fall on Li Ping'er herself in Chapter 14. Invited to Pan Jinlian's birthday celebration not long after Hua Zixu's death, Li Ping'er complains of living alone, saying, "A fox spirit tosses bricks and tiles at nights and I am even more scared" (晚夕常有狐狸打磚掠瓦，奴又害怕).[28] Commentator Zhang Zhupo suggests the author's intention in his interpretation of Li Ping'er's reference to the fox spirit: "[Hua] Zixu is here" (子虛在此).[29] Although the commentator does not go further into what purpose Hua Zixu's vulpine incarnation might serve, it is unlikely that the intended effect is simply to have some psychological impact on Li Ping'er. In light of the karmic implication of the bricks suggested by Pan Jinlian's words above, the bricks and tiles tossed by the fox spirit of the dead Hua Zixu deliver a more critical truth in their literal fulfillment of Pan Jinlian's words above: just as the tiles have been tossed at Li Ping'er by Hua Zixu's fox spirit, Li Ping'er has thrown her own karmic fate into the air.

[28] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 14:160.

[29] Qin Xiurong 秦修容, ed., *Jin Ping Mei: Huiping huijiao ben* 金瓶梅: 會評會校本 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 14:206.

In addition to their function referencing the unfailing nature of karmic retribution, the fact that the tiles are also material elements of a house points to more concrete contexts of Li Ping'er's transgressions as they relate to the house. The wall between the houses of Hua Zixu and Ximen Qing is integral to two other house events that have direct symbolic connections to the retributive consequences of her actions. These events occur over and on the wall, and they provide other explanations for why her retribution must be given such form—that is, the breaking of her body. Reminiscent of the first emergence of the tiles in reference to Li Ping'er's transgression on the first Double Yang Festival, these wall-backgrounded events portend her excessive discharge of blood in connection to the collapse of Hua Zixu's household.

The first event brings about the financial collapse of Hua Zixu's household. This event occurs when Hua Zixu is arrested and taken to the Eastern Capital over a property dispute within his family (Chapter 14). While it will have enormous impact on Hua Zixu's wealth later, this legal event as presented in the narrative is actually less related to the legal case *per se* than it is to the concurrent economic losses plaguing his home—his wife, Li Ping'er, is siphoning his fortune to Ximen Qing. Even before Hua Zixu receives his sentence and loses his property, it is already being dissipated by his wife:

> Later that evening, when the moon rose, Li Ping'er, on her side, together with her two maidservants, Yingchun and Xiuchun, by putting a bench on top of a table, managed to hoist the chests up to the top of the wall. Ximen Qing on his side, accompanied only by Wu Yueniang, Pan Jinlian, and Pang Chunmei, set up a ladder to receive them. They spread a strip of felt over the top of the wall and then hoisted the chests over the top, one at a time, and deposited them in Wu Yueniang's room.

然後到晚夕月上的時分，李瓶兒那邊同兩個丫鬟迎春、繡春，放桌凳，把箱櫃挨到牆上。西門慶這邊，只是月娘、金蓮、春梅用梯子接著。牆頭上鋪苫氈條，一個個打發過來，都送到月娘房中去。[30]

This scene possesses several superimpositions in the way in which Li Ping'er and Ximen Qing engage in illicit affairs on and after the night of the Double Yang Festival. First, like their assignation during the festival day, the smuggling happens at night while Hua Zixu is out of his home. Second, the smuggling event also takes the wall as a major site. Originally intended to defend Hua Zixu's property, the wall, ironically, is instead used as a secured route for both Ximen Qing's trespassing and Li Ping'er's smuggling. Third, Hua Zixu's property goes over the wall in the same direction that Li Ping'er has thrown the tiles. These similarities between the two scenes suggest the possibility that Li Ping'er's smuggling here will be reciprocated by a retribution similar to that implied by the tile-tossing of her first transgression. While the tile-tossing betokens her eventual corporeal breaking, the material rupture of Hua Zixu's household that Li Ping'er initiates will also be repaid by the breaking of her own body. As she drains Hua Zixu's wealth, she too will be drained of her vitality.

The text supplies its rationale for the value conversion between materiality and vitality. On returning home from the Eastern Capital, Hua Zixu finds that all his wealth is gone and that his house is even up for sale. Although he manages to raise two hundred and fifty taels of silver with which to buy a house on Lion Street, soon afterward he comes down with typhoid fever (*shang han* 傷寒) as a result of his resentment over his

[30] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 14:155. *Plum*, 1:279.

loss of wealth.[31] The poem placed in the narration shortly before his move into the new house anticipates his debilitation: "Hua Zixu's *qi* became so engorged with rage his tender guts gave way; But another day, in the court of the underworld, he would be revenged." (子虛氣塞柔腸斷, 他日冥司必報仇).[32] It is interesting that this poetic statement, integrating his bitter death, far precedes the actual occurrence of his death in the plot, and even precedes his relocation and his subsequent confinement to his sick bed. This prolepsis forges a symbolic link between Hua Zixu's vitality and his house; when his house is sold—that is, when the property in his house is officially disposed of—his life has already ended. The material is the vital.[33] The temporal inversion that puts Hua Zixu's death before his loss portends the impending end that he will meet when he is divested of all his wealth.

In addition to Hua Zixu's death, this value conversion between materiality and vitality ultimately factors into Li Ping'er's death. In the same form of leaking that Li Ping'er causes with Hua Zixu's property-vitality over the wall, Li Ping'er's death will be given in the form of leaking—the leaking of her own body. In other words, the ruptured wall also stands in symbolic parallel to Li Ping'er's fate. As she undoes the wall, the karmic cosmos sees its equivalence in her would-be broken body.

If the rupture of the wall designates Li Ping'er's transgression and insinuates her corollary retribution, it is all the more so when the wall is demolished. This actually happens when Ximen Qing purchases the late Hua Zixu's house and reconstructs the

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[31] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 14:158.

[32] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 14:158. *Plum*, 1:285.

[33] Martin W. Huang articulates the correlation between financial ability and virility in the representations of male characters such as Wu Da, Jiang Zhushan 蔣竹山, and Ximen Qing. See his *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 97-98.

estate as his garden. The construction begins in Chapter 16 and covers a significant span of time—including Li Ping'er's brief marriage with Jiang Zhushan—and continues up until Li Ping'er finally enters the Ximen household in Chapter 19. As Li Ping'er is now settled in the Ximen household as Ximen Qing's sixth concubine, all that once belonged to Hua Zixu has now come under the ownership of Ximen Qing. In this light, it is hardly coincidental that the novel arranges the two discrete events at the beginning and end, respectively, of the same Chapter 19. The convergence of Hua Zixu's onetime house and his onetime family, each embodying *jia* 家 in Chinese, declares the extinction of all Hua Zixu's vestiges or *qi*. Hua Zixu's death, from the architectural-moral perspective of this novel, is completed at this point in the dissolution of his house.

The text imbues the destruction of a house, represented by the demolition of its wall, with a strong moral connotation: as in the case of the breaking of the tiles, those who trigger it will bear the consequences. The emergence of Abbot Dao 道 in Chapter 57 is designed to articulate the karmic implications of demolition of the wall. With its clear architectural-moral reference to the razing of the wall, Dao signals the advent of *Dao* 道 upon those who have brought about the breaking. The narrator's account of Dao's emergence explicates the meaning of *Dao* here specifically as the Buddhist principle of karma. Before entering into the passage in which Dao solicits Ximen Qing for contributions for the reconstruction of the Temple of Eternal Bliss, the narrator describes the history of the dilapidation of the temple. Tiles and bricks as material components of the wall refigure in the context of the moral cause of the decay:

> [The monks of the temple] ended up falling victim to crooked swindlers and profiteers who provided them with illicit liquor at inflated prices. When they were

> unable to pay their debts, it was not long before they started to pawn their cassocks, and hock their bells and chimes. They tried to sell the rafters from the main hall of the temple, but nobody wanted them, so they were reduced to burning them for fuel, and even bartered the *bricks and tiles* of the structure for liquor.
>
> 卻被那些潑皮賴虎，常常作酒撈錢抵當。不過一會兒，把袈裟也當了，鍾兒、磬兒多典了，殿上一椽兒賣了，沒人要的燒了，磚兒、瓦兒換酒吃了。[34]

These architectural-moral references to the temple summon up the long-submerged transgressions of Li Ping'er. Like the addict monks, she also "traded the bricks and tiles" of the wall of Hua Zixu's old house for her pleasure. The architectural is the moral. The architectural-moral account of the temple demonstrates that her pleasure, constructed upon the karmic destruction of the bricks and tiles, will not be lasting. Indeed, the answer is not withheld for long. Two chapters later, in Chapter 59, her child Guan'ge 官哥, the fruit of her pleasure, falls dead, which in turn leads to her own breaking, reaffirming that the karmic cosmos repays destruction with destruction.

The work of *Dao* in the world of *Jin Ping Mei* is not limited by punishment. However thorough the karmic economy might be, the moral cosmos of this novel arrives at a reconstruction beyond destruction. This is the purpose that the emergence of Abbot Dao ultimately serves. In response to his petition, Ximen Qing promises a donation of five hundred taels of silver. In light of this novel's narrative grammar of architectural-morality, his contribution for the reconstruction of the temple implies an investment in good karma. This virtuous expenditure, unlike his general pattern of moral and economic dissipation, anticipates a karmic force that counterbalances the retribution due him. The

[34] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 57:691. *Plum*, 3:397.

karmic economy records both black and red figures. The movement of *Dao* is not monolithic.

Even Ximen Qing's good deed, though it evokes wholesome karma on its surface, is not simply good nor necessarily efficacious. His unexpected beneficence in this scene is built on at least three thematic discordances, demonstrating that the dialectical movement of *Dao* involves a complicated sum of different karmic forces. The first comes from the source of Ximen Qing's beneficence. While the donation is a moral act by itself, such an architectural reconstruction is, ironically enough, dependent on the very wealth that has caused and will incur him evil karma, eventually leading him to destruction. Thus, money can be said here to be playing an ambivalent role: it fuels his debauchery while also mediating his goodness. More ironic than the money itself is his motivation for the donation. The text repeatedly refers to Ximen Qing's love of his newly-born son as a major reason for his good deed. In the scene in which Dao is brought before Ximen Qing, the narrator states: "now that he is in such a state of bliss over the birth of Guan'ge, he wished to perform some charitable deeds for the benefit of his infant son" (新得官哥，心下十分歡喜，也要幹些好事保佑孩兒).[35] After Ximen Qing's financial pledge, the narrator reaffirms its psychological grounding: "Preserving good fortune and dispelling disaster are the considerations of parents" (保福消災父母心).[36] These recurrent moral rationales of Ximen Qing's good deed point to the peculiarity of this event. The unvirtuous agent is doing a virtuous act under the mantle of fatherhood. In this sense, Guan'ge, a fruit of Ximen Qing's transgression—his relationship with Li Ping'er—as

[35] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 57:693. *Plum*, 3:402.

[36] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 57:695. *Plum*, 3:407.

well as the immediate reason for his current benevolence, can be said to be playing a double role: this would-be dead child not only brings Ximen Qing's previous moral failing back but also draws his ever-buried goodness out. Like the money that channels both indulgences and good deeds, Guan'ge concerns both sides of Ximen Qing's moral nature.

Another inconsistency underlying this offering event lies in its result. Despite the narrator's auspicious comment on Ximen Qing's benevolence, Ximen Qing's exertion will come to nothing. His most beloved son and wife are soon to die. These tragic results suggest the futility of Ximen Qing's good deed. Nevertheless, the narrator's favorable tone in describing Ximen Qing's donation envisions another layer of karmic economy on the other side of unavoidable retribution.[37] This hermeneutic ambiguity places Ximen Qing's good deed in a potential relationship with a later sequence that sees karmic compensation. Abrupt though this sudden revelation of Ximen Qing's benevolence—as abrupt as Dao's visit—may be in its punctuation of the narrative up to this point, it initiates another phase of the narrative in which the karmic cosmos reconstructs unvirtuous characters while punishing them.

Indeed, following soon after Dao's visit, those events that occur around the second Double Yang Festival embody the sum of the inconsistent movement of *dao*. The destruction of Li Ping'er's body-house is fulfilled exactly in accordance with the weight dictated by karma. But this festival also surfaces another kind of karmic force that anticipates her redemption.

[37] Wanhui (萬迴), the founding figure of the Temple of Eternal Bliss, is suggestive of the redemptive efficacy of Ximen Qing's good deed. Wanhui puns with "to recompense" (*wan hui* 挽回).

The New House

The second Double Yang Festival featured in Chapter 61 consists of two opposing events. On one side, the Ximen household celebrates the day in the household's garden. Ximen Qing hosts a singer named Second Sister Shen 申二姐, and invites his wives and their maids to enjoy her performance. On the other side, Li Ping'er's illness casts a shadow over this festive moment. Forced to come out while in poor health, she manages to listen to songs alongside her fellow wives. Meanwhile, two of Ximen Qing's sworn brothers, Chang Shijie 常時節 and Ying Bojue 應伯爵, and, soon after, Wu Kai 吳鎧—Wu Yueniang's elder brother—visit Ximen Qing, and they hold another banquet in the front house. At the same time, Li Ping'er loses consciousness from excessive blood discharge.

The three guests visiting the Ximen household at this catastrophic moment are bound together in that they either explicitly or implicitly address their own house-related issues: Chang Shijie brings food to Ximen Qing in gratitude for purchasing a house for him a few days prior; Ying Bojue recognizes the value of chrysanthemum pots received from Eunuch Director Liu 劉太監 who supervises the imperial brickyard and offers Ximen Qing bricks for the construction of his villa; and Wu comes to pay a part of the loan he received from Ximen Qing for repairing the local charity granary. Respectively featuring a house newly moved into, pots gifted from a brick producer, and the repair of a granary, these house-related issues, with the concurrent breaking of Li Ping'er as their background, imply that this "festive" chapter conveys another architectural-moral narrative.

In fact, these house-related issues exist in continuity with a couple of sub-narratives about new houses that begin from Chang Shijie's story, told in Chapter 59. He brings the issue of his new house to Ximen Qing who is just experiencing the crisis of his son falling into coma, and reappears when Ximen Qing purchases the house for him in the following chapter. The same chapter interweaves Chang Shijie's story with two other new-house events: Li Ping'er sees Hua Zixu in a dream, and he informs her of his recent move into a new house; and Ximen Qing opens a shop and holds a party. The plots concerning new houses and house issues appearing between Chapter 59 and 62 can thus be summarized as following:

(Chapter 59)	Chang Shijie's visit at the moment Guan'ge falls into a coma Guan'ge's death and his funeral
(Chapter 60)	New houses (a) Hua Zixu's new house in Li Ping'er's dream (b) Ximen Qing's shop-opening and party (c) Ximen Qing's purchase of a house for Chang Shijie
(Chapter 61)	The second Double Yang Festival day gathering (d) Chang Shijie's visit at the moment of Li Ping'er's collapse (e) the chrysanthemum pots gifted by Eunuch Director Liu (f) Wu Kai's visit to repay the loan for the repair of the granary
(Chapter 62)	The death of Li Ping'er

In this section, I will argue that these new-house events and house-related issues annotate the meanings of the deaths of Guan'ge and Li Ping'er. The house-narratives fill out the tragic sequence between the two deaths, providing moral frameworks for the deaths both in retrospect and in advance. If death can be seen as a kind of house event in which one transmigrates from one space of being to another horizon, these sub-narratives concerning houses cast and recast the meanings of the deaths in the Ximen household.

Among these sub-narratives, Chang Shijie's house-purchasing episode stands out. First, structurally, the episode covers a wide range of narrative space stretching from the portent of Guan'ge's death to the second Double Yang Festival gathering that anticipates Li Ping'er's death. Also, the episode is juxtaposed with other house-related events in Chapter 60, combining to make a narrative unit. Despite his fragmentary emergences and marginalized presence in these chapters, Chang Shijie's house-purchasing episode acts as a thread that spans the deadly events of the Ximen household and weaves discrete house events into a sequence.

The beginning of Chang Shijie's episode is traced back to Chapter 56. In this chapter, he asks for financial aid from Ximen Qing for the procurement of a new house for him to move into, and Ximen Qing promises to purchase a new house once Chang Shijie finds one and offers him twelve taels of silver on the spot. Then, in Chapter 59, Chang Shijie visits Ximen Qing to report that he has found one. From here on, Chang Shijie's house-purchasing event begins to be intertwined with the development of the tragedies of the Ximen household:

> When the sun began to set in the west, Guan'ge, whom the wet nurse was holding on her lap, began to breathe irregularly. This threw the wet nurse into such consternation that she called to Li Ping'er, saying, "You'd better come and see. The black pupils of Little Brother's eyes have rolled out of sight, and in his mouth, he is: only breathing out, but not breathing in." Li Ping'er came over, embraced the child in her arms, began to cry, and called out to the maidservant, saying, "Quickly, go and fetch Father. Tell him that the child is about to stop breathing." It so happened that, just at this juncture, Chang Shijie had come to visit Ximen Qing in order to tell him that he had found the house he was looking for, that it had a twelve-foot-wide frontage and a second floor, making four rooms in all, both large and small, and that the price was only thirty-five taels of silver. When Ximen Qing heard the news from the interior that Guan'ge was in serious condition, he sent Chang Shiije on his way, saying, "I won't bother to see you off.

> I'll send someone with the silver to go look at the house with you another day." He then urgently made his way to Li Ping'er's quarters.
>
> 那消到日西時分，那官哥兒在奶子懷裏，只搐氣兒了。慌的奶子叫李瓶兒:「娘你來看，哥哥這黑眼睛珠兒只往上翻。口裏氣兒，只有出來的，沒有進去的！」這李瓶兒走來，抱到懷中，一面哭起來，叫丫頭:「快請你爹去，你說孩子待斷氣也！」可好常時節又走來說話，告訴:「房子兒尋下了，門面兩間，二層，大小四間。只要三十五兩銀子。」西門慶聽見後邊官哥兒重了，就打發常時節起身，說:「我不送你罷！改日我使人拏銀子和你看去。」急急走到李瓶兒房中。[38]

Obviously, this scene constructs a singularity in which Chang Shijie's discovery of a new house, a relatively secondary event, is inserted into a critical moment for the Ximen household. Zhang Zhupo approaches such singularity from the aspect of narrative tempo. He argues that this asymmetrical arrangement of the critical and secondary events exemplifies the author's ingenuity. Zhang writes: "By necessarily inserting a leisurely brush in the midst of a pressing situation, the writing can only be extremely brilliant (like this)" (必於忙中插一閑筆，文字直是千伶百俐).[39] Even though we might accept Zhang's reading, his terse comment raises a few questions about our comprehension of the author's intention. If the "leisurely brush" (*xian bi* 閑筆) of the author indeed seeks to control the narrative tempo, why is it necessary here, in an absolutely critical moment for the Ximen household? What does this temporary suspension of narrative, an otherwise unnecessary intervention, specifically aim to achieve? Most of all, why should it be Chang Shijie who suspends the narrative and why does he raise the issue of his house-purchase?

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[38] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 59:731. *Plum*, 3:475.

[39] *Jin Ping Mei: Huiping huijiao ben*, 59:882.

A clue to this question can be found in another appearance by Chang Shijie on the second Double Yang Festival in Chapter 61. Following his previous visit as Guan'ge's death is imminent in Chapter 59, his second visit as Li Ping'er is dying forms a pattern. To be more specific, the fact that both of his appearances include the issue of his house evokes a thematic relationship between the misfortunes of Ximen Qing's most beloved family members and the new house for which Chang Shijie requests Ximen Qing's aid. In other words, the significance of Chang Shijie's presence—that is, the author's intention by means of his "leisurely brush"—boils down to what the event in which Ximen Qing purchases a house for Chang Shijie is meant to convey. If Chang Shijie's presence as a mortal precursor is intertwined with Ximen Qing's aid in his purchasing of a house, the deaths in the Ximen household heralded by Chang Shijie's visits are inseparable from the meaning of the new house that Ximen Qing buys for him.

The context that incorporates the issue of Chang Shijie's new house, including his two death-heralding appearances, shows a thematic tendency in the approach to house issues. In particular, the two other house events in Chapter 60, namely (a) the late Hua Zixu's new house appearing in Li Ping'er's dream and (b) the opening ceremony of Ximen Qing's new shop, associate Ximen Qing's karmic history to house signifiers. Juxtaposed with and only slightly preceding (c) Ximen Qing's purchase of a house for Chang Shijie, these new-house events once again put the architectural-moral theme on the table. The two house events bring the previous transgressions of Ximen Qing and Li Ping'er back to the present.

The first of these two karmic house events begins with Li Ping'er's dream. In her increasingly serious vaginal discharges since the death of Guan'ge, she dreams of her late husband:

> She seemed to see Hua Zixu, holding Guan'ge in his arms, and calling out that he had found a new abode, and that she should join him in going there to live. Li Ping'er was not yet ready to relinquish Ximen Qing and refused to go with him, but she reached out with both hands to embrace the child, at which Hua Zixu gave her a shove that knocked her to the ground, causing her to wake up with a jerk, revealing it to be but a dream of the Southern Branch.
>
> 彷佛見花子虛抱著官哥兒叫他，新尋了房兒，同去居住。這李瓶兒還舍不得西門慶，不肯去。雙手就去抱那孩兒。被花子虛只一推，跌倒在地。撒手驚覺，卻是南柯一夢。[40]

The meaning of this oneiric event—that I marked as (a) above—is revealed by another new-house event—event (b)—directly following it. As a boat loaded with goods from the Southern Capital purchased by Laibao 來保 arrives, Ximen Qing opens a general store. At a party celebrating the opening of this new shop, held on "the fourth day of the ninth month" (九月初四日), occurring almost at the midpoint between his son's entrance to Hua Zixu's "new house"—on the twenty-third day of the eighth month—and his wife's death—on the seventeenth day of the ninth month—the text goes into great detail about the untimely carnivalesque celebration.[41] For example, the text describes at length a drinking game that Ximen Qing and his guests participate in. In the course of the game, Xie Xida 謝希大 makes a statement with a conspicuous reference to a "broken tile." This

[40] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 60:740. *Plum*, 3:492.

[41] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 60:740.

tongue-in-cheek phrase from Xie Xida highlights the karmic nature of this new-house party:

> "On top of the wall there is a broken tile. Below the wall there is a mule. The broken tile falls down, and lands on the mule. I don't know whether the broken tile wounded the mule, or whether the mule stamped the broken tile to pieces."
>
> 「牆上一片破瓦，牆下一疋騾馬。落下破瓦，打著騾馬。不知是那破瓦打傷騾馬，不知是那騾馬踏碎了破瓦。」[42]

Whatever Xie Xida's intentions might actually be, this suggestive jest points to the prior assignations of Ximen Qing and Li Ping'er. While the wall's broken tile unequivocally evokes Li Ping'er, the horse-like image of the mule invokes the text's frequent association of horses and mules with virility, mostly that belonging to Ximen Qing.[43] In other words, Xie Xida's joke about the mule and the tile recalls the transgression that Ximen Qing and Li Ping'er committed around the wall. Here Xie Xida assumes the place of the narrator's voice, which informs the advent of karmic force, by recalling the evil karma of Ximen Qing and Li Ping'er's past.

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[42] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 60:744. *Plum*, 3:499.

[43] An example of this phallic association with horses is from a poetic description of the sexual affair between Ximen Qing and Wang Liu'er 王六兒 in Chapter 38: "When he presses his way into the portal, it is hard to bear. But he pulls up on the reins, wheels his steed about, and returns triumphant to the fray" (放在戶中難禁受，轉絲韁，勒回馬; 親得勝). *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 38:445-446. *Plum*, 2:389. The words "the horse's eye" (*ma yan* 馬眼), meaning "the mouth of the urethra," explicitly refer to the penis. Chapter 50 describes Ximen Qing "daubing [aphrodisiac] in the eye of his urethra" (安放在馬眼內) and Chapter 79 shows Pan Jinlian "putting a glob of aphrodisiac ointment in the mouth of his urethra" (取膏子藥安放馬眼內). *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jin Ping Mei: huijiao ben* 新刻繡像批評金瓶梅: 會校本, eds. Yan Zhaodian 閆昭典, Wang Rumei 王汝梅, Sun Yancheng 孫言誠, and Zhao Bingnan 趙炳南 (Xianggang: Sanlian shudian, 2014), 50:645, 79:1142. *Plum*, 3:209, 4:638. David Roy analyzes the phallic punning in the description of Ximen Qing riding his horse in chapter 79. See *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei, Volume Four: The Climax* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011), 846, endnote 24.

The purchase of Chang Shijie's new house is arranged at the end of this chain of karmic house events—consisting of (a) Li Ping'er's dream about Hua Zixu moving into a new house and (b) Xie Xida's mention of a "broken tile" at the party for the shop's opening. On the day after the party, Ximen Qing sends fifty taels of silver via Ying Bojue. This tentatively cuts off the narrative thread concerning Chang Shijie's house-purchase until Chang Shijie returns to express his gratitude on the Double Yang Festival. At this juncture in the narrative, the narrator concludes the narration of Ximen Qing's uncommon benevolence with a moralistic comment: "Everything else among the myriad possibilities must be adjudged inferior; But who is there who understands that secret acts of virtue are the best?" (一切萬般皆下品，誰知陰德是良圖).[44] In parallel with the karmic implications of the two previous house events of (a) and (b), the narrator's comments—and especially the term "hidden virtue" (*yin de* 陰德)—imbue (c) the new house Ximen Qing purchases for Chang Shijie with a karmic connotation, albeit in a different sense from that of previous houses. Along with the evil karma evoked by the two earlier house events in this Chapter—(a) and (b)—the wholesome karma that Ximen Qing registers by his good deed regarding the final house, that which he purchases for Chang Shijie, constitutes karmic forces impacting the Ximen household.

The "hidden virtue" that Ximen Qing accumulates in his contribution to another's house is reminiscent of another of his good deeds, the earlier donation to the reconstruction of the Temple of Eternal Bliss. On the one hand, this expenditure for the temple establishes a narrative pattern: Ximen Qing's house-related benevolence for another is followed by the death of one of his family members. Shortly after his offering

[44] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 60:747. *Plum*, 3:504.

for the temple, his son Guan'ge dies. After he provides aid to Chang Shijie, his wife Li Ping'er dies. In this light, the reference to "hidden virtue" is important in that it hints at how the text structures the tragic sequence from Guan'ge's death to that of Li Ping'er. With the karmic economy as a framework, an economy that the "hidden virtue" conveys, the new-house sequence schematized above can be restated here extending it to Chapter 57 to include the episode of Ximen Qing's previous donation for the temple:

Chapter 57	(+) (–)*	Abbot Dao's visit and Ximen Qing's donation
Chapter 59	(+) (–)	Chang Shijie's visit at the moment of Guan'ge's coma
Chapter 60	(–)	Hua Zixu's new house in Li Ping'er's dream
	(–)	Xie Xida's joke at Ximen Qing's shop-opening party
	(+)	Ximen Qing's purchase of a house for Chang Shijie

* (+): an accumulation of wholesome karma; (–): a reminder of evil karma accrued in the past

This karma ledger reveals the three figures who are related to the house motif in Chapter 60—Hua Zixu, Xie Xida, and Chang Shijie—as figural echoes of Abbot Dao. As I have argued, Dao has dual roles in the narrative. First, he serves as a reminder of the evil karma that Li Ping'er and Ximen Qing have accumulated. By means of his mentioning the dilapidated temple, involving the breaking of tiles and bricks, Dao brings to the fore the couple's transgression. Second, Dao provides a chance for Ximen Qing to incur good karma. The three characters in Chapter 60 share Dao's dual roles. The house issues raised by Hua Zixu and Xie Xida bring the past transgressions of Li Ping'er and Ximen Qing back to the present, whereas the house event involving Chang Shijie serves as a space for Ximen Qing to store up good karma. As a result, in completely opposite senses, these characters suggest the operations of *dao*. In the same manner that Dao's visit both prefigures the culmination of evil karma and initiates the accumulation of good karma

through Ximen Qing's good deed, the good and evil karma heralded by these three figures in Chapter 60 will soon see their fruits.

The two main events that constitute Chapter 61 represent the expected karmic results from differing perspectives. As summarized in the beginning of this section, (d) Chang Shijie, (e) Ying Bojue, and—slightly later—(f) Wu Kai come to Ximen Qing to celebrate the Double Yang Festival, while Li Ping'er suffers from serious bleeding and falls unconscious. Obviously, Li Ping'er's breaking is a result of karmic retribution for her previous transgressions as foretold by (a) Hua Zixu and (b) Xie Xida in the preceding Chapter 60. The events of Chapter 61 suggest that an opposing force also intervenes in the retribution. These three guests at the festive gathering— Chang Shijie, Ying Bojue, and Wu Kai—convey the text's message about the karmic force that operates in the direction opposite to that of the retribution. They each foretell that Li Ping'er will be reborn as a new being who will have been recovered from her present breaking. In sum, the portentous outbreak of Li Ping'er's illness and the ironically festive gathering at the moment before Li Ping'er's death function together as a karmic receipt. The events describe both her retribution and redemption.

While (d) Chang Shijie's emergence brings to this chapter the textual concern with the positive karmic capital that Ximen Qing accrues, the narrative focus in this chapter shifts to Ying Bojue, another friend of Ximen Qing. If Chang Shijie's house-purchasing event indirectly envisions Li Ping'er's redemption as facilitated by Ximen Qing's good karma, Ying Bojue heralds the postmortem redemption for Li Ping'er in a rather direct way, invoking her ontological identity as a tile. Ying Bojue carries out his allusive role (e) in his recognition of the chrysanthemum pots that Ximen Qing has

received from Eunuch Director Liu. "Giving endless praise" (誇獎不盡) to the exceptional quality of the pots, Ying Bojue says:

> "These are the double-brimmed pots manufactured from the finest clay in the imperial kilns, and are durable and slow-draining. They are made from clay that has been strained through silken sieves and kneaded under foot until it becomes a thick paste, just like that used in the firing of the finest quality bricks in Suzhou. Where could one go to find articles of this quality these days?"
>
> 「這盆正是官窯雙箍鄧漿盆，又吃年代，又禁水漫，都是用絹羅打，用腳跐過泥，纔燒造這個物兒。與蘇州鄧漿磚一個樣兒做法。如今那裏尋去!」[45]

The context of Li Ping'er's imminent breaking presents a redemptive image of Li Ping'er in the sturdy ceramic pots. The pots carry out a symbolic ritual that redeems Li Ping'er from her bleeding, and, albeit metaphorically, fills the lack of the fragile ceramic figure, a lack moral as well as corporeal.

A popular Buddhist tradition provides a textual reference for the ritual valence of the pots. Known as *The Blood Bowl Sutra* (*Xue pen jing* 血盆經), this apocryphal Buddhist scripture presents a religious prescription for those who suffer from symptoms such as Li Ping'er's. According to the sutra, women "who died in labor fall into a blood pool formed by the age-long accumulation of female menses, and are forced to drink that blood," while the chant of repentance from the sutra would save them.[46] Indeed, Li Ping'er's request of Nun Wang 王 in one of her last moments demonstrates that the

[45] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 61:759. *Plum*, 4:23.

[46] Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 73. "In an oft-read tract of the *baojuan* genre," Faure also argues, "it is said that sinners falling into this hell are men and women who have committed murder in a past life, women who died after childbirth, women who transgress taboos, women and men who fornicate during forbidden periods, and so forth" (Faure, *The Power of Denial*, 74). Most of the conditions listed here apply to Li Ping'er.

representation of Li Ping'er's breaking is in part associated with the popularly held belief in the blood pool.

> "I hope you, after I am before long dead, would invite some nuns on my behalf and chant words of repentance from *The Blood Bowl Sutra* several times so that my sinful karma may be somehow decreased."
>
> 望你到明日我死了，你替我在家請幾位師父，多誦些血盆經懺，我這罪業還不知墮多少罪業哩。[47]

The chrysanthemum pots exactly correspond to the hope that Li Ping'er holds and reveals in this passage. The pots envisage her posthumous reconstruction, liberated from her present leaking. If the chanting is an *ex post facto* ritualism in linguistic form, the pots of durability and containment carry out an *ex ante* ritualism in their material image. They are not so much ironic as iconic. Prior to the retributive death of Li Ping'er and even prior to her own request for a redeeming ritual, the pots perform the ritual on a symbolic level.[48]

In addition to the material nature of the pots, the fact that they are gifted by Eunuch Director Liu further elaborates their soteriological implication, especially in their

[47] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 62:775.

[48] Li Ping'er's postmortem transformation may support the efficacy of the symbolic ritual evoked by the pots. The text insinuates another enduring physical image of her rebirth through the name of place where she is reborn. Li Ping'er's soul appears in Ximen Qing's dream in Chapter 71 and states that she has been reborn to a household located at the "Cauldron-Making" (*zao fu* 造釜) alley of the Eastern Capital (*Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 71:916). The traditional idea of the Five Elements (*wu xing* 五行) cycle associates this container-named place with the salvific character of Li Ping'er's rebirth. In accordance with the natural procedure of the Five Elements from earth (*tu* 土) to metal (*jin* 金), Li Ping'er's rebirth in the "Cauldron-Making" alley can parallel the implied change in her physical nature from ceramic to metal. In other words, the "Cauldron-Making" opens a hermeneutic possibility that she has been reforged as a being of cauldron-like attributes in the "Cauldron-Making" alley. If this is the case, she will not be so susceptible to breaking as she was in her previous life. This continuum of transformation in Li Ping'er's body-image from a fragile vase to an enduring metallic pot defines the chrysanthemum pots as a preliminary image for Li Ping'er's postmortem redemption. Li Ping'er now appears as being less susceptible to breaking, ironically at the very moment when her permanent breaking begins.

specific relationship with house-related concepts. Liu's official appointment as one who "manages the brickyard" (*guan zhuan chang* 管磚廠) indicates this symbolic relationship between the pots and the concept of the house: Liu, who has sent the enduring pots to Ximen Qing, is a producer of bricks, the basic material of a house.[49] Furthermore, the conventional knowledge that the "brickyard" has also been called the "brick-tile yard" (*zhuan wa chang* 磚瓦廠) accounts for why the house-related figure Liu is summoned up in this current scene that relates the deadly bleeding of Li Ping'er. Considering that the "brick-tile yard" often produced tiles and ceramic goods as well as bricks, the emergence of a tile producer in this context of the breaking of the tile figure may not be coincidental.

In fact, Liu's symbolic engagement with Li Ping'er's breaking forms a pattern. Traced all the way back to Chapter 31 for the first instance and spanning to Chapter 64, Liu's intermittent appearances mark major moments of Li Ping'er's bleeding. His first visit to Ximen Qing is a paradigmatic example. Chapter 31 features Liu visiting the Ximen household to celebrate the birth of Guan'ge. His visit comes shortly after the commotion that occurs in the household when a wine vessel is hidden by Li Ping'er's servant, Qintong 琴童. Pan Jinlian's malicious comment on the disappearance of the vessel and the interpretation of the comment given by the narrator thereafter point to this episode having karmic implications:

> "If you lose a flagon like this every time you have a party," said Pan Jinlian, "and don't make a fuss about it, even if you were as rich as Moneybags Wang, when the first sample of vinegar is not sour, the whole batch will tum out to be insipid [your wealth will not last long]." Gentle reader take note: These words of Pan Jinlian's were intended to reflect satirically on the fact that though Li Ping'er was

[49] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 31:357, 31:358, and passim.

> the first woman in the household to bear a child, something valuable had been lost on the occasion of its full-month celebration, which was an unlucky omen.
>
> 潘金蓮道：「若是吃一遭酒，不見了一把，不嚷亂，你家是王十萬，頭醋不酸到底兒薄。」看官聽說：金蓮此話譏諷李瓶兒首先生孩子滿月，不見了也是不吉利。[50]

Immediately after this passage, the wine vessel is discovered. In other words, Pan Jinlian's words function as a concluding statement for the episode in which the vessel is lost and regained. This temporal dovetailing of Pan Jinlian's words with the ending of the vessel episode makes it possible to surmise that the episode might be designed to convey a textual message much like Pan Jinlian's reference to the "unlucky omen." That the vessel is made of ceramic—like a tile—and is also a container for liquid—reminiscent of how the womb is referred to as the "blood chamber" (*xue shi* 血室) in premodern Chinese medicine—further supports this possibility.[51] In combination with the narrator's explanation, these material traits of the wine vessel suggest that the disappearance of the wine vessel foreshadows the mortal disappearance of the ceramic figure herself, Li Ping'er.[52] Liu's appearance is presented in juxtaposition with this portentous event. The birth of Guan'ge, which Liu has come to celebrate, turns out to be a major cause of Li Ping'er's bleeding.

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[50] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 31:356. *Plum*, 2:228.

[51] Wu, *Reproducing Women*, 111. The term "Blood chamber" also appears in this novel when Li Ping'er, close to her death, has her bleeding symptom diagnosed as "*Qi* having disrupted her blood vessels, causing an inflammation in her blood chamber (*xue shi*)." (氣冲血管，熱入血室). *Jin Ping Mei: Huiping huijiao ben*, 61:914. *Plum*, 4:31.

[52] Zhang Zhupo also reads an allusion to Li Ping'er's death in this chapter. Zhang argues that the fates of Li Ping'er and her son structurally correspond to the appearance and disappearance of Shutong 書童, Ximen Qing's secretary-*cum*-catamite. In his general comment on this chapter, Zhang says, "This chapter already places a hint as to the deaths of Li Ping'er and her son. On what grounds? As Guan'ge is born, Shutong just arrives [in the Ximen household]. As Ping'er dies, Shutong leaves." (此回已伏瓶兒母子俱死之機也。何則？官哥生而書童始來，瓶兒死而書童即去). *Jin Ping Mei: Huiping huijiao ben*, 31:460.

Chapter 54 rehearses Liu's role in heralding Li Ping'er's breaking. Unaware of Li Ping'er's initial affliction with vaginal discharge, Ximen Qing takes an excursion with his sworn brothers to the suburbs on a boat. The place at which he chances to arrive is none other than the "front of Eunuch Director Liu's villa" (劉太監莊前).[53] The place, the villa of a brick-tile yard supervisor, indicates the meaning of the concurrent event Ximen Qing is soon to be aware of: something has happened with regard to the destiny of his tile-natured wife. The content of this destiny is confirmed by Liu's next appearance in Chapter 64. Liu visits the Ximen household to express his condolences at Li Ping'er's funeral. Now she is dead. To sum up, Liu's appearances bookmark the history of Li Ping'er's breaking, from start to finish.

These patterned appearances of Liu delimit the implication of the pots he has sent to Ximen Qing for the Double Yang Festival. Just as his earlier appearances are intertwined with Li Ping'er's collapse, his surrogate emergence as the pots also involves an inauspicious heralding of her death. However, his emergence on this festive day is demarcated from his earlier ones in that he emerges as the enduring pots, containing a soteriological token. As he is associated with an imperial brick-tile yard where ceramic objects of the highest quality in the state are produced, his appearance-by-proxy as the enduring pots places a weight on the side of Li Ping'er's karmic scale opposite to retribution.

The last person who takes part in the Double Yang Festival gathering is Wu Kai—his emergence is marked as (f) in my summary of sequences above. In order to repay the loan he has recently received from Ximen Qing, he brings ten taels of silver,

[53] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 54:655.

half of the amount owed. This scene takes its context from Chapter 51, ten chapters before the present chapter on the Double Yang Festival events: Wu asks Ximen Qing for a loan in service of repairing the local charity granary so he might achieve official promotion and Ximen Qing generously lends the money to his brother-in-law. While it is woven throughout the novel that Ximen Qing's financing of others' houses is indexical to his accumulation of good karma—as in his contribution to the rebuilding of the Temple of Eternal Bliss and his aid to Chang Shijie—Wu's case is presented in more unequivocal architectural-moral language: charity granary (*she cang* 社倉). The analogy drawn between storing grains for the economic poor and storing good for the karmic poor qualifies Wu as a guest at the salvific gathering of the second Double Yang Festival.

Aside from the moral nature of the charity granary, the timeline in which Wu processes its repair also buttresses the karmic implication of the granary. A period of time one month from the current Double Yang Festival, when Wu expects its repair to be completed, almost coincides with Li Ping'er's funeral procession. Since it is the ninth day of the ninth month now, the expected completion of the repair falls around the ninth day of the tenth month. The funeral procession is carried out on the twelfth day of the tenth month. On the day of the cortège, Chen Jingji 陳經濟, who plays the ritual role of surrogate son, signals the departure by "smashing a pot" (*shuai pen* 摔盆).[54] With this signal, Li Ping'er's earthly existence is declared terminated, and she then finally leaves the Ximen household for an intermediate space between this world and the world of the afterlife. The fact that the granary's maintenance is completed around the time of Li

[54] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 65:817. This scene forms a correspondence to her initial entrance to the Ximen household with "embracing a treasure vase" (抱著寶瓶). *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 19:215.

Ping'er's posthumous migration may indicate what Ximen Qing's good karma is spent on. Note that a storehouse in the Buddhist lexicon refers to the place where one accumulates karma.[55] Just at the moment that requires Li Ping'er to have karmic capital for her new life, the storehouse becomes ready to open. In the temporal coinciding of the completion of the granary's repairs and the cortège, the "storehouse" for the poor finds its beneficiary.

The salvific wholesome karma proposed by the three participants of the second Double Yang Festival gathering illustrates the narrative's soteriological vision. While Li Ping'er makes up for all the tiles she has broken with the breaking of her own body, the text arranges another chance for her in her next reincarnation. Her death does not itself mean that all karmic reckoning is completed. Another salvific phase awaits her.

Coming ten chapters after the description of the second Double Yang Festival, Chapter 71 embodies the soteriological vision that extends to the next life, again in the language of the house motif. When Ximen Qing stays in the Eastern Capital for his new official appointment, Li Ping'er appears in his dream to introduce her "new house."

> "I've come looking for you," said Li Ping'er, "in order to tell you that I've found a new home. I especially wanted to see you tonight because I'll be moving in before long." … Sure enough, when they headed east past the memorial arch, they arrived at a small alley and, almost immediately thereafter, came to a double-leaved gate of white planks. Li Ping'er pointed it out, saying, "This is my home." No sooner had she finished speaking, than she shook herself loose and went inside. Ximen Qing hastily stepped forward to stop her but suddenly awoke with a start to find that it was but a dream of the Southern Branch.
>
> 李瓶兒道:「奴尋訪至此，對你說，我已尋了房兒了。今特來見你一面，早晚便搬取去也。」… 果然往東轉過牌坊，到一小巷，旋踵見一座雙扇白板

[55] For example, Yogācāra Buddhism posits that karmic seeds are stored in the "storehouse-consciousness" (*ālayavijñāna*). Dan Lusthaus, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogacara Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih Lun* (London: Routledge, 2002), 193.

> 門，道:「此奴之家也。」言畢，頓袖而入。西門慶急向前拉之，恍然驚覺，乃是南柯一夢。[56]

The next day, Ximen Qing finds this house in reality. On his way through the "Cauldron-Making" alley, he sees a house with "a double-leaved gate of white planks, exactly like the one he had seen in his dream" (雙扇白板門，與夢中所見一般), and hears from residents in the neighborhood that it belongs to Commander Yuan's 袁 household, to which Li Ping'er was predicted to be reborn at her funeral.[57]

In order to explain the karmic implication of Li Ping'er's new house, the text inserts an almost half-chapter-long narrative before and after the oneiric event: Ximen Qing mediates the sale of a house belonging to his former colleague Xia Yanling 夏延齡 to a newly appointed He Yongshou 何永壽. One problem with this event is the discrepancy between its length and significance. Despite the extensive textual space invested in the event, it has little significance for later narrative developments. He Yongshou and his new house rarely concern Ximen Qing's household henceforth. Nevertheless, the episode in which Ximen Qing mediates the house sale occupies almost the entire first half of Chapter 71. It is not until Ximen Qing's completion of the contract that the meaning of this lengthy narrative is specified. On the very night of the contract, having thus fulfilled his narrative role as a mediator of the sale, Ximen Qing sees Li Ping'er in his dream as quoted above.

Traditional Chinese narrative theory accounts for this kind of structural imbrication of a secondary narrative with a major one in the framework of "displaying

[56] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 71:915-916. *Plum*, 4:323.

[57] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 71:917. *Plum*, 4:325.

the bait" (*nong yin* 弄引), a narrative technique that defines such a secondary narrative as bait, supposedly to be connected to a major narrative to follow. Jin Shengtan 金聖嘆 (1608-1661) introduces this technique in his "How to Read the Fifth Book of Genius" (*Du di-wu caizi shufa* 讀第五才子書法): "This means that when there is an important section of writing, it is best not to start in abruptly; rather, a passage of minor interest should be used to lead into it" (謂有一段大文字，不好突然便起，且先作一段小文字在前引之).[58] According to this compositional principle, the narrative role of the house-contract episode ("a passage of minor interest") is to prepare for Li Ping'er's announcement of her rebirth—namely, her move to a "new house" ("an important section of writing"). Indeed, the two officials, whose contract Ximen Qing mediates, alike anticipate Li Ping'er's transmigration through their names, which suggest the evanescence of life. Xia Yanling 夏延齡 puns on "how can one extend life?" (何延齡) while He Yongshou 何永壽 literally means "how can one gain an eternal lifespan?"[59] As these twin names suggest, Li Ping'er has finished her transitory life and moved on to another one.

[58] David L. Rolston, *How to Read the Chinese Novel* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 142.

[59] Dialectological evidences indicate the phonetic proximity of *xia* 夏 and *he* 何. The Song dynasty rhyme book, *Da Song chongxiu guangyun* 大宋重修廣韻 (*Expanded Book of Rhymes, Repeatedly Revised under the Great Song*) reads both characters as [*hia*] ("*hu ya qie*" 胡雅切) and [*he*] ("*he ge qie*" 胡歌切). See "Chouji xia 丑集下," *Kangxi Zidian* 康熙字典 (Tongwen Shuju edition, 1887), 245 and "Ziji Zhong 子集中," *Kangxi Zidian*, 98. Modern Shanghai 上海 dialects pronounce each character as [ɦo] and [ɦa] respectively (Li Rong 李榮, ed., *Shanghai fangyan cidian* 上海方言詞典 [Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997], 168 and 73). *Xia* also sounds [ɦo] in various dialects including those dialects of Suzhou 苏州, Ningbo 寧波, and Wenzhou 温州. See Li Rong, ed., *Suzhou fangyan cidian* 蘇州方言詞典 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1993), 109; Li Rong, ed., *Ningbo fangyan cidian Ningbo fangyan cidian* (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), 105; and Li Rong, ed., *Wenzhou fangyan cidian* 温州方言詞典 (Nanjing: Jiangsu jiaoyu chubanshe, 1998), 231.

In addition to heralding Li Ping'er's reincarnation, Ximen Qing's mediation of the house sale has a more fundamental role in thematic terms: it reveals Ximen Qing as a mediator of the "new house" for Li Ping'er. By juxtaposing Li Ping'er's move to her new house with Ximen Qing's mediation of a new residence for his colleague, the composition of the text suggests Ximen Qing has contributed to Li Ping'er's move.

This is by no means arbitrary. The text anticipates Li Ping'er's postmortem redemption and Ximen Qing's role for the redemption ten chapters prior, namely in the Double Yang Festival in Chapter 61. In this tragic moment, at the beginning of Li Ping'er's death, the three house-related issues of the festive day envision Li Ping'er's redemption in advance. The chrysanthemum pots gifted by the brickyard supervisor Eunuch Director Liu reconstruct Li Ping'er's broken body, and Wu Kai's repair of the charity granary arranges a karmic house for Li Ping'er to move into. Running parallel to the pots and granary, Chang Shijie's new house serves as confirmation that the karmic capital for Li Ping'er's new house is also arranged.

Ximen Qing's monetary expenditures thus are salient to the causality between the earthly houses of Chapter 61 and Li Ping'er's postmortem house appearing in Chapter 71. The text scarcely describes Li Ping'er's role in her own redemption. The narrative in which Ximen Qing's money is used for the houses for others in need partly explains why the soteriological prospect for Li Ping'er is carried out not through Li Ping'er herself but through Ximen Qing. His status as the final authority for the expenditures of the household constitutes a rationale for Li Ping'er's redemption in the cosmic market of karma presupposed by this novel. The money that Ximen Qing spends produces a domain of exchange for equivalent exchangeable values. Li Ping'er's redemption being

represented by her new house is derived as a kind of good that figures in this market. In other words, funds that Ximen Qing spends for Chang Shijie's house and the repair of the charity granary are converted into karmic values, which are in turn used for Li Ping'er's new house.

The causal connection between money and redemption and money as a source of redemption—these physio-moral themes integrate the *qi* monistic vision of *Jin Ping Mei*. Exactly symmetrical to Li Ping'er's transgressions—including her smuggling of Hua Zixu's wealth and the physical destruction of his house—leading to the breaking of her body and eventually her death, Ximen Qing's money contributes to Li Ping'er's redemption. Whether it is the corporeal, the material, or the moral, values do not exist in isolation. They keep flowing, being connected to another realm, and being exchanged for other values. The prospects for redemption and moral regeneration are produced in the incessant flow and as a result of borderless transvaluation.

This transvaluative poetics supports the distinctive narrative status that belongs to Li Ping'er, marked off from those of the other wives in the Ximen household. Li Ping'er's karmic history—including the material and moral ruptures she causes within Hua Zixu's household, the breaking of her own body as a result of earlier transgressions, and finally her redemption and its karmic financing by means of Ximen Qing's material benevolence—illustrate the transvaluative operation of the karmic rule in a way that is clearer than in any of the other sub-narratives featuring Ximen Qing's wives. Although Wu Yueniang contributes to Ximen Qing's posthumous deliverance by giving birth to Xiao'ge, who will atone for his father's evil karma, the text does not endow Wu Yueniang herself with a strong physio-moral narrative as it does Li Ping'er. Wu

Yueniang's role is also limited with regard to Ximen Qing's sexual expenditure, one of the major factors in the physio-moral narrative of this novel. Ximen Qing does not have sexual relations with Wu Yueniang as frequently as he does with some of his other wives, including Li Ping'er; instead, Wu Yueniang receives focus in the text more for her symbolic quality as the formal wife of the Ximen household. Another significant female character, Pan Jinlian, has stronger connections to Ximen Qing in terms of his material and sexual expenditure. However, she does not embody the soteriological vision of this novel as extensively as Li Ping'er does. The text does not hint at Pan Jinlian's redemption until she is brutally killed by Wu Song 武松, after which her former maidservant Pang Chunmei 龐春梅 retrieves and buries Jinlian's dismembered body and thereafter regularly performs rituals for her.[60] More importantly, Pan Jinlian does not give birth to a son and thereby fails to produce a redemptive moment for Ximen Qing, in contrast to the moment when Li Ping'er's son draws out Ximen Qing's natural paternal love and the benevolence that ensues and the moment when Wu Yueniang's son atones for Ximen Qing's evil karma by entering into the Buddhist priesthood. In sum, Li Ping'er integrates the *qi* monistic vision of *Jin Ping Mei*. By herself becoming a channel for and subject of transvaluation, Li Ping'er pieces together transgressions, retributions, and redemption. These different phases of karma act both on and through her body.

[60] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 88:1183.

Houses for Death and Rebirth

Residing in Death

The proposition that the house conveys karmic implications is also true of the novel's fourth decade (Chapters 30 to 39). As these chapters describe a series of events concerning new houses, the architectural-moral implications of the karmic houses related to Li Ping'er likewise frame these houses newly purchased by Ximen Qing: the houses reflect his morality, parallel his corporeal state, and foreshadow his fate. Specifically, the houses aligned with his official and economic ascendency nonetheless bring signifiers of death in themselves, and overlay a retributive future onto moments of present pleasure. In this section, I will shift my focus from Li Ping'er to Ximen Qing and examine a series of karmic houses that prefigure Ximen Qing's karmic fate. Paired with his ever-increasing desire, these houses serve both as narrative settings and as records of Ximen Qing's evil karma anticipating his impending doom.

The story of Widow Zhao's 趙 villa in Chapter 30 is a prelude to his karmic fate. This house, which Ximen Qing purchases soon after Guan'ge's birth, is tainted with various subtexts betokening Ximen Qing's death. These are even present in the house's introduction. Zhang An 張安, who "takes care of the graveyard" (看墳), brings the issue to Ximen Qing's attention.[61] The reason why the graveyard keeper mediates the purchase of the villa is that it is adjacent to the Ximen family cemetery. Asked by Pan Jinlian about the graveyard keeper's visit, Ximen Qing answers:

[61] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 30:339.

> "Zhang An came the other day to tell me that Widow Zhao's country estate, which is adjacent to our ancestral graveyard, is being offered for sale, landed property and all. The asking price is three hundred taels of silver, but I'm only willing to give her two hundred and fifty taels. I instructed Zhang An to negotiate with her. If the sale is agreed to, I'll have Ben the Fourth and Chen Jingji go out to pay over the silver. Inside [the house] is a four-eyed well, from which water can be drawn."
>
> 「張安前日來說，咱家墳隔壁趙寡婦家莊子兒，連地要賣，價錢三百兩銀子。我只還他二百五十兩銀子，教張安和他講去。若成了，我教賁四和陳姐夫去兌銀子。裏面一眼井，四個井圈打水。」[62]

This introduction to the widow's villa encodes the theme of mortality via three factors described in the context of the sale of the villa: the one who introduces the issue of the purchase (a graveyard keeper), the location (near the cemetery), and the exterior character of the house. While the first two factors are relatively self-evident in their associations with death, the final factor about the "four-eyed well" needs explanation.

The archetypal description of a house in this novel normally includes the number and layout of rooms—see Chang Shijie's words quoted above about the new house he has found. Strange enough, however, Ximen Qing's impression here about the widow's villa is characterized by the "four-eyed well," literally "a well with four mouths." This uncommon description for a house is rationalized by its potential reference to Ximen Qing's fate, which will be ultimately proven by his last words in his sickbed: "You one wife and four concubines, look out for each other" (一妻四妾，攜帶著住).[63] The topological image, one main and four subordinates, associates the well and the last words of its new owner. Why four? Why does the well have only four mouths in spite of the fact that the number of concubines in the Ximen household is five? This discrepancy is solved

[62] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 30:340. *Plum*, 2:195.

[63] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 79:1088. *Plum*, 4:656.

at the point of Ximen Qing's death. Since it is long after Li Ping'er's death, there are only four concubines remaining. The number of concubines living at the time of his death presents the present owner of the villa at the time of Ximen Qing's purchase as another factor that signifies the villa as a symbol of mortality: like Widow Zhao, the remaining women of the Ximen household will also own the villa as widows.

When Ximen Qing is eventually buried in the family cemetery next to the villa, the purchase of the villa turns out to have been a self-fulfilling prophecy. As suggested by Pan Jinlian's response to the new house in this scene—"What indeed! Go ahead and buy it. In the future when your womenfolk have occasion to visit the graveyard, they'll have something pleasurable to do when they get there" (咱買了罷。明日你娘每上墳，到那裏好游玩耍子)—he is preparing the place where his wives will rest while they visit his grave.[64] The only textual appearance of Zhang An hereafter clearly marks the correspondence between the two contradictory points—the current heyday and the future, after Ximen Qing's demise. Zhang An merges again in Chapter 81, in which he, in mourning clothes, sends Ximen Qing's obituary to Han Daoguo 韓道國.[65] This parallelism between his only two appearances reveals his role in the text. Zhang An brings the inaccessible moment of the future into the festive present. He is a temporal marker. Like the villa that he mediates, he embodies time, synchronic play, and an

[64] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 30:340. *Plum*, 2:196.

[65] In this obituary sent to Han Daoguo, the text confirms that Zhang An, who "takes care of the graveyard," is supposed to and finally does take care of Ximen Qing's grave. "His Honor has passed away, and tomorrow, the ninth day of the third month, is the day of the seventh weekly commemoration of his death. The First Lady has asked me to transport this load of wine, rice, and food boxes to the graveyard in preparation for the ceremony of burning paper money there tomorrow" (張安說: 老爹死了，明日三月初九日是斷七，大嫂交我拏此酒米食盒往墳上去，明日墳上與老爹燒布去也). *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 81:1108. *Plum*, 4:5.

incursion of the future into the blind present. Indeed, his name puns backwards as "to bury" (*anzang* 安葬).

That the death of Ximen Qing is inscribed in the villa is reinforced through the voice of Ben the Fourth (Bensi 賁四), who is in charge of its remodeling. In Chapter 35, Ben discusses with Ximen Qing the matter of procuring construction materials and their meeting then leads to a banquet. While playing a drinking game at the banquet, Ben tells a suggestive joke:

> "A magistrate was interrogating a suspect in a case of illicit sexual intercourse and asked him, 'Initially, how did you go about violating her?' To which the man replied, 'Her head was facing east, and her feet were also facing east, when I did it.' 'Nonsense,' the magistrate responded. 'How could you have intercourse (*xingfang* 行房) in such a crooked position?' At which point a bystander came forward, knelt down, and said, 'Your Honor, if there is any vacancy in the Bureau of Penal Affairs (*xingfang* 刑房), I would be happy to fill it.'"
>
> 「一官問姦情事，問: 你當初如何姦他來？那男子說: 頭朝東，腳也朝東姦來。官云: 胡說！那裏有個缺著行房的道理？旁邊一個人走來，跪下說道: 告稟，若缺刑房，待小的補了罷。」[66]

This joke is based on the homophones, two words that are read "*xingfang*," which refer to both sexual intercourse and the Bureau of Penal Affairs; the joke thus allegorizes Ximen Qing, whose official position is with the bureau but whose main occupation, in actuality, is sexual intercourse. Ying Bojue's immediate response clarifies the connotation of the allegory: "Brother Ben, you know how to look out for yourself, don't you! After all, His Honor is not yet old. There might be something to be said for anything else, but you can hardly offer yourself as a replacement where his performance in the bedroom is

[66] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 35:418. *Plum*, 2:338.

concerned" (好賁四哥，你便益不失當家，你大官府又不老，別的還可說，你怎麼一個行房，你也補他的).[67] Although Ben asserts his "purity of intent" (*wu xin* 無心), Ying Bojue dismisses it and all the more clearly unmasks Ben's "purity of intent" with his blatantly sexual use of the images of the knife and sheath: "When there is no blade, you've nothing but the sheath" (沒了刀兒，只有刀鞘兒了).[68] Although not by Ben's "blade," readers will witness that his joke is realized right after Ximen Qing's death. Other "blades" indeed replace Ximen Qing's unofficial position at *xingfang* 行房 ("sexual intercourse"): none other than his son-in-law Chen Jingji takes Pan Jinlian's "sheath," and one of his servants, Laiwang 來旺, takes another of Ximen Qing's "sheaths," Sun Xue'er's 孫雪娥. In this light, Ben the Fourth's name, Bensi 賁四, is quite evocative. The character *ben* suggests an orthographical resemblance to *fen* 墳, meaning "burial mound," "tomb," and "to build a tomb," and *si*, as in the popular convention, puns on "death" (*si* 死). This possible implication for the construction supervisor's role explains the meaning of his work for the villa: he is building the tomb for its owner. As a symbolic repetition of Zhang An, Ben the Fourth likewise heralds the death of the new owner of the villa.

Chapter 31 adds another house to the catalog of karmic houses when Ximen Qing buys the house of Grand Householder Qiao's (Qiao dahu 喬大戶) family. Like the Widow Zhao's villa bordering his family cemetery, this neighboring house across from the Ximen household is also karmically encoded. The seed of this karma is traced back to

[67] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 35:418. *Plum*, 2:338.

[68] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 35:418. *Plum*, 2:338.

Chapter 22. Being enamored with Song Huilian 宋惠蓮, the wife of his servant Laiwang, Ximen Qing sends Laiwang to Hangzhou 杭州 on a business trip and enters into an affair with her while her husband is away. The Qiao household emerges as the background to this event that registers another of Ximen Qing's transgressions in his karmic ledger. When Wu Yueniang goes over to visit Qiao's wife for her birthday party, Ximen Qing invites Song Huilian to his Spring-Hiding Grotto (*Cang chun wu* 藏春塢) and commences the affair. Laiwang becomes aware of the relationship upon his return, and drunkenly swears at Ximen Qing in public (Chapter 25). Then, Ximen Qing, on the one hand, entraps Laiwang and makes a false charge of theft, and, on the other hand, comforts Song Huilian who is in distress over her falsely accused husband. The Qiao house is directly involved in the fate of Ximen Qing at this moment, when he promises her that he will buy the house: "One day soon I'll buy the Qiao family's property across the street and fix up a three-room house for you to live in. Once you've moved in over there the two of us can enjoy ourselves to our heart's content." (我明日買了對過喬家房，收拾三間房子，與你住。搬了那裏去，咱兩個自在玩耍).[69] Unfortunately, Song Huilian is unable to occupy the house, because she soon kills herself in response to her husband's exile to Xuzhou 徐州 (Chapter 26).

Regarding Ximen Qing's moral responsibility for Song Huilian's suicide, the text generally keeps silent at the moment of the event. However, the text uses the occasion of his later purchase of the Qiao house to weigh in on the past event of Song Huilian's suicide and Ximen Qing's underlying transgression *ex post facto*. This karmic message

[69] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 26:296. *Plum*, 2:109.

becomes clear in Chapter 33 when the retribution for Ximen Qing's past transgression surfaces. The house once promised to Song Huilian now brings about a death in the Ximen household. In an exact parallel to the birthday of Qiao's wife mentioned above, this karmic death occurs on the day after Wu Yueniang's birthday. Wu Yueniang, pregnant, visits the house as it is being remodeled and her foot slips, causing her to miscarry a son. An ironic intersection between Ximen Qing's possession of a new house and his wife's loss of pregnancy grounds the karmic nature of this event. A sequence in Chapter 59 that is structured with a similar ironic intersection of a house and a loss confirms the thematic typicality of the present context: right after Ximen Qing opens a silk shop in the Qiao house, Guan'ge is attacked by Pan Jinlian's cat and dies. At both points when a son of the Ximen household is lost, the Qiao house serves as the background to the tragedy. When the Qiao house is rebuilt, Wu Yueniang's fetal house collapses; when a shop opens in the house, another child closes his eyes.

In fact, the Qiao house, in its karmic nature, is intertwined with another house both structurally and thematically. The house on Lion Street, which once belonged to the late Hua Zixu and is now used as a thread shop, mirrors the would-be silk shop of the Qiao house. This thread shop again foregrounds the moral problems bound up with the Qiao house. The composition of Chapter 33 illustrates this thematic connection between the two karmic houses:

(a) Ximen Qing intends to open a thread shop and Ying Bojue recommends Han Daoguo as a manager.
(b) Pan Jinlian hides and then returns Chen Jingji's key to the pawnshop.
(c) On the day after her birthday, Wu Yueniang miscarries her fetus at the Qiao house.
(d) The younger brother of Han Daoguo, Han the Second (Han Er 韓二), and his sister in-law, as well as Han Daoguo's wife, Wang Liu'er 王六兒, are caught *in flagrante delicto* in an incestuous relationship.

This sequence can be divided into two parts that involve the two different houses. First, (b) Chen Jingji's loss of his key—a key is a small phallic object—is paired with (c) Wu Yueniang's subsequent loss of her male fetus at the Qiao house. Also, the bracketing events of (a) and (d) introduce the Han family, suggesting another crucial loss in the Ximen household germinated at the newly opened thread shop.

The text unspools the thread-like karma encoded in the thread shop by recalling Hua Zixu, a former owner of the place. Subsequent to the house-sequence above, the event in which Ximen Qing examines the case of incest in the Han household carries out this symbolic flashback through two ironic scenes. The first emerges in Ying Bojue's advice for Han Daoguo's legal defense. Ying Bojue suggests to Han Daoguo that he claim innocence regarding his incestuous brother and wife. Then, in the course of giving his advice, Ying Bojue invokes again the "bricks and tiles," the karmic symbols reminiscent of the tile-figure Li Ping'er and, ultimately, her original husband, Hua Zixu: "You only need to say 'I often stay away from home, and in my absence the bullies from the neighborhood are constantly pitching *bricks* and tossing *tiles* in order to insult my wife'" (你只說我常不在家，被街坊這夥光棍時常打磚掠瓦，欺負娘子).[70] The bricks and tiles that Ying Bojue fabricates perfectly evoke the bricks and tiles that Ximen Qing tossed in his assignations with Li Ping'er. Therefore, Ying Bojue's advice to exonerate the Han family ironically indicts Ximen Qing. It is interesting that Ximen Qing is the judge of the court. The textual reminiscence of Ximen Qing's past transgression suggests

[70] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 34:387. *Plum*, 2:283.

that while this is a case involving the Han household case on the surface, Ximen Qing judges his own past self on a symbolic level.

The second ironic scene arises via Ximen Qing's own words. Bribed by Han Daoguo, Ximen Qing chastises the bullies: "How dare you enter her house by climbing over the wall? Moreover, you did so while her husband was away from home, and she had only a young daughter in the house. Whatever you had in mind, if it was not seduction, it must have been robbery" (如何敢越牆進去？況他家男子不在，又有幼女在房中，非姦即盜了).[71] This question from Ximen Qing more specifically evokes the transgression he committed earlier at Hua Zixu's home. As in his condemnation of the bullies, Ximen Qing himself climbed over the wall of Hua Zixu's house and stole his wife Li Ping'er "while her husband was away from home." In other words, the "seduction" and "robbery" for which he blames the bullies are self-referential to his own deeds. The bully is Ximen Qing himself.

In sum, the case of Han Daoguo informs the realization of karmic retribution in two ironic ways: the case summons up Ximen Qing's past transgression up in his own court, and Ximen Qing lays blames for and judges his own past transgression. Through these two ironies, the case of Han Daoguo provides one layer of meaning for the newly opened thread shop. It stands for karma. Like a thread that connects one point to another, the thread shop represents the causal connection between Wu Yueniang's (and therefore also Ximen Qing's) loss of a fetus and Ximen Qing's past transgressions. (c) Wu Yueniang's miscarriage is the work of karma, prefigured by (b) the immediately prior event involving Chen Jingji's loss of his key and backgrounded by the karmic place of

[71] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 34:392. *Plum*, 2:292.

the Qiao house. Structurally sandwiching Wu Yueniang's miscarriage, events (a) and (d) concerning the Han family carry out a narrative reference to the manifestation of karmic force. When Ximen Qing judges the bullies as a reflection of himself in his own court, he, albeit unwittingly, confirms the retributive quality of the concurrent loss of his fetal son.

On the other hand, this ironic judgment also concerns the future returns that will be carried out through the soon-to-be opened thread shop. The subsequent event involving the Han family confirms this. While Han Daoguo leaves for the Eastern Capital to marry his daughter to Zhai Qian 翟謙—the majordomo of Grand Preceptor Cai Jing 蔡京—Ximen Qing becomes himself again a "robber" who enters another's house "while one's husband is away from home" and has an affair with Han Daoguo's wife, Wang Liu'er (Chapter 37). Then, the emergence of another new house informs the advent of yet another strand of karmic retribution. Ximen Qing, in his clandestine relationship with Wang Liu'er, introduces the house thus:

> "When Manager Han gets home, you ought to talk it over with him. I'd be willing to spend a few taels of silver to buy a house on Lion Street so the two of you could simply move over there to live. It would be nearer the silk goods store, on the one hand, as well as being more convenient for shopping and everything else."
>
> 「等韓夥計來家，你和他計較。等了獅子街那裏，替你破幾兩銀子，買所房子，等你兩口子亦發搬到那裏住去罷。鋪子裏又近，買東西諸事方便。」[72]

Wang Liu'er's ensuing remark soon debunks the blatant truth concealed in Ximen Qing's words: "Even with regard to your coming and going, it would have the advantage of obviating a good deal of gossip on the part of petty-minded people. As long as what we

[72] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 38:445. *Plum*, 2:387.

do is right, there's no reason to be afraid of anybody" (就是你老人家行走，也免了許多小人口嘴。咱行的正，也不怕他).[73] The house's convenience to Han Daoguo and his wife is nominal. It is, in fact, for Ximen Qing's own convenience to conceal the illicit relationship from the public eye.

This new house involved in Ximen Qing's assignations brings back its precursor, the Qiao house that Ximen Qing promised to Song Huilian in Chapter 26. Like the new house that he is now seeking to take for the wife (Wang Liu'er) of his shop manager (Han Daoguo), the Qiao house is originally a space for Ximen Qing to claim the wife (Song Huilian) of his servant (Laiwang) for himself. Nevertheless, there is a stark contrast between the two houses. The Qiao house is not given to Song Huilian on account of her abrupt suicide and ends up becoming a silk shop, whereas the other house is given to Wang Liu'er, the wife of the thread shop manager Han Daoguo. This continuity with and discontinuity from the Qiao house reveal the nature of the new house given to Wang Liu'er: it is a return of the Qiao house, yet now in a successful form. This new house for Wang Liu'er achieves the desire Ximen Qing sought but failed to achieve in his earlier relationship with Song Huilian.

At the point of his demise, this new house that he has purchased for Wang Liu'er turns out to be a space where the cosmic punishment for his earlier transgressions against Song Huilian and her husband Laiwang are meted out. In a fashion similar to that in which his fetal son is lost at the Qiao house he has promised to his former paramour Song Huilian, his own life will be lost at the new house for another of his paramours, Wang Liu'er. The entanglement of the two houses—the Qiao house and the late Hua Zixu house,

[73] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 38:445. *Plum*, 2:387.

the would-be silk shop and the current thread shop, a house that evokes Ximen Qing's unachieved desire and a house that realizes the desire, a house where Ximen Qing accrues evil karma and a house where karmic retribution is carried out—integrates the karmic history of Ximen Qing. In the intersection of the karmic houses, his past and future encounter each other.

The Womb-House

The new house for Wang Liu'er is predicated on the analogy between the body and the house, a seminal narrative grammar in this novel. The house is a space for her residence and also a spatial metonym of her body as a space for Ximen Qing to enter. If the house is a setting that channels retribution for Ximen Qing, this is on the metonymic order that identifies the female body-space with the actual house-space. However, the body as house also serves the function of the body as a site of redemptive rebirth. The very symbolic body as house where Ximen Qing realizes his desire and meets his retributive death mediates his redemptive rebirth. The consecutive house events of Chapter 39, with a brief opening event from Chapter 40 included, serve as trenchant examples of this embodied soteriology. Arranged at the end of the fourth decade, this series of house events presents an integration of all the karmic implications regarding the house cataloged thus far.

This soteriological narrative block in Chapter 39 begins with the narrator's introduction describing Ximen Qing's purchase of a house for Wang Liu'er, where the two share regular assignations. Then, the narration quickly moves on to Ximen Qing's arrangement of a Daoist rite for Guan'ge. This ritual event is narrated with intense focus

on details of the temple's magnificence, the sacrificial prayer, and the talismans. The extensive narration of the Daoist rite is followed by a gathering of the wives of the Ximen household to celebrate Pan Jinlian's birthday. The gathering prompts another extensive religious episode in this chapter: An abbess and Nun Wang deliver a Buddhist sermon about the reincarnation of a man. Nun Wang remains the narrative focus until the next morning, when Wu Yueniang asks her for an umbilical cord—supposed to be efficacious for fertility—and the nun promises it.

Following the discussion of Wang Liu'er's new house that introduces the house motif, the third and fourth sub-narratives about women's gatherings also engage architectural-moral themes in their analogies of the female body as a house-space. The Daoist rite props up this trope of the body-house. Declared during the rite, Guan'ge's Daoist name, Wu Yingyuan 吳應元, in its pun on *yinyuan* 因緣 (karmic relationship) evokes the complexity of Ximen Qing's karma. This complexity includes the varied meanings of the body-houses stated above as leading to Ximen Qing's sexual transgressions and his eventual rebirth. With the "karmic relationship" as a connecting thread, this sequence within Chapter 39 can be summarized as follows:

(a) Ximen Qing's purchase of a new house for Wang Liu'er
(b) Ximen Qing's Daoist rite for Guan'ge, and Guan'ge's Daoist name that alludes to *yinyuan*, the karmic relationship
(c) The Buddhist sermon about a man's reincarnation through uterine habitation
(d) Wu Yueniang's request for an umbilical cord, which heralds the birth of Xiao'ge, Ximen Qing's posthumous son and reincarnation

These four events are found together in an entanglement of contrasts, parallels, and juxtapositions. To be specific, (a) the karmic house that leads Ximen Qing to his death is bookended by (d) the womb-house that prepares for Ximen Qing's rebirth; (b) the Daoist

rite and (c) the Buddhist sermon are parallel religious rituals; and (c) the story featuring the rebirth of a canonical figure prefigures (d) the conception of Xiao'ge by the efficacy of the umbilical cord. All these intertwined elements, despite their structural complexity, converge into one theme: Ximen Qing's karmic death and redemptive rebirth.

The first house event in Chapter 39 is illustrative of a characteristic technique employed by the novel to associate a house with Ximen Qing's evil karma. Ximen Qing finally purchases a new house that he had promised to Wang Liu'er, and continues his illicit affair with her there. Like the Widow Zhao's villa that symbolically anticipates Ximen Qing's death (Chapter 30) and the Qiao house where Wu Yueniang miscarries her fetus as retribution for Ximen Qing's evil karma for Song Huilian's misfortune (Chapter 33), this new house for Ximen Qing's paramour also serves as a space that records his unbridled pleasure and thus accrues evil karma. The description of this new house makes explicit the karmic nature of the house:

> Ximen Qing had already initiated an affair on the outside with Han Daoguo's wife, Wang Liu'er. For this woman he had laid out a hundred twenty taels of silver to purchase a house on the east side of the stone bridge on Lion Street. The house consisted of a twelve-foot-wide frontage and four interior courtyards, receding along a vertical axis. … It was observed that, in the course of a month, Ximen Qing would come to pay her a visit three or four times; that he and Wang Liu'er were as hot for each other as burning charcoal, and that the clothes she wore and the household furnishings were no longer what they had been in the past.
>
> 西門慶外邊又刮剌上了韓道國老婆王六兒，替他獅子街石橋東邊，使了一百廿兩銀子，買了一所門面兩間，倒底四層房屋居住。… 見一月之間，西門慶也來行走三四次，與王六兒打的一似火炭般熱，穿著器用的，比前日不同。[74]

[74] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 39:453-454. *Plum*, 2:405.

The "burning charcoal" image integrates the elated mood described in this introduction to the new house. Ximen Qing's frequent visits and her proportionately increasing wealth form a celebrative atmosphere between the two lovers. However, the "burning charcoal," an image that obviously evokes *yang* energy, also implies the self-evident *yin* result, that it will be burnt up at some point in the future.[75] Indeed, Ximen Qing will have the penultimate intercourse of his life at this house, before he has his final intercourse with Pan Jinlian and falls into a coma (Chapter 79). In other words, along with Pan Jinlian's quarters within the Ximen household, this house for Wang Liu'er will background the process in which he comes to death, or his vitality turning to ash. This is what karma means in its literal sense: Ximen Qing burns his charcoal-vitality (cause) and becomes ash (effect).[76]

Structurally symmetrical to this event (a) that opens the house-sequence in Chapter 39, the last event of the sequence (d) in which Wu Yueniang requests an umbilical cord envisions another future event beyond Ximen Qing's retributive death. In opposition to Wang Liu'er's new house, the umbilical cord marks the beginning of a salvific thread for Ximen Qing. Given that the umbilical cord will indeed bear fruit in the form of Wu Yueniang's pregnancy with Xiao'ge, who is presented as Ximen Qing's reincarnation and as the redemption of Ximen Qing's evil karma, the umbilical cord and

[75] Andrew Plaks provides a good example for the application of *yin-yang* cosmology to the reading of Chinese narrative in his *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976). For the mutual engagement of *yin* and *yang*, see "Introduction," especially 6-9.

[76] Chapter 48 explicitly demonstrates that the house for Wang Liu'er is associated with Ximen Qing's desire and virility. Right before he obtains an aphrodisiac from the Indian monk in Chapter 49, Ximen Qing resolves to expand Wang Liu'er's house. This house-extending episode stands as a narrative precursor for the ensuing extension of Ximen Qing's virility. *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 48:562.

ensuing pregnancy embody a karmic force different from that which underlies Wang Liu'er's new house.

Wu Yueniang acquires the umbilical cord ten chapters later, in Chapter 50. She takes the cord together with "an efficacious elixir for conceiving sons" (*zhong zi ling dan* 種子靈丹) and has intercourse with Ximen Qing.[77] Wu Yueniang's pre-gestational rituals illustrate how the umbilical cord initiates the salvific thread for Ximen Qing. An architectural event is embedded to this context: Wu Kai, Wu Yueniang's elder brother Qing, asks Ximen Qing for a loan to repair the charity granary (Chapter 51). Wu Kai will reappear ten chapters later in the second Double Yang Festival gathering at the Ximen household in Chapter 61 and become one of the three guests who anticipate Li Ping'er's redemption and postmortem house. However, the context of Wu Kai's request for the loan relates more to the concurrent construction of the womb-house belonging to Wu Yueniang, Wu Kai's sister and Ximen Qing's formal wife, than it does to his later role in anticipating Li Ping'er's postmortem house in Chapter 61. Arranged between Wu Yueniang's acquisition of the umbilical cord and her intercourse with Ximen Qing, Wu Kai's granary repair project reflects that, like the granary, Wu Yueniang's long-barren womb-house is given new life. The function of the granary matters here. If the cause of the granary is in the service of the moral good—namely, relief for the poor—Ximen Qing's financing for the granary consequently serves that same the moral cause. Then, in correspondence to his material contribution, he will be given a return in karmic form. As he finances the reconstruction of the granary, his wife's womb-house is also reconstructed. The umbilical cord that appears in Chapter 40 lays the foundation for the

[77] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 53:636. *Plum*, 3:292.

womb-house. Before Ximen Qing provides his financial assistance, Wu Yueniang prepares the house for the reincarnation of her husband.

In fact, Chapter 39 has already anticipated the karmic implication of the umbilical cord. The (c) Buddhist sermon given by nuns about the reincarnation of a man casts the (d) following event in which Wu Yueniang requests the cord in a soteriological frame, invoking a womb-house. The abbess recites a story from the "Great Treasury Scriptures" (*Da zang jing* 大藏經), featuring a figure named Squire Zhang 張 (Zhang *yuanwai* 員外).[78] One day, Squire Zhang decides to devote himself to Buddhism and sets out for Yellow Plum Temple. Once at the temple, the Fourth Chan 禪 master recognizes him, and Zhang begins to practice asceticism from then on. After six years of this practice, the master advises that he "go south up to the banks of the Turbid River in order to enter the womb and take an abode, thereby securing a new habitation for himself" (往南去濁河邊投胎奪舍，尋房兒居住).[79] When Zhang ends up finding a girl on the bank of Turbid River, he asks "to rent a house to live in" (借房住).[80] Without waiting for an answer, Zhang jumps into the river. The girl then eats a peach she finds floating near the shore and becomes pregnant. The child born from this pregnancy becomes the Fifth Chan master, who attains Buddhahood and enlightens his mother as well.

Zhang Zhupo's commentary addresses the author's intention in inserting the Sutra. In each phase of Squire Zhang's reincarnation process, including Zhang's southward departure, the girl eating the peach and becoming pregnant, and the reborn Zhang

[78] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 39:465.

[79] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 39:468. *Plum*, 2:433.

[80] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 39:468.

attaining Buddhahood, the commentator invokes Xiao'ge, Ximen Qing's posthumous son and reincarnation, writing, "Xiao'ge has come" (孝哥來矣), "Xiao'ge has been conceived" (孝哥孕矣), and "Xiao'ge has been transformed" (孝哥幻化矣).[81] The commentaries here make explicit that this digression is intended to present Squire Zhang as a double for Ximen Qing. Indeed, what defines Squire Zhang's mundane life before his entrance into Buddhist practice is in accordance with Ximen Qing's. Zhang has a "powerful and wealthy household" (*jia hao da fu* 家豪大富) and has as many as eight wives.[82]

When we read the following thread that follows Wu Yueniang's request for the umbilical cord and how she ultimately provides the womb-house for Ximen Qing's reincarnation in accordance with Squire Zhang's uterine abode, the difference between (d) Wu Yueniang's womb-house and (a) the new house for Wang Liu'er becomes clear. One belongs to Ximen Qing's legitimate wife; the other belongs to his illicit paramour. One will be reconstructed by Ximen Qing's involvement in a morally good cause; the other adds to his evil karma and will devitalize him. A later concurrence of the two houses demonstrates that this contrast is not arbitrary. Ten chapters later, in Chapter 50, when Wu Yueniang acquires the umbilical cord, Ximen Qing also obtains an aphrodisiac; he firstly uses it for intercourse with Wang Liu'er at her house. These opposed-but-accompanying house narratives retroactively define the meaning of the current juxtaposition of the two house events, Wang Liu'er's new house and Wu Yueniang's womb-house. Ximen Qing's stay at Wang Liu'er's new house advances him toward his

[81] *Jin Ping Mei: Huiping huijiao ben*, 39:543-544.

[82] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 39:465.

retributive death while Wu Yueniang's womb-house is prepared for the accommodation of his rebirth.

The second sub-narrative of Chapter 39 reaffirms the soteriological meaning of the envisaged womb-house of Wu Yueniang. Like (d) the pre-gestational rituals for the birth of Xiao'ge, (b) the Daoist ritual for Guan'ge is also predicated on the redemption of Ximen Qing. To be more specific, the way in which the name of Ximen Qing's posthumous son is symbolically combined with the name of his first son embodies Ximen Qing's own karmic fate. The allegorical combination of the two sons' names not only shores up the thematic consistency between the two sons but also reveals the soteriological vision for Ximen Qing, a vision that weaves through the following two episodes of (c) the Buddhist sermon and (d) the umbilical cord.

In the second event of the house-sequence in Chapter 39, (b) the Daoist ritual of praying for Guan'ge's health carries out this soteriological vision by giving the child a Daoist name, Wu Yingyuan. Pan Jinlian's words introduce the problematics encoded in this name. Hearing the name, she takes issue with the surname Wu, saying to Wu Yueniang, "Elder Sister, these Taoists are impertinent. What reason could there be for replacing the child's surname with his own?" (大姐姐，道士無禮，怎的把孩子改了他姓了).[83] The subtextual allegation in her jeering is that Guan'ge is the son of the abbot, insinuating that Li Ping'er had a liaison with him. Even apart from her malice, Pan Jinlian's words actually do bring the meaning of the surname into question.

The character for the surname Wu 吳 is enmeshed in a complex semantic net, especially in its association with Xiao'ge 孝哥, Ximen Qing's posthumous son. Chapter

[83] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 39:462-463. *Plum*, 2:423.

100 unravels a strand of this net. In this final chapter, which features Xiao'ge likewise being given a religious (Buddhist in this case) name, Ming Wu 明悟, before his adoption by Chan master Pu Jing, the child's new name conjures up Ximen Qing's late son in a symbolic relationship. A problem inherent in his Buddhist name triggers this association. The name Ming Wu is relatively clear in its meaning, "to clearly awake to," but it is nevertheless grammatically incomplete in that it lacks an object. What is he expected to "clearly awake to?" Although cultural convention gives an answer that is easy to surmise, the text proposes a specific answer through the Daoist name of this other son. Guan'ge's Wu, in its homophonic association with *wu* 悟 (to awake), evokes *yinyuan* (karmic relationship), which puns on his Daoist name, Yingyuan.[84] In other words, with this semiotic nexus, *wu*, the religious names of Ximen Qing's two sons, as verb and object respectively, can form a complete Buddhist idiom: "to clearly realize karmic relationships" (*ming wu yinyuan* 明悟因緣).

If such an interpretation is possible, the Buddhist connotation of Guan'ge's Daoist name has its structural significance in that it prefigures the soteriological nature of the story about Squire Zhang, told in that same chapter. In Buddhism, to understand all the conditions that ground one's being is synonymous with awakening. It is believed that by intuiting all the karmic relationships, specifically the relationships of one's past, present, and future lives, one may attain awakening, and, vice versa, only the awakened can reach

[84] Roy interprets Wu Yingyuan as "lacking karmic affinity" (*wu yinyuan* 無因緣) and "lacking resonance with the primal essence" (*wu yinyuan* 無應元). *The Plum in the Golden Vase or, Chin P'ing Mei, Volume Two: The Rivals*, 581, endnote 80. I took his interpretation of Yingyuan as "karmic affinity" and rephrased it as "karmic relationship."

such understanding.[85] If Squire Zhang points to Ximen Qing—as Zhang Zhupo reads it—and the awakening of Squire Zhang can also be read as a prospect for that of Ximen Qing, Guan'ge's name is suggestive of the possibility of this prospect. Indeed, Guan'ge is and embodies the whole of Ximen Qing's *yinyuan*, especially in his relationship with Li Ping'er.

In this allegorical way, the Daoist ritual for Guan'ge participates in the sequence in Chapter 39 that epitomizes Ximen Qing's karmic biography. Taken together, (a) the new house for Wang Liu'er that incurs more evil karma for Ximen Qing, (b) the karmic pun in Guan'ge's religious name, (c) the sutra pointing to rebirth, and (d) the architectural rhetoric of a womb-house suggest the death and rebirth of Ximen Qing. Final retribution is unavoidable. But this retribution is not final. Even in the midst of his retributive collapse, another reconstruction is under way. The reconstruction is completed at the moment of the complete destruction of Ximen Qing's life, when Xiao'ge is born.

Connected Subjectivity

The figural correspondence between Xiao'ge and Xiuchun 繡春 recertifies the novel's soteriological prospects for Ximen Qing and Li Ping'er. As I wrote at the beginning of this chapter when introducing my usage of the term *soteriology*, Xiao'ge becomes Chan master Pu Jing's disciple and enters into the Buddhist priesthood in order to atone for Ximen Qing's evil karma (Chapter 100). As an act of atonement for his father,

[85] One of the early sutras *Madhyama Āgama* says, "If one sees dependent origination, one sees the Dharma; if one sees the Dharma, one sees dependent origination." Bhikkhu Analayo, Marcus Bingenheimer, and Rodney S. Bucknell, eds., *The Madhyama Āgama (Middle-Length Discourses)*, vol. 1 (Moraga: Bukkyo Dendo Kyokai America, Inc., 2013), 3.30:233.

Xiao'ge's celibate priesthood realizes his name, "filial" (*xiao* 孝).[86] Similarly, Xiuchun, one of Li Ping'er's maids, holds rituals for her dead mistress and finally becomes a nun after the disintegration of the Ximen household.[87] By performing posthumous rites for Li Ping'er, who dies without a living descendant, Xiuchun becomes a ritual daughter of Li Ping'er. Xiao'ge and Xiuchun demonstrate the depth of the text's concern for the rebirth and redemption of Ximen Qing and Li Ping'er. The religious dedications carried out by such actual and symbolic descendants ameliorate the karmic accounts of Ximen Qing and Li Ping'er and replenish the probability of their transmigration to "new houses."

This thesis that the priesthood of Xiao'ge and Xiuchun contributes to redeeming their parents implies a salient principle inherent to the karmic economy of *Jin Ping Mei*: some karmic values are not necessarily vested in those who produce the values but are relinquished to others. This is especially true of good karma. Unlike the general tendency exhibited by this novel concerning evil karma that brings about a corresponding punishment to the one who has generated the karma, *Jin Ping Mei* does not always identify the producer of good karma and its beneficiary. Aside from the cases of Xiao'ge and Xiuchun, a good number of moments relating to good karma that I have examined in this chapter are predicated on this tendency. For example, the good karma for Li

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[86] Katherine Carlitz maintains that Xiao'ge's celibacy is a form of karmic punishment directed at Ximen Qing. Based on *Mengzi* 4A: 26, "There are three things that are unfilial, and the greatest of them is to have no posterity" (不孝有三，無後爲大), Carlitz argues that Xiao'ge's celibacy results in a failure to carry on the family line, reinforcing the theme of punitive consequences for Ximen Qing. Carlitz, "Codes and Correspondences," 7-18. *Mengzi* 孟子, ed. Wan Lihua 萬麗華 and Lan Xu 藍旭 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007), 167. Translation is from Irene Bloom, *Mencius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 84. At odds with Carlitz's claim, however, is the fact that the text arranges a substitution, albeit symbolic, for the end of the family line through Ximen Qing's servant Daian 玳安, who is adopted into the Ximen household and "inherits the family business" (承受家業; *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 100:1332), which possibly includes ancestral rites for his earlier master.

[87] *Jin Ping Mei cihua*, 62:781 and 95:1261.

Ping'er's postmortem house comes from Ximen Qing's good deeds. Similarly, Wu Yueniang anticipates Ximen Qing's reincarnation with her womb-house.

The concept of the vicarious accrual of good karma may bewilder some modern readers who are familiar with the type of causal narrative in which an individual's volition and behavior create that individual's own fate. Indeed, the redemption by others highlighted in *Jin Ping Mei* challenges, in part, the conventional narrative ethics that defines subjectivity in terms of autonomous behavior and corresponding responsibility. An individual's volition is certainly a significant part of subjectivity—particularly when it comes to moral responsibility—but is not the whole. Granted, those who commit a transgression pay for it. However, good karma is given beyond one's moral will and even outside oneself. One can unwittingly accrue good karma, and, moreover, possess good karma by virtue of others. If we define good karma as being conducive to eventual redemption, the good derives as much from myriad relationships surrounding an individual as from the individual's moral volition and behavior.

The material and the corporeal provide nexuses for the cosmic and karmic connections of individuals not only by but also beyond their volition. Money that Ximen Qing provides to his friend arranges for a postmortem house for Li Ping'er. The house that Ximen Qing has promised to his paramour Song Huilian backgrounds the destruction of the womb-house for his fetus. Another womb-house, that of Ximen Qing's formal wife, accommodates his reincarnation for redemption. Insofar as materiality and the body take part in constituting a moral subjectivity in the karmic cosmos, this subjectivity is far from solipsistic. The subject conditioned by the physio-moral operation of the karmic cosmos has its meaning in convoluted relationships with others.

This conception of connected subjectivity may appropriate the late Ming 明 (1368-1644) concept known as "desire for the sake of the communal good" (*gong yu* 公欲). The *qi* monistic contention that the body and materiality bring about an ultimate order of individual desires through the connected whole on a karmic level evokes this "desire for the sake of the public," the moral rationale that late Ming thinkers often employed in their justifications of the natural pursuits of sexuality and materiality. Feng Congwu 馮從吾 (1556-1627) makes a claim that reflects this tendency. Feng reframes the "desire for material goods and sex" as realizing the "heavenly principle" that sustains the human community. He says:

> The desire for material goods and sex is human desire in the first place. But when they are desired for the sake of the communal good, then this is heavenly principle rather than human desire.
>
> 貨色原是人欲，公貨公色便是天理，便不是人欲。[88]

The transvaluation in *Jin Ping Mei* rearranges sexual and material desires in terms of cosmic *gong* 公 ("communal good") and heavenly principle. While characters by no means intend such a noble pretext in their individual pursuit of desires, the text uses these desires in its fictional accomplishment of cosmic order. Ximen Qing's sexual desire results in relationships with his sons who anticipate and actually realize the posthumous

[88] Feng Congwu 馮從吾, "Bianxue lu 辨學錄," in *Feng Shaoxu ji* 馮少墟集, *juan* 1, 45b. Ming printed edition. Copy in Harvard-Yenching Library. Translation is from Huang, *Desire and Fiction Narrative*, 52. Mizoguchi Yūzō 溝口雄三 quotes the same passage in his examination of the late Ming reconceptualization of human desire. He relates this new perspective on human desire to shifts in thinking regarding *gong* 公 (public-official; common good) and *si* 私 (private-egoistic; self-interest). Mizoguchi Yūzō, *Chūgoku no kō to shi* 中国の公と私 (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 1995), 21-28. Translations for *gong* and *si* respectively as "common good" and "self-interest" are from Yingshi Yu, "Business Culture and Chinese Traditions: Toward a Study of the Evolution of Merchant Culture in Chinese History," *Chinese History and Culture*, Volume 1: *Sixth Century B.C.E. to Seventeenth Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 260.

redemption of their father—the Tantric logic of salvation *through* sexuality converges in this narrative logic of salvation *as a result of* sexual desire. The karma market as a cosmic adaptation of *gong* thus reframes the micro level of individual desires on the macro level of cosmic order.

This connected subjectivity constituted by cosmic causality underlies the *qi* monistic cosmos that *Jin Ping Mei* envisages. Not by individuals as single points but by the totality of ways in which individuals, materials, and bodies are intertwined, the cosmos generates the karmic good and maintains its moral order.

CHAPTER III

SACRED OBSCENITY AND SAGACIOUS IDLENESS: THE DAOIST ADAPTATION OF THE "NATURE OF *QI* AND MATERIAL" IN *LIAOZHAI ZHIYI*

The concept of intrinsic physio-moral proclivity is at the center of premodern Chinese discourses on human nature. Mainly called the "nature of *qi* and material" (*qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性; for brevity, I will refer to it as "*qi*-nature" hereafter), this concept has long functioned as a category in the description of the emotional and corporeal states of human beings.[1] *Qi*-nature refers to an established structure of personality and temperament, a unique quality inherent to each individual. However, its compounding with "nature" (*xing* 性) at the same time associates individual *qi*-nature with a rather universal mode of human existence, meaning a physical and affective domain that accommodates the manifestation of vital drives.

One problem with this *qi*-nature is that it is often imbued with moral incompleteness. This becomes clearer in its frequent occurrences with the concepts of "original nature" (*benran zhi xing* 本然之性), "the nature of heaven and earth" (*tian di zhi xing* 天地之性), and "the nature of benevolence and righteousness" (*yi li zhi xing* 義理之性).[2] In contrast to these terms that point to intrinsic moral inclination, *qi*-nature accounts for the cause of phenomenal evils in the framework of human nature. As neo-

[1] Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 attributes the neo-Confucian invention of *qi*-nature to Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077). Mou Zongsan, *Xinti yu xingti* 心體與性體, vol. 5 of *Mou Zongsan xiansheng quanji* 牟宗三先生全集 (Taibei: Lian jing, 2003), 531.

[2] Mou Zongsan, *Xinti yu xingti*, 531.

Confucian tradition established its dualistic theory of human nature by idealizing moral nature as being engaged with transcendent principle (*li* 理), morally precarious quality of the *qi*-nature came to be more commonly confirmed. Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130-1200) description represents this dualistic tendency on human nature:

> The nature is principle only. … If there is obscurity or obstruction [by unclear *qi*], then in the operation of principle, the principle of Heaven will dominate if the obstruction is small and human selfish desire will dominate if the obstruction is great. From this we know that the original nature is perfectly good. This is the nature described by Mencius as "good," by Zhou Dunyi as "pure and perfectly good" and by Cheng Yi as "basic nature" and "the nature traced to the source of our being." However, it will be obstructed if physical nature contains impurities. Hence [as Zhang Zai said] "A gentleman does not consider physical nature as really nature," and, "If one learns to return to accord with his original nature, then the nature of Heaven and earth will be preserved."
>
> 性只是理 。… 蔽錮少者，發出來天理勝；蔽錮多者，則私欲勝，便見得本原之性無有不善。孟子所謂性善，周子所謂純粹至善，程子所謂性之本，與夫反本窮源之性，是也。只被氣質有昏濁，則隔了，故「氣質之性，君子有弗性者焉。學以反之，則天地之性存矣。」[3]

After the consolidation of the neo-Confucian tradition, illustrated here by Zhu Xi's words, *qi*-nature became established as a premise attributing moral frailty to the phenomenal state of being. Now, all the personal inclinations that deviate from normative neo-Confucian ethics—e.g., emotional excess, uncontrollability of desire, and incapability of fulfilling moral responsibilities—came to fall into the category of *qi*-nature.

This understanding of the moral fallibility of the *qi*-nature explains why its

[3] Zhu Xi 朱子, *Zhuzi yulei* 朱子語類, 4:43, ed. Li Jingde 黎靖德 (fl. 1263), punctuated and collated by Wang Xingxian 王星賢 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 66. Translation is from Wm. Theodore de Bary, Irene Bloom, and Burton Watson, eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Volume 1: From Earliest Times to 1600* (New York: Columbia University Press), 494-495, with transliterations updated to reflect pinyin spellings.

redefinition was one of the foremost tasks that late imperial *qi*-monists were eager to assume. As I introduced in Chapter 1, the underlying thesis of the *qi* monists' claims on human nature was that the human consists only of *qi*. Due to this understanding, the moral advocation of *qi*-nature or the incorporation of the so-called moral nature into *qi*-nature was crucial to their monistic conceptualization of the phenomenal human being. *Qi* monists believed that through approving *qi*-nature in moral terms they could establish the *qi* monistic view of human nature without compromising Mencius's fundamental premise and the so-called orthodox tradition of Neo-Confucianism grounded in his thought concerning the goodness of human nature, and also without postulating an *a priori* moral quality such as original nature that would thus return to the neo-Confucian dichotomy of human nature.

Wang Fuzhi's 王夫之 valorization of *qi*-nature epitomizes this *qi* monist project. By reshaping the relationship between the key terms of neo-Confucian discourse of human nature, Wang attempts to deconstruct the existing moral implications of *qi*-nature at its lexicological level:

> The so-called "*qi*-nature" is synonymous with the nature contained in *qi* and material. The material refers to the material form of human beings, which is bounded by principle of life. Inside, the material is filled with *qi*. What fills heaven and earth, regardless of whether inside or outside the human body, is none other than *qi* and, therefore, none other than principle. The principle runs through *qi*, controlling and limiting it. Therefore, the material comes to exist as it is by containing *qi*, and *qi* comes to exist as it is by containing the principle. Because the material contains *qi*, a person has their own life. Because *qi* contains the principle, a person has their own nature.
>
> 所謂「氣質之性」者，猶言氣質中之性也。質是人之形質，範圍著者生理在內；形質之內，則氣充之。而盈天地間，人身以內人身以外，無非氣者，故亦無非理者。理，行乎氣之中，而與氣為主持分劑者也。故質以函氣，而氣

以函理。質以函氣，故一人有一人之生；氣以函理，一人有一人之性也。[4]

The semantic transformation of the term "nature" (*xing* 性) here props up Wang's entire thesis. In contrast to its established meaning as a predetermined quality, Wang redefines it as a mode of manifesting one's unique intrinsic quality, *qi* and material. The recasting of nature invalidates the term's established usage, which splits the neo-Confucian categorization of human nature into original nature and the *qi*-nature. This is obviously in line with his claim that humans only consist of *qi* and material. *Qi* and material, not merely as one kind of human nature but rather the only form of human existence, extricate *qi*-nature from its previous status as a complementary counterpart to original nature.[5] As a result, Wang creates his monistic human being as one who finds the source of moral capacity in none other than oneself.

"Qing'e" and "Wang Cheng," the two stories from *Liaozhai zhiyi* that I will read in this chapter, capture the late imperial reclamation of *qi*-nature as illustrated here by Wang.[6] In tandem with contemporary philosophical experiments, these stories also

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[4] Wang Fuzhi 王夫之, *Du Sishu da quan shuo* 讀孟子大全說, in *Chuanshan quanshu* 船山全書, ed. Chuanshan quanshu bianji weiyuanhui 船山全書編輯委員會, vol.6 (Changsha: Yuelu shushe, 1996), 858-857.

[5] Meng Peiyuan 蒙培元, *Lixue fanchou xitong* 理學範疇系統 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 1989), 245-247. Such a conceptual transposition of *qi*-nature is not entirely credited to Wang Fuzhi. To take into account a similar phrase found in Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周 (1578-1645), who is one generation ahead of Wang, for example, "nature refers to the righteousness and principle contained in *qi* and material, [which means] *qi* and material [by themselves] are not nature" (性是就氣質中之指点義理者，非氣質即為性也) (Liu Zongzhou, *Liuzi quanshu* 劉子全書, vol.5 [Taibei: Huawen shuju, 1968], 2711), the nature as a property of *qi* and material is deemed to be a shared idea during the Ming-Qing transitional period. As to the historical transformation of the concept of *qi*-nature, see Meng Peiyuan, 230-249. My quotation of Liu Zongzhou is also cited from Meng Peiyuan, 242.

[6] The Chinese text of *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋志異 used here is Pu Songling 蒲松齡, *Liaozhai zhiyi: huijiao huizhu huiping ben* 聊齋志異: 會校會注會評本, ed. Ren Duxing 任篤行 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 2000). This text is based on the Kangxi 康熙 edition and the transcript (*shou gao* 手稿) edition for "Cheng E" and "Wang Cheng" respectively.

attempt to relocate traditional thought on *qi*-nature into their narratives. Yet, in these fictional appropriations of the intellectual discourse, they find a specific ideological source in Daoism, the Daoist valorization of human spontaneity (*ziran* 自然; literally "self-so"). Daoist approval of human nature is not premised on human nature being good in moral terms, but rather that its natural state is good in and of itself; this amoral reconfiguration of human nature underlies the representations of *qi*-nature in the two stories, reflecting *qi* monists' advocacy for it.

The common plot elements between the two stories give form to this Daoist outlook. The protagonist in each of these the two stories is eventually given good rewards as a result of following his natural spontaneity: "Qing'e" features a lascivious character who comes to be united with a woman he desires; likewise, "Wang Cheng" grants a lazy character unexpected wealth without requiring any effort of him. These unconventional plots are suited to the manifestation of one's *qi* and material that Wang Fuzhi defines as nature above. By focusing on the personality of the protagonists, the stories bring physio-moral qualities of obscenity and idleness to the fore.

Despite their unequivocal reliance upon the Daoist tenet of spontaneity, the texts, on the other hand, draw upon conventional, if not Confucian, norms as well in their moral rationale for *qi*-nature. The self-evident value of spontaneity is not just asserted as an absolute principle that motivates the *qi*-natured protagonists' wish-fulfillment narratives, but is actualized through convoluted reconciliations with conventional norms. The narrative juxtaposition of contradictory moral orientations illustrates this syncretically conditioned theme of spontaneity: obscenity eventually serves to restore a protagonist's family in one, and idleness is revisited as a virtue of self-contentment in the other. Using

this universal moral grounding, the texts revamp the *qi*-nature of their characters not only as being justifiable by the Daoist tenet of spontaneity but also as being morally desirable in their potential to be consistent with established ethical systems.

These multiple layers of thematic concerns, therefore, can be mapped as a twofold rationale of *qi*-nature. On the one hand, the Daoist advocacy for spontaneity reinstates the depreciated *qi*-nature, while, on the other hand, these syncretic reconciliations comprise the same Daoist advocacy, associating *qi*-nature with more universal values. Through this thematic amalgamation of Daoist and conventional ethics, the *qi*-natured protagonists actualize their natural inclinations, fulfill their wishes, and ultimately achieve conventional moral ideals as well.

The Daoist Vision and Revision of *Qi* Monism

Qi monist criticism of Daoism reveals the peculiarity of "Qing'e" and "Wang Cheng." As described in Chapter 1, criticism of Daoism was one of the major methodologies generally employed by *qi* monists to justify their theory. In order to substantiate their claim that they were successors in the orthodox lineage of Confucianism, *qi* monists needed to demarcate their advocacy of *qi* from non-Confucian traditions that equally emphasized *qi*. The *qi* monists' criticism of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism makes the *qi* monists' claim of orthodoxy more complicated. Their criticisms of Daoist transcendentalism paralleled their criticism of the transcendentalism of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. *Qi* monists regarded neo-Confucian transcendentalism as the product of influences from Buddhism and Daoism. By criticizing Daoist theories, *qi* monists argued their theories were close to the genuine thoughts of the ancient

Confucian sages, thus distinguishing themselves from non-Confucian theories of *qi*.

Qi monists' criticism of Daoism can be largely categorized into three aspects: metaphysics, ontology, and ethics. First, *qi* monists argued that Daoism, like its ideological cousin, Buddhism, is based on a dualistic metaphysics. Dai Zhen's criticism of Daoist dualism offers an obvious example of the *qi* monists' criticism: Dai especially focuses on the Daoist concept of "spirit" (*shen* 神). He interprets the term as referring to the transcendental noumenon that presides over the manifestation and transformation of *qi*, and, in this vein, identifies spirit with the principle of Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism: "Laozi, Zhuangzi, and the Buddhists honor spirit as transcending *yin* and *yang* and the transformation of *qi*. This is [the same as] Cheng-Zhu honoring principle as transcending *yin* and *yang* and the transformation of *qi*" (老、莊、釋氏尊其神為超乎陰陽氣化，此尊理為超乎陰陽氣化).[7] In another place, Dai specifies the transcendental status of the Daoist spirit in terms of its presiding and generative function. He maintains: "When [the Song Neo-Confucians] took principle as the ruler of *qi*, it was like [Laozi, Zhuangzi, and the Buddhists] taking spirit as the ruler of *qi*. Their holding that principle can produce *qi* was like [Laozi, Zhuangzi, and the Buddhists] holding that spirit can produce *qi*" (其以理為氣之主宰，如彼以神為氣之主宰也。以理能生氣，如彼以神能生氣也).[8] Dai's criticism on the transcendent nature of spirit anticipates his criticism on the Daoist view of the human. Dai argues that Daoism applied the transcendent metaphysics of spirit to human ontology, making the human spirit transcendent as well and, thus, dividing the spirit from the body. "The error of Laozi, Zhuangzi, and the Buddhists is that they

[7] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.15:170. Ewell, "Re-inventing the way," 198.

[8] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 2.4:175. Ewell, "Re-inventing the way," 227.

divided and distinguished this [spirt from the body]. They treated spirit as internal and the physical body as external. They regarded the form and body merely as a lodging house [in which one stays during one's life and leaves]" (老、莊、釋氏之謬，乃於此岐而分之。內其神而外形體，徒以形體為傳舍).[9] Beyond dualism in and of itself, the Daoist dualism of the spirt and the body becomes more problematic for Dai in that it nullifies the phenomenal foundation of ethics. That the dualist moral-metaphysics of Daoism views the body as a mere "lodging house" mainly relating to vitality implies the noumenal counterpart of the body, spirit, which is a sacred and sublime entity working beyond phenomenal manifestations of *qi*. This belief that locates the source of sublimity in the transcendent realm is exactly at odds with Dai's *qi* monist view establishing ethics in the dimension of bodily affects. A passage shortly followed by the one cited above articulates Dai's understanding of the transcendent ethics of Daoism: "[Laozi, Zhuangzi, and the Buddhists] hold that the desires of the blood-and-*qi*, the bond of ruler and minister, and the affection of father and son, of older and younger brother, and of husband and wife—all these arise only after there is a physical body, while the spirit is perfectly vacuous and still, with no desire and action" (以舉凡血氣之欲、君臣之義，父子昆弟夫婦之親，悉起于有形體以後，而神至虛靜，無欲無為).[10]

The two Daoist narratives that I will read in this chapter escape such criticism from *qi* monists by illustrating the possibility of a *qi* monistic world within a Daoist outlook. The *qi* monistic worlds of "Qing'e" and "Wang Cheng" show that their phenomenal worlds secure moral self-sufficiency. Unequivocally Daoist motifs such as

[9] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.15:169. Ewell, "Re-inventing the way," 196.

[10] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.15:169. Ewell, "Re-inventing the way," 196.

the practice of inner alchemy and strange objects with extraordinary powers figure in displaying the movement and transformation of *qi* in a phenomenal world. Also, these Daoist motifs serve to bring about the moral elevations of the *qi*-natured protagonists. Through entanglement with the *qi* intrinsic to each character, the motifs adjust conventional moral ideals to the emotional and physical movement of characters' *qi*. In sum, our texts trace the course by which such practices, objects, and personalities configured within the category of *qi* realize moral potential. Through the narratives of these various levels of *qi* motifs, these Daoist stories depict the moral elevation of quotidian selves without finding recourse in a transcendent spirituality.

This theme of the moral potential of *qi* resonates with Judith T. Zeitlin's argument that *Liaozhai zhiyi* challenges the conceptual categorization of the normative and non-normative. The Daoist narratives "Qing'e" and "Wang Cheng"—and specifically their non-normative *qi*-natured heroes and extraordinary objects—illustrate that "the boundary between the strange and the normal is never fixed but is constantly altered, blurred, erased, multiplied, or redefined."[11] The texts designate with obvious self-awareness those opposing concepts of "different" (*yi* 異) and "same" (*tong* 同), "aberrant" (*guai* 怪) and "normative" (*chang* 常), and "exceptional" (*qi* 奇) and "canonical" (*zheng* 正), and they place the practice, object, and personality of *qi* in the former categories of strangeness.[12] But, as the narratives develop, the practice of *qi* turns out to contribute to the realization of moral norms in universal senses. Similarly, objects that convey the abnormal manifestation of *qi* derive their moral virtues from the *qi*-natured protagonists. The Daoist

[11] Judith T. Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange: Pu Songling and the Chinese Classical Tale* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 7.

[12] Zeitlin, *Historian of the Strange*, 6.

settings of the stories serve as a thematic and semantic environment that can best facilitate the movement of *qi* triggered by practice, object, and personality. The settings arrange the *qi*-related motifs on multiple levels and justify their engagement of these motifs. For example, the major plot of "Qing'e," in which a character with an obscene nature obtains an extraordinary chisel and realizes his desire with the phallic object, brings to the fore not only the motifs featuring *qi* (the *qi*-nature of the protagonist and the extraordinary power of the chisel) but also physio-moral exchanges between the character's *qi* and the object's *qi*.

This link between object and moral personality, facilitated by *qi*, presents a *qi* monistic Daoist world that is starkly demarcated from the dualist worldview of Daoism criticized by Dai Zhen. The Daoist narratives of "Qing'e" and "Wang Cheng" promote moral elevations not by invoking the intervention of an absolute, sublime generator-presider of *qi* but by approving quotidian material manifestations of *qi* and morally incomplete desire, which is termed *qi*-nature by neo-Confucians. This fictional celebration of the moral potential of *qi* supports the *qi* monist tenet that the cosmos is comprised of the one and only dimension of phenomenality where individuals experience moral elevation through the body and bodily affect, representative manifestations of *qi*. "Qing'e" and "Wang Cheng" thus describe the *qi* monistic world that philosophical *qi* monism claims as a Neo-Confucian discourse in the form of Daoist imagination.

"Qing'e": Sacred Obscenity

Synopsis

A thirteen-year-old boy named Huo Huan 霍桓 happens to be enamored of his

neighbor, a girl named Qing'e 青娥. One day, a Daoist gives Huo a magic chisel so powerful that it can even penetrate solid rock and Huo is suddenly struck by the idea that he can use the chisel to enter Qing'e's house. That night, Huo bores through the walls of Qing'e's house and enters her bedchamber where he soon falls asleep on her bed. Although Qing'e quickly finds him and her servants accuse him of theft, he is allowed to escape the house with Qing'e's tacit approval.

After a couple of years, magistrate Ou 歐, who favors Huo for his literary talent, arranges a marriage between Huo and Qing'e. Qing'e gives birth to a son, Mengxian 孟仙, but, years later, she dies. For his own mother, who is consumed with a grief that is rapidly debilitating her, Huo goes off in search of fish soup. On the way home from his trip, Huo encounters an old man who cures his blisters and offers to serve as a matchmaker for him. Huo first delivers the soup to his mother at home and returns to the mountain to meet the old man.

When Huo arrives at the mountain, he finds nothing, and ends up falling off a precipice. He manages to survive, and finds a cave where he is reunited with Qing'e—she faked her earlier death with Daoist magic. Huo also meets her father, who had left home early on to pursue Daoist cultivation, in the cave, and receives a warm welcome. However, Huo tenaciously demands that Qing'e sleep with him. She denies the request, which arouses her father's anger, and Qing'e and her father drive Huo out of the cave. Enraged, Huo bores holes through the cave with his chisel and brings his wife back home from the cave. They resume their married life; after eighteen years, Huo's mother dies. While their son Mengxian leaves to perform funeral rites at a hut, Huo and Qing'e hide themselves.

After about another twenty years, at the official examination hall in the capital, Mengxian comes across a man named Zhongxian 仲仙, who turns out to be his younger brother. They rush to Zhongxian's home, only to find their parents have once again vanished right before their arrival.

Obscene Innocence

"The intent [when he] bores a hole [into Qing'e's house] and sleeps on [her] bed is foolish. The act [when he] burrows through the wall [of the cave] to curse the old man is mad" (鉆穴眠榻，其意則癡。鑿壁罵翁，其行則狂), writes the Historian of the Strange (異史氏 *yi shi shi*), pointing to the two most striking events in the narrative of "Qing'e," and encapsulating his evaluation of Huo's acts of chiseling as "foolish" (癡 *chi*) and "mad" (狂 *kuang*) respectively.[13] With these terms, the Historian implies that young Huo's sexuality, albeit inchoate, is unimpacted by moral reasoning, and his later anger toward his father-in-law is also uncurbed by any sense of propriety. At odds with the Historian's disapproval, however, Huo's "foolish" and "mad" acts of chiseling have a positive result. They not only realize Huo's obscene wishes but also bring about his moral elevation. There is a clear gap between the Historian's moral commentary and the perspective of the text.

The late imperial usages of "foolish" and "mad" that the Historian employs in his commentary may provide a conceptual bridge to fill the gap. Paolo Santangelo suggests that these terms functioned not so much in their own discrete meanings as much as in a

[13] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1391.

collective connotation in conjunction with other kindred terms such as *pi* 癖 ("obsessed"), *dian* 顛 ("insane"), and *feng* 瘋 ("crazy").[14] For the late imperial nonconformists, Santangelo claims, this foolishness-insanity semantic group stood as an emblem of their nonconformist spirit. Those iconoclasts who challenged neo-Confucian orthodoxy recast these derogatory terms in an ironic sense that celebrated their heterodox value. To use Santangelo's expression, they "leaned towards a liberation of their personality from rules and conventions in behaviour, and rejected the dichotomy between principle and desires in the ideological field."[15] This self-reflective nonconformist signification of foolishness and insanity underscores the Historian's comment above. The Historian, in his intentional employment of these terms, overtly criticizes Huo's acts of chiseling but covertly celebrates his "foolishness" and "madness."

The sexuality and violence that run through the description of Huo's first act of chiseling connect to this twofold perspective. As leverage for a potential de-construction of conventional norms, the text conflates young Huo's innocence and ignorance with its normative descriptions highlighting his obscenity. Until the end of this sequence—before Huo becomes an adult—the text does not make any attempt to suture its ambiguous and ambivalent descriptions. Rather, the text exposes the inconsistencies as they are. The scene in which Huo approaches Qing'e—which the Historian identifies with "foolishness"—is orchestrated by such heterogeneous values as purity and impurity, and knowledge and ignorance:

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[14] Paolo Santangelo, *Materials for an Anatomy of Personality in Late Imperial China* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010), 331-340. I followed Santagelo's translation of the terms above.

[15] Santangelo, *Materials for an Anatomy of Personality*, 355.

> When it became night, Huo climbed over his house wall and headed straight to the residence of the Wu household. It was not until he bored through two walls that he managed to get into the inner courtyard. He saw that in a small side room a lamp was still burning, and lay down to peep inside, where Qing'e was removing her evening garments. After a while, the candle went out. It was silent without any sound. He burrowed through the wall [of Qing'e's bedroom] and entered. The girl was already fast asleep. He gently removed his shoes and quietly climbed up onto her bed. Because he was still afraid that the girl might wake with a start and he would then be necessarily driven away with rebuke, he furtively lay on the edge of the embroidered bedding. Even just to listen only to her fragrant breath was somehow comforting. But he was extremely tired from the nightlong work, so that a slight closing of his eyes made him fall asleep in spite of himself.
>
> 更定，逾垣而出，直至武第，凡穴兩重垣，始達中庭。見小廂中，尚有燈火，伏窺之，則青娥卸晚裝矣。少頃，燭滅，寂無聲，穿墉 入，女已熟眠 。輕解雙履，俏然登榻，又恐女郎驚覺，必遭呵逐，遂潛伏綉衾之側，略聞香息，心願竊慰。而半夜經營，疲殆頗甚，少一合眸，不覺睡去。[16]

This scene unequivocally invites a reading focused on Huo's sexuality. Specifically, three narrative schemes and descriptions are committed to designating Huo as a symbolic agent of sexuality. The text focalizes Qing'e's undressing through Huo, uses a sexual euphemism for his act by describing it as "to climb up onto a bed" (*deng ta* 登榻), and uses "comfort" (*wei* 慰) in its description of his final contentment.[17] On top of these subtexts, the subsequent scene reifies the moral problem of sexuality in penal language. When Qing'e's servants find Huo asleep on her bed, they regard him as a "thief" (*zei* 賊) and his chisel as a "deadly weapon" (*xiong qi* 兇器).[18] Even the alibi, made up by the servants who take note of Qing'e's wish to condone his actions so as to conceal the event

[16] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1385.

[17] "To climb up onto a bed" commonly implies "to have a sexual intercourse." The mothers' reactions to this event retroactively reveal the sexual symbolism of this phrase. Qing'e's mother "regards it as a disgrace" (辱之). And Huo's mother excoriates the children involved as "the debauched boy and lascivious girl" (蕩兒淫女) who "crossed thighs with each other" (交股). *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1386.

[18] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1385-1386.

from her mother, is that there was a "thief" (*dao* 盜).[19] While this alibi exempts Huo from potential public criticism for this "theft," it nevertheless restates the criminal nature of his phallic chiseling on a symbolic level.[20]

These descriptive and diegetic suggestions of obscenity and violence exist side by side with the narrative premise that he is no more than a young, thirteen-year-old boy. Huo's youth lend moral ambiguity to his acts. Exempting them from potential moral criticism, the narrative stress on his innocence and ignorance limits the truth effect of the normative descriptions above. As an example, the abrupt pause for the close-up of Huo's innocent look in the scene in which Huo is found on Qing'e's bed dramatizes this inconsistency in the narrative view of his moral intention: "When [the servants] shook him, he woke up and immediately arose. His eyes were twinkling just like shooting stars. Although he did not seem to be very terrified, he was too shy to say a word" (抚之始覺，遽起，目灼灼如流星，似亦不大畏懼，但靦然不作一語). This detailed portrait of Huo's look, especially his eyes, clashes with the prior emphasis on the sexual implications of his chiseling. The new emphasis on Huo's purity strips away the initial intensity of his affectionate desire and reverts Huo's image to an innocent young boy who "never knew that it—his trespass by chiseling—was illegal" (並不知其非法也).[21] Huo's

[19] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1386.

[20] The verb, *xue* 穴 meaning "to bore through," demonstrates how this text projects the phallic image onto the chisel. First, this verb frequently occurs with Huo's uses of the chisel, which lead to spousal and ensuing sexual unions with Qing'e. Also, *xue* has an orthographical association with *bi* 屄, a common slang term for the female genitalia. In this case, "to bore through" a wall constitutes a euphemism for sexual reunion. Third, other denotations of *xue*, "hole" and "cave," once again relates the word to Huo's acts of chiseling and vaginal symbolism related to Qing'e. The text embodies the term within its narration as Qing'e's cave-like self-contained spaces, including the real cave where she practices her Daoist cultivation. Then, the chisel's penetrations into these cave-like spaces reflect the relationship between the vaginal and phallic protagonists.

[21] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1385.

self-vindication echoes the textual description. For Qing'e's servants who press hard upon him, Huo protests his innocence, saying: "I am not a thief. To be honest, I love Qing'e and just wanted to be near her fragrance" (我非賊，實以愛娘子故，願一近芳澤耳).[22] This dual championing of his innocence by the narrator and Huo himself stands at odds with the earlier critiques on his sexuality and violence.

Commentator Dan Minglun 但明倫 (1782-1855) takes note of the inconsistency. For the scene above, in which Huo with his innocent look is found by Qing'e and her servants, Dan captures the contradiction between the advocacy of Huo's innocence and his shyness, and points out that Huo's expression of shyness reveals his own moral awareness of his illegitimate act. Then, Dan attempts to suture the conflict. Eclipsing the hermeneutic *glissement* intended by the text, this rational critic-reader suggests a way to make a moral judgment on the protagonist compatible with the textual statement on his innocence. His method boils down to invoking the Confucian theory of human nature. With a clear reference to *Mengzi*, he comments: "Since, once he gets near the beauty, his aspiration has been achieved, and he never knew that [his behavior] is illegal, why is he terrified? That he 'was too shy to say a word' shows nothing other than that it is the child's original essence that feels ashamed of evil" (即近美人，則心志已遂，不知非法，何畏懼之有？惟靦然不作一語，乃童子羞惡之本真耳).[23] The "original essence that feels ashamed of evil" plays a dual role here. On the one hand, it creates a conceptual

[22] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1385.

[23] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1385. It is highly probable that the word, *tianran* 靦然, meaning "shy," is meant to invite an opposite way of reading. Also meaning "shameless," this contronym rephrases the sentence "he was too shy to say a word" above as "shamelessly, he did not say a word." Although the preceding conjunction, *dan* 但 ("but"), does not allow this reverse interpretation in the current syntax, Huo's later emergence in the cave where he indeed "shamelessly" demands sexual intercourse from Qing'e substantiates the double-edged nature of this term.

space for Huo's moral recognition. By innate moral ability, Dan argues, young Huo is aware of the "illegality" (*fei fa* 非法) of his act, which is expressed by his "shy" look. On the other hand, Dan appropriates the Mencian thesis in confining Huo's moral awareness to, literally, a "natural" state prior to consciousness. In other words, Dan establishes his logic for sanctioning the narrative description of young Huo's ignorance by bringing his unconscious level of moral awareness—or, simply, nature—to another side. By this dualistic framework of moral epistemology, Dan completes his hermeneutics: Huo does not know (by consciousness) but also does know the norms (by nature).

This way of reading, however, is considerably compromised by the text's only occasionally Confucian configuration of Huo's character. Unlike Dan, the text by no means dichotomizes his nature. Insofar as the text claims in its persistent ambiguity, both obscenity and innocence are equally undeniable parts of his nature. What the text is mainly concerned about is, on the contrary, the combination of these inconsistencies. The final scene of this event, in which Huo steals Qing'e's hairpin, incarnates the attempt at synthesis. The text rehearses the preceding textual play of his purity and obscenity, and interweaves the two opposing moral qualities of Huo by means of the sagely, if not cryptic, voice of an old maid-servant:

> Huo glanced down to the side of a pillow where there was a hairpin with a phoenix ornament and snuck it into his sleeve. However, this was noticed by a maid-servant, who immediately informed [Qing'e]. She neither said anything nor became angry about it. An old maid-servant patted him on the nape of his neck, saying, "Don't say he is foolish. Although he is young, his thinking is quite clever." Then, she sent him out through the hole that he had bored.
>
> 生覷枕邊，有鳳釵一股。陰納袖中。已為婢子所窺，急白之，女不言亦不

怒。一媪拍頸曰:「莫道他騃，若小意念乖絕也。」乃曳之，仍自竇中出。[24]

One of the distinguishing features of the old maid-servant's words is that in this obviously moral context articulating Huo's lecherousness, she instead mentions his "clever[ness]" (*guaijue* 乖絕). Moreover, she applauds Huo stealing of the hairpin as him being "clever." This epistemological designation for a moral quality and the positive recognition of a negative object are highly reminiscent of the late imperial usage of absurdity, as in the aforementioned example of the Historian's term, "foolish[ness]." While the Ming non-conformists self-caricatured their affirmation of human desire as being absurd, the old maid-servant's use of the word "clever[ness]" returns such an ironic connotation for absurdity to its original implication that the "foolish" obsession with one's natural desire is, in fact, "clever." By the same token, Huo is "clever" because he is faithful to his desire. He is "clever" in his "foolishness." Even though he is ignorant of social norms to the extent to be called "foolish," none other than the ignorance that allows him to follow the structure of his own desire rewrites the "foolish[ness]" into "clever[ness]." This crisscrossing of "cleverness" and "foolishness" is perfectly consonant with the hermeneutic twists found in the Historian's closing comment; the "foolish[ness]" of the Historian's context is on par with the "clever[ness]" of the old-maid servant's remark. Both are the predicates for the spontaneous manifestation of Huo's desire.[25]

[24] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1386.

[25] Daoist tradition defines genuine knowing as being so spontaneous that it leaves an agent not knowing the fact that s/he knows. Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312) provides a reference for spontaneous knowing, which echoes the old maid-servant's words in our text. In his annotation of *Zhuangzi* 莊子, Guo states, "He who deliberately tries to make himself know is unable to know; rather, his knowing is simply spontaneously knowing. This spontaneous knowing is nonknowing, and thus knowing comes from nonknowing.

Ultimately, the old maid-servant's recognition of Huo's "clever[ness]" reveals the limitation of the conventional ethics in understanding the text's valorization of Huo's nature. The normative view that defines Huo's sexual drive as being entirely distinguished from his innocence—as in the case of Dan Minglun's comment above—leaves no room for the clear narrative endorsement of the anti-normativity of his desire as it is. The binary framework of orthodox ethics that dichotomizes his obscenity and innocence would only place the old maid-servant's behavior, including "patting him on the nape of his neck," in a hermeneutic oscillation between the two sides of his inconsistent characterization. Instead, the text intentionally arranges such an ambiguity and redefines Huo's purported transgression in terms of this ambiguity. The closing of this scene demonstrates this narrative scheme: The text evokes a rat image in Huo's creeping out through the hole, suggesting that his previous trespass is a rat-like act—in classical Chinese, the "rat" (*shu* 鼠) is associated with illegal acts, including theft. Yet, at the same time, this story treats Huo's illegitimacy not with severe punishment, but rather with humor, as in the image of the young boy's creeping out through the hole. Insofar as this double signification of Huo's escape shows, obscenity is not contested by innocence. The text gives him the hole through which he goes out.

The Virtues of the Phallic Object

Huo's second act of chiseling takes his reunion with Qing'e as its background.

Spontaneous activity is nonactivity; thus activity comes from nonactivity. For these reasons, activity takes nonactivity as its master and knowing takes nonknowing as its source" (爲知者不能知，而知自知耳。自知耳，不知也。不知也則知出於不知矣。自爲耳，不爲也，不爲也則爲出於不爲矣。 為出於不為，故以不為為主). *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, ed. Wang Xiaoyu 王孝魚 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 6:224. Translation is from Brook Ziporyn, *Penumbra Unbound: The Neo-Taoist Philosophy of Guo Xiang* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 40.

Years after their marriage, Qing'e suddenly leaves their family to pursue Daoist cultivation, faking her death with her magic. Later, Huo encounters Qing'e in a mountain cave where he happens to have become lost. This reunion introduces a thematic parallel to Huo's previous use of his chisel by focusing on Huo's sexuality. One difference is that while the preceding act of chiseling presents Huo's sexual affect in a symbolic form through suggestive descriptions and in an indirect way by means of other characters' voices, this reunion night depicts Huo's sexual drive in his own explicit, self-conscious claims: on that night when he meets Qing'e at the cave, Huo tenaciously demands sexual intercourse. Despite Qing'e's firm rejection, Huo "grasps her arm and will not release it" (捉臂不舍).[26] With this manifestation of his sexual desire, the text reiterates the voices of conventional ethics much as Qing'e's servants had expressed in the prior chiseling incident. In her refusal, Qing'e says, "How dare you think such an *obscenity* could be permitted here?" (此何處，可容狎褻).[27] Intervening in the squabble, Qing'e's father also condemns him: "This reprobate is defiling my immortal cavern! You should get out of here immediately" (俗骨污吾洞府! 宜即去).[28] In the end, Huo is driven out of the cave. Qing'e and her father deceive him, letting him think that he would be able to take Qing'e home with him, but they soon close the door on him leaving him alone outside. This moment of rejection and frustration invites the emergence of the chisel:

> Looking back, there were only precipitous cliffs and soaring rocks without even a little crack. All alone with only his shadow, he had no place to return to. Looking

[26] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1389.

[27] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1389.

[28] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1389.

> up at the sky, a declining moon was hanging high and there were scarcely any stars left. He wailed at the cliff, which ultimately provided no response. At the height of his anger, he untied the chisel at his waist and began to chip away at the rock, advancing in his attack. As he advanced, he continued to curse.
>
> 回頭則峭壁鑱巖，無少隙縫。隻影煢煢，罔所歸適，視天上，斜月高揭，星斗已稀。悵悵良久，悲已而恨，面壁叫號，迄無應者。憤極，腰中出鑱，鑿石攻進，且攻且罵。[29]

This scene is characterized by the heroic depiction of its protagonist. Huo's rage and ensuing furious chiseling—embodiments of his *qi*-nature—are not so much presented in a derogatory tone as they are portrayed with grandiosity. The repetition of tetrasyllabic phrases, focalization through his gaze and emotions, and the stress on his beleagueredness and loneliness—all these descriptive devices rehearse the repertoire of a heroic protagonist. More significantly, the rhetoric of a suffering hero here serves as a backdrop for the subsequent events. As he bores through the cave and regains Qing'e, the heroic description imbues this action with a moral triumph that Huo achieves by overcoming the deception and isolation he has been subjected to.

The spatial composition of Huo separated from Qing'e and her father by the cave wall is salient in understanding the underlying theme of this event, because it projects an ideological implication for both sides. If the outside of the cave where Huo's chisel functions represents his chisel-like *qi*-nature, the other side where Qing'e practices her Daoist cultivation reflects a religious divinity that she pursues. Therefore, when Huo breaks through the formidable wall, it is the victory of an "obscene" and "vulgar" *qi*-nature over Daoist divinity. This ideological subtext is, in fact, prefigured by Huo himself. His remonstration against his father-in-law is too ideological to be neglected. To the

[29] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1389-1390.

father-in-law who repudiates his vulgarity and would drive him out of the cave, Huo says, "An affectionate desire between man and woman is unavoidable for humans" (兒女之情人所不免).[30] Huo's logic, the inevitability of natural desire, restates his current victory as that of natural spontaneity over religious purity.

Subsequent narrative events continue to reify this ideological implication of Huo's triumph, yet now from Qing'e's side. Suddenly shifting its focus to the female protagonist, the text answers why her space of Daoist divinity could not help but be broken, and why she should return to the unsanctified space of mundanity. That this section of the narrative is mainly concerned with the fulfillment of her family responsibilities is connected to the chronotope of mundanity. Focusing on her resumed mundane life, the narrator summarizes that she (1) suggests that the family move to another region in order to avoid neighbors' gossip about her return, thus moving to a distant villa belonging to the Huo family, (2) gives birth to a daughter there, and (3) marries the daughter off—though not mentioned, this span of time includes her nurturing of their first son, Mengxian, as well. This summary stops at the death of her mother-in-law, which leads to her last mundane responsibility, the arrangement of a funeral for her. The text foregrounds her voice and highlights her leading role in this ritual event:

> "In the abandoned field of our family, there is a spot where a pheasant hen is incubating eight eggs. Since it is a proper place for burial, you and our son should carry and lower her coffin there. Our son has already grown up enough to stay at the hut and keep the grave [by himself], and need not return [with you]."
>
> 「吾家茅田中，有雉抱八卵，其地可葬，汝父子扶櫬歸窆。兒已成立，宜即留守廬墓，無庸復來。」[31]

[30] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1389.

[31] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1390.

This narrative emphasis on her voice underscores her unprecedented engagement in family affairs. In comparison to her earlier tenure with the family, concluding with her vanishing to the cave, this is a striking change. As the text summarizes in an equally succinct manner, her previous life in marriage is characterized by minimum fulfillment of familial responsibilities. She mostly, "except for three daily audiences with her mother-in-law, closes her doors and sat in meditation, with rare attention to house-work" (一日三朝其母，餘惟閉門寂坐，不甚留心家務).[32] Even after she gives birth to Mengxian, she "entrusts everything about him to a wet nurse, as if she does not really care about and love him" (一切委之乳保，似亦不甚顧惜).[33] Then, "four or five years later" (又四五年), she finally fakes her death with her Daoist magic and hides herself away for the purpose of her cultivation.[34] In brief, these past paltry fulfillments of familial responsibilities retroactively highlight the peculiarity of the current scene. Now her concern with the funeral suggests a noticeable change in her attitude toward mundanity, even giving definition to her previous familial engagements, including rearing and marrying off her daughter.

This change in Qing'e also forms a thematic contrast between her earlier vanishing and her subsequent vanishing following the funeral, this time together with her husband. The text handles this second vanishing from the perspective of their son left alone: when Mengxian comes back home to see his parents after mourning for his

[32] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1387.

[33] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1387.

[34] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1387.

grandmother, "both his father and mother were gone without a trace" (父母俱杳).[35] This narrative setting, in which Qing'e's vanishing is focalized through her son's eyes, is starkly demarcated in its moral implications from the earlier depiction of her first vanishing, which takes the shared perspective of her husband and mother-in-law as a focal point of description, saying: "When [Huo] chases her to ask [what the suggestive farewell means], [he finds Qing'e] lying on the bed without breath. Huo and his mother, in a deep grief, purchase a quality coffin and bury her" (追而詰之，則仰眠榻上而氣絕矣。母子痛悼，購良材而葬之).[36] Viewed retroactively from the moment of Qing'e's second vanishing, the earlier funeral that her husband and mother-in-law carried out for her fake death turns out to be quite ironic. In that earlier funeral context, Huo and his mother lament in a "deep grief" their wife and daughter-in-law, who is actually alive, and even bury her in a "quality coffin." These ironic ritual sincerities of the bereft family members define Qing'e's pursuit for a pure life not so much as sublime but as self-centered. In contrast, now, the segment of the narrative narrated from the son's perspective and, or to be more exact, the overall context of her second vanishing that provides the situation for the narration of their son's view is devoid of any such moral critique: she has already married her daughter off, has brought up Mengxian to be an adult who can carry out mourning rites by himself, and has even carried out the funeral for her mother-in-law. Compared to her earlier mundane life, which ended with her fake-death-enabled eremitism, her fulfillments in familial responsibilities in her second mundane life qualify her for her present eremitism. Now that Qing'e has fulfilled all her

[35] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1390.

[36] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1387.

requirements in mundane life, her Daoist pursuit no longer conflicts with any of the requirements of conventional ethics.[37]

The completion of Qing'e's mundane cultivation promises a more persistent cultivation in eremitism, and this in turn serves to redefine the moral implications of Huo and his chisel. The sequence from the moment of Huo's heroic triumph at the cave to Qing'e's return to their home constitutes a proposition that Huo's unchecked sexuality and rage figure his *qi*-nature as a necessary condition for Qing'e's Daoist refinement. The obscene and violent chiseling bring Qing'e to the mundane space where she completes her familial responsibilities.

In fact, this ironic association between the mundane and the sacred is not something that emerges only at the completion of the narrative. The text hints at this ironic subtext even at the narrative's beginning, where the two young protagonists are introduced. First, Qing'e emerges with a reference that invites a symbolic imbrication with the chisel. In her introduction, the text states that she "adored the personality of He Xiangu" (慕何仙姑之為人) from her youth.[38] He Xiangu, the only one among the Eight Immortals to be undisputedly female, is known for her intake of mica powder in order to become an immortal.[39] Legends about her record that she, following a direction received

[37] In this light, the auspicious place where "a pheasant hen is incubating eight eggs" (雉抱八卵) may signal the prospect of her Daoist practice. Given that the number eight in traditional Chinese numerology refers to cosmic completeness, as exemplified by the Eight Trigrams (*ba gua* 八卦), and also refers to Daoist transcendence, as represented by the Eight Immortals (*ba xian* 八仙), the "eight eggs" here likely imply that Qing'e, like the eggs, is also soon to hatch from her mundanity and be united with the cosmic completeness, or *Dao*. For the numerological meanings of the number eight associated with the Eight Trigrams, see Bent Nielsen, *A Companion to Yi Jing Numerology and Cosmology: Chinese Studies of Images and Numbers from Han (202 BCE-220 CE) to Song (960-1279 CE)* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 9-11.

[38] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1384.

[39] There are textual variations and ambivalence regarding the gender of Lan Caihe 藍采和, one of the

upon meeting of a celestial being in a dream, took a dose of mica powder and took a vow of celibacy, and finally reached transcendence. This hypertextual narrative embedded in her emergence prefigures the semantic pairing with the ensuing appearance of Huo's chisel. In the description of the Daoist's demonstration of the chisel, the text reads that as he "chopped at a stone on the wall, pieces, as if having rotted, broke off wherever his hand went" (斫墻上石，應手落如腐).[40] Indeed, whenever Huo uses the chisel—or, in other words, whenever the stone powder is produced—Qing'e is drawn from her exclusive containment back to the mundane space of human relationships, where her true cultivation is carried out. This aligns the chisel as a positive parody of the He Xiangu legend, counterpoised with Qing'e's Daoist pursuit. In response to Qing'e's Daoist ideal, Huo's chisel provides her with stone dust, the divine mineral that will secure her transcendence.

The Daoist's account of the chisel's usage reinforces this symbolic association. In the same scene as the Daoist's demonstration above, he also says to Huo, "this is a tool for picking medicinal herbs" (此剷藥之具).[41] Given that "to pick medicinal herbs," commonly expressed with the phrase, *cai yao* 採藥, refers to internal elixir cultivation in Daoist tradition, Huo's use of the chisel perfectly fulfills the expected purpose.[42] With the

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immortals among the Eight Immortals (*Daoism Handbook*, ed. Livia Kohn [Leiden: Brill, 2000], 118). For the legend of He Xiangu, see *"Dōkyō" no daijiten: dōkyō no sekai o yomu* 「道教」の大事典—道教の世界を読む, ed. Sakade Yoshinobu 坂出祥伸 (Tōkyō: Shin Jinbutsu Ōraisha, Heisei 6 [1994]), 404.

[40] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1384-1385.

[41] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1384.

[42] An occurrence of this argotic usage is found in Chen Zhixu's 陳致虛 (1290-ca. 1368) statement on "The Eighteen Secrets for the Alchemic Formulas by the Unity of the Three" (*Danfa cantong shiba jue* 丹法參同十八訣). In the first entry, he says of medicinal herbs, "to pick medicinal herbs: to tidy up body and mind, and to gather and hoard spiritual energy" (採藥: 收拾身心，斂藏神炁). Chen Zhixu 陳致虛, *Shangyang zi*

chisel, Huo establishes a spousal relationship with Qing'e and achieves the opportunities for her mundane cultivation. This Daoist allegory can be rephrased from Qing'e's perspective. Not necessarily by intaking medicinal herbs in a literal sense, but by being involved in the mundane relationship that Huo's act of chiseling brings about, does Qing'e intake the "herbs." She cultivates the internal elixir through her mundane practice of familial responsibilities, realizing a gradual immortality.

Qing'e's name, *qing* 情 ("affect"), integrates this mundane transcendence. As Martin W. Huang points out, *qing* in the late imperial context "offered itself as a convenient alternative for those literati writers who were seriously re-examining the implications of desire (including its more 'physical' aspects)."[43] With *qing*, they "sentimentalize[d] desires."[44] On top of its reflection of contemporaneous notions, however, the resonance of *qing* in this narrative is more associated with the valorization of Qing'e's mundane life as a necessary condition of her eventual transcendence. Feng Zhenluan's 馮鎮巒 (1760-1830) comment on the relationship between Qing'e's *qing* and her Daoist transcendence is clearly illustrative of its unique religious overtone in this narrative. Of the scene in which Qing'e's servants notice her silent intention to condone young Huo's trespass, Feng writes, "Even had an immortal been here, *qing* would have affected them. Some people say that an immortal should cut off affectionate relations (情緣 *qing yuan*). I would claim that Buddha, Laozi, Patriarch Lü [Lü Dongbin 呂洞賓;

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jindan dayao 上陽子金丹大要, in *Zhengtong daozang* 正統道藏, ed. Changchun zhenren 長春真人, vol.5 (Taibei: Xinwenfeng chuban gongsi, Minguo 74-77 [1985-1988]), 517. For more examples, see his "Chapter on the Abstruse Usage of Collecting" (*Caiqu miaoyong* 採取妙用), *Shangyang zi jindan dayao*, 435-437.

[43] Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fiction Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 31.

[44] Huang, *Desire and Fiction Narrative in Late Imperial China*, 31.

796-1016], and Patriarch Qiu [Qiu Chuji 丘處機; 1148-1227] are all celestial people who had plenty of *qing*. Enormous wickedness and great evil arise from those in the world who lack *qing*" (雖真仙至此，情亦為之動矣。或曰:「仙人絕情緣。」予謂釋迦、老子、呂祖、丘祖，皆天上之多情人也。巨姦大惡乃天下之無情人).[45] Feng's claim that Qing'e's affective move proves that she has the seed of transcendence like all other divinities redefines the nature of her affectionate relationship with Huo. Early on, the text mentions that her father is "Case Reviewer Wu" (Wu *pingshi* 武評事), thus implying that her surname is Wu 武, thus making her full name Wu Qing'e, which also carries significant meaning. While her *wu qing* 無情 ("affectionlessness") represents her initial exclusively reclusive life, including celibacy in her youth and her limited engagement with parenting after marriage, the *qing* that takes her out of eremitic practice and back into mundane practice prefigures her moral transformation and religious transcendence at the story's end.

Huo's chisel is consonant with this salvific implication of his female counterpart's *qing*.[46] If Daoist transcendence necessarily requires conflation with the mundane, it is the chisel's work that cracks the solid walls surrounding Qing'e's self-contained space of cultivation and dissolves the boundary between the divine and the mundane. The

[45] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1385.

[46] The text informs Huo's textual ontology in the same way as its symbolic signification of Qing'e—through his name. Those characters that constitute the name Huo Huan 霍桓 unequivocally evoke the essential qualities of his chisel. With the two characters that respectively mean "fast" or "to remove" and "solid" or "hard," his name points to his *solid* and *hard* chisel that can penetrate walls *fast*. His courtesy name Kuangjiu 匡九 affirms this material signification of Huo. The combination of the two characters forms *kuang* 劻, meaning "haste" or "abrupt." *Kuang* repeats the meaning of his surname *huo* and suggests his symbolic identification with the chisel.

mundane divinity that enables Qing'e's transcendence comes from the "mica powder" that the chisel produces.

The *qing*-producing operation explains the chisel's role in this story's constitution of a *qi* monistic world. If Huo's natural sexuality and hot-tempered personality represent his *qi*-nature and this is in turn echoed by another category of *qi* from Qing'e's side—her affective desire or *qing*—the chisel figures in the *qi*-natures of the two protagonists. It manifests Huo's invisible sexuality in its phallic trope and, furthermore, realizes what Huo tries to do in pursuit of his own nature. Qing'e's *qing* once again affirms the narrative roles of the chisel. The chisel produces an affective *qi*—anticipated by the "mica-power"—and this by-product of the chisel's work draws Qing'e into mundanity and eventually completes her Daoist cultivation. Just as it does for Huo, the chisel fleshes out Qing'e's invisible *qi* and accomplishes her religious pursuit through its moral adjustment of her *qi*. In sum, the chisel completes a dynamics based on *qi*, the moral reciprocation of the *qi*-natures of the male and female protagonists, and the affective relationship between such *qi*-natured characters.

Beyond this triad relationship mediated by the chisel, the monistic configurations of the chisel as a *qi*-manifesting object, *qi*-natured characters, and the affects and virtues as products of the operation of *qi* culminate in their establishment of a morally self-complete system. As I argued above, the chisel enables Qing'e to meet familial responsibilities, the realization of Confucian moral ideal. Also, as I will argue below, Qing'e's accomplishment of familial responsibilities is followed by her ultimate eremitism, this time together with Huo, in which Huo participates in Daoist cultivation. In other words, the chisel's work leads our protagonists to moral accomplishments in

Confucian and Daoist terms. Through the mutual engagement mediated by and manifested as *qi*, the object, characters, and affects result in moral values that would otherwise be unlikely to be given.

Syncretic Union

The story's epilogue reaffirms the moral self-sufficiency of this monistic world. Specifically, the epilogue recounts the compatibility of Daoist cultivation through eremitism and the Confucian preservation of family, adding a happy ending that shows the accomplishments of both virtues. The fraternal union of the two Huo brothers that constitutes the main feature of the epilogue emerges as a narrative answer to the dilemmatic question of how to secure the mundane community of family despite individual, reclusive Daoist pursuits. In addition to the answer revealed in Qing'e's fulfillment of familial responsibilities, the epilogue narrative proposes a more permanent resolution for the dilemma by extending the framework from the previous synchronic familial relationship to a diachronic generational continuity of family.

The epilogue begins with the narrator's description of Mengxian's continued failures at the official examination and one more attempt at his age of forty—this setting suggests around twenty years have passed after his parents hid themselves. In the examination hall, Mengxian comes to observe a handsome youth beside himself who writes his name on exam sheets as Huo Zhongxian 霍仲仙. Wondering at the similarity of the name to his own, Mengxian asks him a series of questions, from his place of ancestry to the names of ancestors, and becomes assured of him as a brother. As soon as the exam finishes, the two brothers rush to Zhongxian's home. But they find that their

parents have already foreseen this fraternal union and have hidden themselves just before their arrival. As Mengxian would make to return to his home in Shanxi 山西, Zhongxian also follows his brother, "because their ancestors' graves are in Shanxi" (以晉中祖墓所在).[47]

This ritual theme, the "ancestors' graves" that rationalize the permanent union of the brothers has a twofold significance, in structural and thematic terms. Structurally, the ritual motif aligns the fraternal union with two other earlier ritual events, one being the funeral performed for Qing'e after her faked death and the other the funeral for her mother-in-law that Qing'e arranges. In parallel with the two earlier funerals that mark major inflection points in the narrative as a whole, this final ritual theme in the epilogue insists on a consistency with the earlier sub-narratives of the body of the story. That these structural reiterations of the ritual motifs are not coincidental but converge into a common theme is demonstrated by their consistent connection to Qing'e's vanishing. Like the two earlier funerals that inform Qing'e's eremitism in the pursuit of Daoist cultivation, this prospect of ancestral rites confirms its homogeny with the two earlier ritual events in that it is also backgrounded by her vanishing. In brief, the occurrence of the ritual motifs points to each ritual-related sub-narrative having to do with the matter of Qing'e's Daoist eremitism.

Apart from the structural and thematic parallels to the preceding two rituals arranged by Huo and Qing'e, the ancestral rites envisioned by their sons are demarcated from the former in the latter's promise of the preservation of family. While the funerals that are concurrent with Qing'e vanishings and therefore suggestive of the dissolution of

[47] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1391. "Jin" 晉 is the byname of Shanxi province.

family, the expected ancestral rites by the Huo brothers confirm its continuity, the continuity even beyond the brothers' generation. The names of the brothers re-endorse this vision of familial continuity. The shared component of their names, *xian* 仙 ("immortal"), implies that they might also follow their parents and pursue Daoist eremitism at some point of their lives. But, so long as their sons preserve the "ancestors' graves" as well as these *xian* brothers do now, their Daoist pursuits will not threaten the continuity of family.

This ritual vision of the brothers' ancestral rites accounts for the thematic status of this epilogue. The symbolic continuity of family through the rites not only justifies the eremitism of Qing'e and Huo but also envisions the sustainability of the brothers' Daoist pursuit. Like their Daoist parents, these Daoist-named/fated brothers will be qualified for their pursuit by their mundane cultivation in which they hold ancestral rites. This ideological negotiation or syncretism completes the Daoist theme of this story on the basis of universal ethics.

"Wang Cheng": Sagacious Idleness

Synopsis

While living in poverty on account of his extreme laziness, Wang Cheng happens to pick up a hairpin. Soon he encounters a fox immortal, the owner of the hairpin. The fox immortal, who turns out to be Wang's grandmother, offers Wang money and makes him leave for Beijing to conduct business in the hemp cloth trade.

Running counter to his grandmother's advice that he hasten in his journey, Wang procrastinates for a couple of days along the way due to unexpected rain. When he arrives

at the outskirts of the capital, he hears that demand for hemp cloth has already been met and its price has plummeted. Wang has no choice but to dispose of his stock of cloth at a low price. Even worse, his money disappears from the inn where he is staying.

Wang becomes too ashamed of his being bankrupt to return home. While staying at the inn, Wang realizes that he can earn money from quail-fighting and buys some quails with the support of the innkeeper. Unfortunately, another heavy rain comes and lasts for days, during which all the quails die but one. However, the innkeeper recognizes the extraordinary potential of the surviving quail and encourages Wang to train it. When a competition is held at the palace of the grand prince, Wang brings his quail to participate. Wang's quail wins consecutive victories over the prince's best trained quails, leading the prince to want to purchase it. After a series of negotiations, Wang sells his quail for six hundred taels.

Wang returns home with the money. Wang follows the orders of his fox grandmother and purchases farmland. He works diligently under the discipline of his grandmother for three years. He makes a good fortune, and then the grandmother vanishes.

Nature, the Natural, and the Naturalized

The plot of this story in which a lazy protagonist becomes rich inevitably poses a question: "How can wealth arise out of idleness?" (懶中豈果有富貴乎哉).[48] This question from the Historian's closing remark on the story, in fact, involves more than the ironic tension between Wang's idleness and his ultimate accrual of wealth. The specific

[48] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 161.

contexts of this story situate the question in a broader perspective of inquiry surrounding mimetic practice—that is, the fictional embodiment of a moral ideal and its engagement in the story's causal system. This meta-narrative outlook on morality that recent narratologists have termed "narrative ethics" reifies the Historian's question above: How can the accumulation of wealth not grounded in one's purposeful endeavor be explained in terms of causality?[49] To what extent can and should the causal role of the supposed cosmic moral order be negotiated with quotidian reality? These questions epitomize the narrative project of "Wang Cheng." In its promotion of a lazy parvenu, this text explores the possibilities of unconventional narrative ethics and moral causality. It replaces the existing, prevailing notion of morality with its own vision of a new moral order, and by doing so builds a new model of the moral world.

A moral metaphysics that reconfigures morality in terms of the universal mechanism of the market economy is placed at the heart of this new design for the world of narrative. In "Wang Cheng," Pu Songling extensively incorporates the economic concepts of transvaluation and equivalent exchange in order to represent the cosmic order, and it locates all agents—including human characters, non-human objects, and nature—in a monolithic system of symbolic and material exchanges. Under this economic and economized system, a character's virtues, whether moral or amoral, hold the potential for conversion into symbolic capital, which is in turn used to mediate exchanges with other material valences such as commodity and money. This chain of values reshapes the meaning of Wang's idleness. His idleness, an affective and moral value that represents his

[49] James Phelan explains "narrative ethics" as "regard[ing] moral values as an integral part of stories and storytelling because narratives themselves implicitly or explicitly ask the question, 'How should one think, judge, and act—as author, narrator, character, or audience—for the greater good?'" (eds. Peter Hühn et al., *Handbook of Narratology*, vol.2 [Berlin, Germany; Boston, Massachusetts: De Gruyter, 2014], 531.)

qi-nature, is transvaluated into a sort of value-capital. What is problematic with this symbolic capital, converted as it is from Wang's idleness, is that it is described as being of positive value. As its eventual, final form as wealth illustrates, the text not only approves of but also valorizes Wang's idle nature.

The early major event in which Wang comes across a fox immortal, whom he soon discovers is his grandmother, heralds this economic reframing of Wang's idleness. Rather than simply reducing Wang's idleness to a moral defect, the text employs it as a causal ground on which to reveal his moral nature and to prepare for subsequent material rewards. In other words, his encounter with the fox immortal contains the narrative's position on Wang's morality.

> It was not until the sun reached three poles high that Wang got up and shambled home. He stumbled upon a gold hairpin in the grass. … Suddenly an old woman came, looking for the hairpin. Since Wang, though in poverty, was of good nature, he immediately took out the hairpin and gave it to her. Being pleased, the old woman effusively praised Wang for his splendid virtue.
>
> 紅日三竿王始起，逡巡欲歸。見草際金釵一股。… 欻一嫗來尋釵。王雖故貧，然性介，遽出授之。嫗喜，極贊盛德。[50]

This scene is distinctive for its underlying causality: it is not by means of his moral act but of his late rising and sluggish walking that he happens to find the hairpin. Given that the hairpin leads him to the encounter with his fox grandmother and her subsequent sponsorship of him, the causal deployment of this series of events appears to be quite ironic, if not arbitrary. However, the text embeds additional conceptual apparatuses for the causal link between Wang's idleness and his fortuitous sponsorship by the fox

[50] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 156.

immortal. The narrator's reference to Wang's natural goodness—"of good nature" (*xing jie* 性介)—is the first exemplification of the narrative strategy of causal lubrication. By overlaying his essential moral quality on its initial foregrounding of his idleness, the text lays a causal ground for the later economic return. The fox immortal's praise for Wang's "splendid virtue" (*sheng de* 盛德) reinforces this narrative scheme. This phrase, referring to the nobility of one's personality in general beyond a good deed, reaffirms the narrator's mention of Wang's moral nature above in another character's voice.

Another apparatus in the next scene is all the more seminal to the causal arrangement between Wang's idleness, the serendipitous encounter with his fox grandmother, and the fortune he receives from her. Once she recognizes Wang as being her grandson, the fox immortal says, "I lost this hairpin while passing by this place and it fell into your hands. Would this not be a heavenly reckoning?" (過此遺釵，適入子手，非天數耶).[51] The idiomatic expression "heavenly reckoning" (*tianshu* 天數) is notable. This phrase, commonly used as an agnostic predicate for an unexplained causality, also plays the role of rationalizing the fortuity of the encounter here. But, at the same time, the text imparts a unique significance to the term beyond its common usage. The subsequent events demonstrate the extended semantics. The fox immortal, now identified as Wang's grandmother, witnesses the abject poverty of his household, and offers him money first for grains and then capital for his business. This consequence of the familial encounter evokes an economic notion, the reckon-able as in the most literal sense of the *shu* 數 ("to reckon") in *tianshu*. This economic signification in the grandmother-son encounter maps out the value exchange between the two characters: the fox immortal regains her hairpin

[51] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 156.

and does her lazy, impoverished grandson a monetary favor, while Wang obtains money for grains and capital for business in return for his "splendid virtue." This framework of exchange construes Wang's accidental fortune as a legitimate result of the reckon-able system. The "heavenly reckoning" brings out Wang's invisible moral quality and transforms it into a material value, manifested with the help of his fox grandmother.

The subsequent sequence relating Wang's business trip recounts his idleness. Again drawing in the aforementioned economic notions, this series of events shifts the earlier focus on the causal linkage between Wang's moral nature and the fortune he happens to acquire to a new connection between his idle nature and its natural result, the loss of his entire fortune. Heaven plays a pivotal role this time as well. Its significance is stronger than the previous invocation of the phrase "heavenly reckoning," as it now intervenes in Wang's fate directly. Unlike its previous symbolic presence, heaven is here a concrete actor that triggers the playing out of Wang's idleness and affects the real economy; thus heaven establishes its own causal field. The rain that Wang runs into on his way to Beijing fleshes out this change in the heaven's status. It puts forth his natural disposition and affective susceptibility, thereby interlacing Wang's nature with the exterior physical world.

> Wang packed goods in sacks and set off on his journey. He ran into rain *en route*, which soaked his clothes and shoes. Because Wang had never gone through such a hardship [as being exposed to] wind and frost in his life and his fatigue was unbearable, he decided to take a brief break at an inn. (a) Unexpectedly, it rained incessantly until dusk, the rope-like rain streaked down from the eaves. It became worse overnight. (b) As Wang saw pedestrians coming and going, walking through the ankle-deep mud, he was afraid to undertake such trouble. He waited until noon, when [the road] became drier and drier. But dark clouds spread out overhead again and another round of heavy rains poured. It was not until he had a couple of nights more that he departed.

> 囊貨就路，中途遇雨，衣履浸濡。王生平未歷風霜，委頓不堪，因暫休旅舍。不意淙淙徹暮，簷雨如繩，過宿，潦益甚。見往來行人踐淖沒脛，心畏苦之。待至亭午，始漸燥，而陰雲復合，雨又大作。信宿乃行。[52]

The verb "to soak" (*jinru* 浸濡) in the first sentence encapsulates the physio-moral intertwinement between the rain and Wang's nature. Wang, who "had never gone through such a hardship [as being exposed to] wind and frost in his life" becomes overcome by "fatigue" (*weidun* 委頓) when he gets wet. In other words, what the wetting of his clothes and shoes points to is not merely an objective condition with which Wang is faced but more fundamentally the rain's affective effect—or the effect on Wang's affect. Those objects of focalization—(a) the continuation of rain with increased intensity, and (b) the atrocious road conditions and the inconvenience to the pedestrians—suggest the internalization of the rain into his consciousness. He literally gets "soaked" within his mind from the rain.

Another Wang-focalized depiction, the "rope-like rain streaked down from the eaves" (*yanyu ru sheng* 簷雨如繩), clearly allegorizes the interconnection between the two agents surrounding the wetting. On one side, there is heaven, which arouses Wang's inherent temperament with the rain. On the other side, there is Wang, who is equipped with the structure of affect susceptible to the rain and projects his feeling of lethargy into the rainy scenes. The "rope-like" streaking ties the two together. Through the rain, the two natures—heaven as nature and Wang's idleness as his natural disposition—are placed in a mutual entanglement.[53]

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[52] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 157.

[53] The entirety of the focalized parts are omitted in some other editions, including the Zhuxuezhai 鑄雪齋

Subsequent events extend this heaven-human connection to the market. As Wang finally arrives at the outskirts of Beijing after the unexpected delay along the way, he finds that hemp cloth has plummeted in price. The narrator's voice, which comes to the fore at this point, elaborates the causal chain between the three agents of heaven, human affect, and the market system.

> Originally, when the southern route was just newly opened, the supply of hemp cloth was absolutely meager. As the household of the prince hurriedly purchased it, its price immediately soared, even up to three times as high as usual. Since [the household of the prince] had bought enough for itself on the previous day, those [traders] who came late were all disappointed. The innkeeper communicated this to Wang. Wang became frustrated at his failure.
>
> 先是，南道初通，葛至絕少。貝勒府購致甚急，價頓昂，較常可三倍。前一日方購足，後來者並皆失望。主人以故告王。王鬱鬱不得志。[54]

The funerary tradition in China that uses hemp cloth in its mourning rituals makes it probable that the household of the prince has experienced an abrupt bereavement. But the text provides no clue to the sudden increase in the demand for hemp cloth. Instead, the text only focuses on the mechanism of the hemp cloth market and its influence on Wang's business. This economic framework explicates the reason for Wang's failure in a way differing from a common causality such as a karmic retribution. The market mechanism

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transcription edition, the Historian of the Strange's (*lishi*異史) edition, and the Twenty-Four Chapter (*ershisi juan* 二十四卷) edition. Extensively simplifying the passage that I quoted above, these editions briefly read "Wang packed goods in sacks and set off on his journey. He ran into rope-like rain *en route*" (囊貨就路，中途遇雨如繩; *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 164, collation notes no. 13). Although the near impossibility of fixing a historical order to *Liaozhai zhiyi* editions limits a predication of influential relationship among discrete texts, the textual variation, whether deletion or addition, by itself is highly suggestive of the conscious attention of the hypothetical editors.

[54] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 158.

attributes Wang's failure to the spontaneous operation of the economy: his lost opportunity is due to his late arrival at the market.

This causal concept that incorporates Wang's idleness into market mechanisms is in line with the story's representation of market. Along with the presence of heaven and heaven's rain as nature and Wang's idleness as his own intrinsic nature, the text also conceives the market as another kind of natural entity that reciprocates with and causally relates to the other two natures. The imbrication of the representations of flow in the market mechanism properly captures its imaginary alignment with the other two natures: The newly opened southern route, a channel, causes the in*flux* of goods, which again results in the *fluctu*ation of the price of the hemp cloth.[55] With regard to the overall development of this narrative, the significance of such fluidity lies in its placing the market on a par with the flowing rain and Wang's idleness as a humanized form of spontaneity that the flow epitomizes—asserting a thematic consistency. More importantly, the representational homogeny between the nature-conceived agents—namely, nature as identified with heaven and Wang's human nature—embodies their causal conflation. As the heaven-nature triggers the protagonist's affect-nature, and his affect-nature is reciprocated by the market-nature, fluidity serves as a meta-mimetic designation—the so-called causality—for their mimetic linkages.

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[55] In the traditional Chinese economics, fluidity is a seminal rhetoric for the movement of goods and circulations of capital. The following example from the *Guanzi* 管子 shows a paradigmatic usage of the fluidity of the market: "The feudal lords of the empire, bearing their gold, vied with each other in their rush to be first in line so that without the son of Heaven doing anything the price of *jing* reeds from the Yangtze and Huai rose tenfold, amounting to one hundred catties of gold per bundle. Consequently, by the time the son of Heaven had held court for three days, the empire's gold was *flowing* into Zhou like a *rushing stream*" (「天子下諸侯，載其黃金，爭秩而走，江淮之菁茅，坐長而十倍，其賈一束而百金。故天子三日即位，天下之金四流而歸周若流水」). Guan Zhong 管仲, "Qingzhong ding 輕重丁," In *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注, ed. Li Xiangfeng 黎翔鳳, vol.3 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004), 1473. Translation is from *Guanzi: Political, Economic and Philosophical Essays from Early China*, trans. W. A. Rickett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 482. Emphasis mine.

Indeed, the succeeding events, which follow a chain of action in which Wang loses all his money, demonstrate how these nature-conceived agents complete a causally-connected triad relationship. While Wang stays in Beijing, "day by day the hemp cloth arrived in increasing amounts, so the price fell further" (越日葛至愈多，價益下).[56] After a long hesitation of about ten days, Wang, on the advice of the innkeeper, finally disposes of all of his goods at a low price. Then, the next morning, Wang finds that the money he has made through disposing of his goods has been lost. At this nadir in the story of Wang's fate—or as the narrator puts it, "when [he] is neither able to advance nor retreat" (進退維谷)—the previous notion of "heavenly reckoning" (*tianshu*) reemerges, here in its simplified designation, *shu* 數.[57] As in his fortuitous encounter with the fox immortal and in his rain-induced procrastination on his way to Beijing, the text highlights heaven's intervention in connection with Wang's moral nature, this time again referring to his virtuous quality. In the midst of his financial predicament, he makes a moral response. For those who advise him to "claim an indemnity against the innkeeper by filing a suit" (鳴官，責主人償), Wang answers, "Since this is my fate (*shu*), how can I blame the innkeeper?" (此我數也，於主人何尤).[58] The current context surrounding *shu* shows an exact structural parallel to the term's previous occurrence in the fox immortal's utterance

[56] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 158.

[57] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 158.

[58] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 158. Other editions including the Zhuxuezhai transcription edition, the Historian of the Strange's edition, and the Twenty-Four Chapter edition have this sentence slightly different: "What can the innkeeper do?" (主人何干; *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 165, collation notes no. 20). In Comparison to these editions, which emphasize the actual limit of innkeeper's capacity, our text, especially the verb, "to blame" (*you* 尤), highlights Wang's moral initiative. Dan Minglun's comment is worthy of note in that he further specifies the narrative role of Wang's moral initiative in relation to subsequent events. "To attribute [his loss of money] to his fate and not to blame another, what a discernment and what a magnanimity! How can such a person end up in poverty?" (歸之于數，不尤乎人，何等識見，何等器量！若而人，豈果貧困以終哉; *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 158).

of "*tianshu*." As in the earlier case where *tianshu* is related to Wang's "splendid virtue" and the fortune he then receives from the fox immortal, the conjunction of *shu* and Wang's moral response in this moment heralds another reversal in his economic fate, reaffirming the tripartite model among heaven, Wang's nature, and the market.

While I will argue in the next section that this reversal takes place in the second half of the story, it will suffice to say here that the causal integration between Wang's virtue and his economic fate with the heaven-signifier (*shu*) as a nexus is placed at the heart of the symmetrical structure of this narrative as a whole. The structure of the whole narrative can be visualized as follows:

(a) (nature and wealth) Wang in idleness and poverty
(b) (money) financial patronage from the fox immortal and her guidance into business
(c) (rain) Wang's procrastination during the rain and the drop of the price of cloth
(d) (money, virtue, and heaven) Wang's attribution of his entire loss to fate
(c') (rain) the death of the quails and the discovery of the extraordinary quail
(b') (money) Wang's negotiation with the grand prince for the price of the quail
(a') (nature and wealth) Wang's moral transformation and wealth

Although (d) Wang refuses people's advice to pursue monetary compensation through a lawsuit, his virtuous nature chooses to make a moral deposit—indeed, the text articulates this accumulation of moral savings through the innkeeper "regarding [Wang's act] as being virtuous" (德之).[59] However, by means of heaven's spontaneous working or *shu*, (b') his moral deposit will be withdrawn with a colossal amount of interest, through another spontaneously operated system, the market—specifically, the quail market.

The triad of heaven, Wang's nature, and the market, integrated by *shu*, anticipates a more essential triadic relationship that underlies the *qi* monistic poetics of this story.

[59] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 158.

The story relates Wang's idle nature, the natural phenomenon of rain, and the market mechanism through a single causal system. (c) Wang behaves in accordance with his intrinsic *qi*-nature, but his affect is influenced by the *qi*-climate. In reverse, the story also suggests that (c') Wang's virtue affects the cosmic operation of *qi*. The market participates in these correspondences of *qi* between the human and nature. (c) Its price regulation is influenced by rain, which in turn causes Wang's deficit. In addition, (c) the market draws out Wang's motivation to purchase quails and (c') mediates heaven's reward for his virtue by the pricing mechanism that approves the value of the extraordinary quail. The function of the market, especially its engagement with other agents of *qi*—Wang's *qi*-nature and the *qi* of nature itself—suggests the symbolic quality of the market as another embodiment of *qi*. The market facilitates the exchanges among goods, capital, affect, virtue, and reward. In brief, the market involves all kinds of fluctuation of *qi* within the story-world. And through this involvement, the market is symbolically aligned with other *qi*-signifiers. It moves in concert with the *qi*-natured protagonists and the *qi* of nature, which in turn naturalize the market as another form of *qi*.

Shu concerns the mutual engagement and transvaluation of all these different forms of *qi*. As in its essential meaning, "to reckon," the text reckons, converts, and thereby reincorporates the different levels of physio-moral values. In this vein, what *shu* refers to transcends the conceptual boundary of Wang's fate. Before it conveys something represented, *shu* conveys something that represents. It is a designation for a textual composition that relates variegated kinds of values—to be specific, nature, the natural,

and the naturalized. This "reckoning" spirit weaves through the different yet connected entities of spontaneity, completing a monistic vision of the world.

Avian Hagiography

When the fox immortal initially introduces the idea of business to Wang, she says, "Grandson, you must not be idle, but run a business, however modest. You cannot last long if you just sit and eat" (孫勿惰，宜操小生業，坐食烏可長也).[60] Wang's subsequent business in Beijing is given as a personality-rebuilding program intended to correct his idleness. However, Wang still makes no endeavor and, as a result, loses all his capital. Unexpectedly, Wang happens to acquire a quail with a capacity *par excellence* in the midst of his desperate circumstances, and makes money selling the quail. This series of narrative developments exactly runs counter to the fox immortal's words above. Contrary to her expectation for Wang to achieve through his own labor, he just "sits and eats."

Nevertheless, the text does not depreciate Wang's fortune just arbitrarily arising from his idleness. Instead, it valorizes his idle nature as though it were a kind of virtue, virtuous enough to qualify him to have such a fortune. Commentator Dan Minglun's closing remark well reflects such an endorsement of Wang's idleness. Invoking the traditional ethics of the gentleman, he writes,

> Even though he obtains the hairpin, he would not have it. Even when he loses money, he accepts it as a [heavenly] reckoning. Are these not what they mean when they say, 'the gentleman is contented in poverty, the wise man knows his fate?' His idleness would also probably refer to these.

[60] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 157.

> 拾釵而不取，亡金而任數，所謂「君子安貧，達人知命」者，非耶? 其惰也，殆亦有說焉。[61]

Here, Dan revisits Wang's poverty as a result of his gentlemanly virtue, not the result of his idleness. If he is idle at all, Dan argues, it is not idleness in its most common sense, but the idleness that functions as an ironic twist on such qualities as being content in poverty and knowing one's fate. In fact, Dan's reinterpretation of Wang's idleness perfectly summarizes the underlying structure of the second half of the narrative. From the point when Wang finds the extraordinary quail, the text begins to make a transformation of his idle nature, as in Dan's logic, into a gentlemanly quality. It first zooms out of Wang's specific trait from idleness to the general domain of his personal disposition, in which his idleness and other virtues are intertwined, and then relocates the idleness in relation with the virtues, including those Dan showcases above.

The notion of passivity emerges as being seminal to the text's conceptual inversion of idleness. Encompassing both Wang's idleness and his other virtues, such as his self-contentment in poverty and self-confinement in fate, passivity provides a meaningful nexus for integrating his morally opposed dispositions. Indeed, Wang, by nature, would not play any active role in ameliorating the harshness of his own reality. Instead, as demonstrated here, he releases control of fate to serendipity, other's help, or a change in his situation. His initial encounter with the quail succinctly illustrates this narrative concern with his passivity. Featuring another round of rain, this scene

[61] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 161. The idiomatic phrase, "the gentleman is contented in poverty, the wise man knows his fate" is attributed to Wang Bo's 王勃 (649-676) famous Daoist essay "Preface to the Prince of Teng's Pavilion" (*Teng wang ge xu* 滕王閣序). *Xinyi Guwen guanzhi* 新譯古文觀止, ed. Xie Bingying 謝冰瑩 et al. (Taipei: Sanmin shuju, 1987), 387.

demonstrates how passivity grounds his mode of behavior. Like the first rain encountered on Wang's way to Beijing, which threw him into the dire predicament of failure in his hemp business, this second rain once again drives Wang to an extreme point of despair:

> When it became night, heavy rain began to pour which continued until dawn. As dawn broke, the street was flooded like a river, with an ongoing incessant drizzle. Wang stayed [at the inn] and intended to wait until it became clear, but it continued to rain for several days, without any sign of ceasing. (a) When he looked in the cages, quails were dying one by one. Wang was extremely agonized, and could not figure a way out of the predicament. (b) As days went by, more and more died, leaving only a few. Wang gathered them into one cage and fed them. (c) After that night, he went out to look at them, finding only a single quail had managed to survive. (d) He explained what had occurred to the innkeeper, shedding tears in spite of himself.
>
> 至夜，大雨徹曙，天明衢水如河，淋零猶未休也。居以待晴，連綿數日，更無休止。起視籠中，鶉漸死。王大懼，不知計之所出。越日，死愈多，僅餘數頭，並一籠飼之。經宿往窺，則一鶉僅存。因告主人，不覺涕墮。[62]

This scene perfectly reprises the earlier rain scene in its descriptive parallels of the continuity of rain and Wang's complete incompetence. Compared to the earlier scene, however, this second rain storm dedicates relatively more space to Wang's response. The response is mainly narrated with alternating descriptions between the Wang-focalized depiction of the dying quails and the third person narration of his interiority: (a) the unceasing rain and dying quails are followed by (b) the narrator's internal description of Wang's "extreme agony" and (c) another focalization on the last surviving quail is interwoven with (d) another third person narration of Wang "shedding tears in spite of himself." Wang's passivity, which dominates this scene, culminates in his ensuing

[62] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 158-159.

internal response: he "wants nothing but to seek death" (但欲覓死).[63] This liminal state of existence leads to his encounter with the surviving quail. The innkeeper recognizes the quail and advises Wang to train it.

From this point, Wang's dependence on the quail begins. Being idle and incompetent, Wang would never attempt to achieve something on his own accord, but rather entrusts his entire livelihood to the quail. As he depends on the quail in material terms, he more and more comes to be emotionally subordinate to the quail as well. The text highlights this subordination in juxtapositions of the money the quail earns and Wang's emotional or affective responses: "As he accumulated twenty taels over about half a year, he began to be more relieved" (半年許，積二十金，心益慰).[64] This causal link between the "twenty taels" and his "relief" even leads to Wang "regarding the quail as if it was his own life" (視鶉如命).[65] This narratorial statement is soon sanctioned by Wang's own voice: when the grand prince (*da qin wang* 大親王) urges him to sell the quail, Wang answers, "I do not have any other consistent means of living, but for depending on [this quail] for my life. So I do not want to sell it" (小人無恆產，與相依為命，不願售也).[66] This is more than true. Wang is deeply reliant upon the quail, not just in a general sense of living but in the concrete sense of survival, *ming* 命.

Indeed, the quail has every reason to be qualified as an object of Wang's complete reliance. In the scene in which Wang's quail demonstrates its capacity, that is, where the

[63] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 159.

[64] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 159.

[65] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 159.

[66] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 160.

quail defeats the grand prince's most excellent quail, named "Jade Quail" (*yu chun* 玉鶉), the text puts its focus on valorizing Wang's quail as a hero:[67]

> Unlike Jade Quail, which became drained gradually, [Wang's quail] became more and more ferocious and fierce and it fought with greater vigor. Before long, [Jade Quail] dropped its snow-white feathers and ran away with its wings hanging. The many spectators all exclaimed with admiration.
>
> 玉鶉漸懈，而其怒益烈，其鬥益急。未幾，雪毛摧落，垂翅而逃。觀者千人，罔不嘆羨。[68]

The heroic presentation of Wang's quail in this passage incorporates an ironic contrast to its unheroic owner. While the quail that is here the subject of narrative focus defeats the grand prince's quail, its owner, presently at the margins of narrative focus, has no role other than to see its fighting performance—as a rule, the narrator's perspective is highly likely to adopt Wang's view, and thus the marginalization of Wang himself in this scene reflects his own status in the narrative perspective. The "ferocity" (*lie* 烈) and "alacrity" (*ji* 急) that represent the quail's valor integrate this ironic reflection. More than any other potential qualities, these precisely adumbrate Wang's real lack.

The "vehement" and "rapid" natures of the quail owned by the ever timid and procrastinating protagonist inform the quail's symbolic role as a supplement for Wang's passivity. As an imaginary Other that dovetails perfectly with Wang's lack, the virtues of the quail make cover for and supercede his sheer incompetence. The text celebrates Wang's success by means of the quail's outstanding capacity. As illustrated by how the

[67] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 160. The name of the grand prince's quail, *yu chun*, in its homophonic association with the adjective *yu chun* 愚蠢 ("foolish") is highly implicative of the stupidity of the prince who is only obsessed with quail fighting and spends his fortune on it.

[68] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 160.

audiences “admire [Wang’s quail] with envy” (*tan xian* 嘆羨), Wang’s success by means of the quail that he happens to have acquired at the nadir in his life is told as the zenith of his fate.

These narrative celebrations of the quail’s symbolic supplementation for Wang’s lack and of his eventual success through the supremely competent quail are, in the long run, related to the moral (re)definition of Wang’s passivity. Insofar as his extreme passivity brings the quail to him, that passivity cannot simply be designated as a moral lack. Rather, the causal arrangement retroactively reshuffled from the current vantage point of his success places this passivity as an indispensable condition of his success: it is in his sheer passivity, lingering in the capital after becoming bankrupt, that Wang buys the quail at market; it is in another display of passivity in his hopelessness, to the extent of that he “wants nothing but to seek death” after the heavy rain that he finds the last surviving quail; and, most of all, it is in his persistent passivity in which he ekes out a living dependent on the quail that his quail is prepared for the glorious victory in the grand prince’s household later.

This approval of Wang’s passivity is heavily predicated on Daoist tradition. Take the pivotal concept, *Dao* 道, as an example: this idea, an ultimate order of the Daoist cosmos that the *Daodejing* 道德經 explicates as that which “is without interference, and still leaves nothing undone” (無爲而無不爲), properly describes our protagonist, who attains his success on the grounds of his passivity.[69] That this passivity derives from his

[69] *Daodejing* 37:1. The whole sentence is “The Eternal of the Way is without interference, and still leaves nothing undone” (道常無爲而無不爲). *A Chinese Reading of the Daodejing: Wang Bi’s Commentary on the Laozi with Critical Text and Translation*, trans. Rudolf G. Wagner (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 236.

intrinsic propensity for incurable idleness all the more articulates the Daoist foundation of this story. Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249) comments on the phrase from *Daodejing* quoted above that "[the *dao*] complies with [its] self-so" (順自然也). Indeed, our protagonist does nothing but comply with the indigenous structure of his natural affect throughout the course of the narrative.[70] He does train the quail by his own efforts, but in order to live by means of it, this is the minimum action required to secure the development of the narrative.

In its own specific reference to quails, the *Zhuangzi* further highlights the ideological grounding for Wang's passivity. One passage in the *Zhuangzi* presents a quail in the context of celebrating the sage's virtuous mode of living, saying: "The sage dwells like a quail and eats like a fledgling. He is like the bird traveling with no trace" (夫聖人，鶉居而鷇食，鳥行而無彰).[71] One of the most representative early period commentators on the *Zhuangzi*, Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. 312), reads this passage in terms of spontaneity: referring to the phrase "dwells like a quail" (*chun ju* 鶉居), Guo writes, "Since [the sage] has no deliberate mind-intent, he is ensured comfort" (無意而期安也).[72] The meaning of "no deliberate mind-intent" here is specified in his annotation on the next phrase, "the bird traveling with no trace," to which he adds, "[Because the bird] follows its nature in action, [it] leaves no constant trace" (率性而動，非常迹也).[73] According to Brook Ziporyn, who examines the implications of the frequently recurring

[70] *Daodejing* 37:1, Wagner, *A Chinese Reading of the Daodejing*, 236.

[71] *Zhuangzi jishi*, 12:421.

[72] *Zhuangzi jishi*, 12:421.

[73] *Zhuangzi jishi*, 12:422.

"trace" in Guo's commentary, this "trace" refers to a self-conscious attention.[74] Guo uses the term in a negative light, Ziporyn argues, insofar as attention to the non-essential "trace" produces an otherized image of the essential being. The "trace" precludes one from existing as oneself in the natural state when there is no such epistemological other. This leads to Guo's conclusion that the sage is traceless. Just as "[King] Yao is simply spontaneously what he is" even without perceiving himself as a sage, the sage "has no mind of his own, and precisely this allows him to merge with things."[75] Likewise, the sage's quail-like dwelling as tracelessness necessarily implies the sage's spontaneous action, or, in Guo's terms having "no deliberate mind-intent." Needless to say, the sage's lack of preference for dwelling, the state in which the sage even has no self-awareness of his being humble in his humble dwelling satisfies the definition of himself. The sage's quail-like dwelling is merely the result of him following his nature.

Several important contexts within our story conflate Wang's passive nature with his quail-like dwelling. The very beginning part of the story is one such case in point. In the very first words of the story, the narrator briefly refers to his idle disposition—"his nature was extremely idle" (性最懶)—and then shifts the focus to his humble house as a result of the idleness: "There was only a dilapidated house with a few remaining rooms, where he slept with his wife under clothing made for cattle" (惟剩破屋數間，與妻臥牛衣中).[76] The association between his idleness and his dwelling extends to his haphazard

[74] Ziporyn, *Penumbra Unbound*, 19.

[75] Ziporyn, *Penumbra Unbound*, 36 and 47.

[76] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 156.

lodging in the time before he picks up the fox immortal's hairpin. Prior to that pivotal event, the text deploys his random habitation as a background:

> It was high summer and scorching. There had been an old villa of the Zhou household, in which the structures were falling down and only a pavilion remained. Many villagers took lodging there and Wang too was one of them.
>
> 時盛夏燠熱。村外故有周氏園，墻宇盡傾，唯存一亭。村人多寄宿其中，王亦在焉。[77]

Likewise, his stay at the inn on his way to Beijing is also described as deriving from his idle nature. As mentioned above, he decides to seek accommodations in defiance of the fox-grandmother's advice due to his unaccustomed feeling of fatigue in the rain.

To sum up, whether it be his own home, a neighbor's pavilion, or an inn, all these examples alike relate Wang's dwelling to his idleness. They form a narrative grammar that establishes that where he stays or lodges possesses thematic resonance in regard to his nature. And this metonymic sense of Wang's dwellings also makes Guo Xiang's comment above applicable to Wang's case: like the bird that "follows its nature in action," Wang decides on his dwellings in following his spontaneous affective structure. To put it in an illustrative way, Wang chooses to take lodgings in his idle nature.

To return to the matter of passivity, if the eventual narrative approval of Wang's passivity—as confirmed by the quail and the ensuing wealth he acquires at the zenith of his passivity—requires a transformation of the conventional view of his idleness into a supreme virtue of Daoist spontaneity, this challenge in moral perspective even reframes the view of his nature-associated lodgings. As in Dan Minglun's closing remark quoted

[77] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 156.

above, in which he reinterprets Wang's idleness into such gentlemanly qualities as being "contented in poverty and knowing his fate," Wang's humble and random lodgings, from this retroactive redefinition, turns out to be in parallel with the Daoist valorization of his idle nature: they are quotidian exteriorizations of his interior virtue by which he remains in a given situation without a deliberate pursuit of good housing in particular and fortune in general. Once he has no "deliberate mind-intent" in regard to them, they cannot help but be given from without, not as an inevitable result of his pursuit but literally as a fortune, as the fortunes that result from his serendipities—namely, the serendipities of, first, the fox-immortal's hairpin and, finally, the quail.

Despite the significance of Wang's virtue and his serendipitous discoveries including the quail, it is obvious that the narrative of Wang's passivity is incomplete without the innkeeper's role. As a figural recurrence of the fox immortal who offers Wang a favor and brings him to market, the innkeeper structures the transvaluation between Wang's virtue and his monetary reward. This third character, who has a moral debt to Wang from the event in which all of Wang's money is stolen but he does not file a suit, channels Wang's moral capital, and also mediates the later corollary compensation through the quail. This latter part needs to be observed in more detail because the text embeds his role in helping Wang's quail business in every one of its important phases. This is even applied to the very first step of the business. He participates, albeit indirectly, in Wang's purchase of quails with the "five taels of silver" (金五兩) that he gives Wang for his return home; instead Wang conceives of a plan to launch the quail business with this money.[78] And once Wang brings the idea of the quail business—due to his passivity,

[78] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 158.

Wang cannot decide on the purchase on his own—the innkeeper eagerly encourages him to buy the quails: "Forcefully egging him on, [the innkeeper] promises him food and lodging without charge" (亟慫恿之。且約假寓飲食，不取其值).[79] Also, when most of the quails die on account of the prolonged rain, the innkeeper recognizes the potential of the only surviving quail, advises him to train it, and takes Wang out gambling in order to test the quail. Finally, when the grand prince's household is opened for quail fighting, the innkeeper tells Wang about it, determines when to send the quail for the match, and, after it defeats the prince's quails, he directs Wang's negotiation with the prince. Throughout this course of events, the innkeeper figures in supplementing Wang's passivity: he draws, leads, and connects Wang to the quail and directs how he is to act in the market.

With regard to his narrative role as a mechanism that brings wealth to Wang, it is notable that Dan Minglun associates the innkeeper's action with the operation of heaven. On the scene in which the innkeeper recognizes the extraordinariness of the quail, Dan writes, "This is actually what heaven reveals" (天實啟之).[80] Given that Wang acquires a fortune through the innkeeper's help, Dan is correct in his view that the innkeeper acts as an agent for heaven's will. The fact that the text only designates him as *zhu ren* 主人 meaning "owner" or "master" without presenting his actual name seems to buttress Dan's implication. The pronoun that literally denotes his profession, an inn owner, also reflects his narrative role as an earthly agent of the heaven, a real "master." The "master" (the innkeeper) connects the moral—represented by Wang's virtues—and the capital—in the

[79] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 158.

[80] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 159.

form of the quail's market value—facilitating the transvaluative reciprocation of the different kinds of values.

What Dan implies but does not explicitly state is that heavenly will is carried out in the venue of the market. If the innkeeper is a deputy of heaven, it is in this sense that he mediates the moral return in his alignment with the market principle. The scene in which he tells Wang to follow his directions during the potential negotiation over the quail's price with the prince captures his narrative status as an incarnation of the market spirit. Before going to the prince's household, he coordinates signals in advance for the negotiation, saying, "If [the prince] persists in [buying the quail], please just look at my head. Once I nod my head, then you can respond to [the suggested price]" (「如固強之，惟予首是瞻，待首肯而後應之」).[81] As the innkeeper sets himself up as having knowledge of an appropriate market price, Wang indeed negotiates with the prince, in accordance with his directions.

The innkeeper's function as a proxy for heaven in his embodiment of the market principle is connected to the narrative scheme underlying the wealth given to Wang in his complete passivity. By tying Wang to his passivity while realizing his wealth through the innkeeper, the text creates Wang's wealth without involving him in deliberate action in pursuit of attaining wealth.[82] This figural composition of a passive protagonist and an

[81] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 159.

[82] The premise that the innkeeper himself does not take any benefit unto himself throughout the narrative also has to do with his narrative status as a pure mediator. Before Wang returns home after the quail fighting at the grand prince's house, where he has earned the six hundred taels of silver, Wang tenaciously requests that the innkeeper to take as much money as he wants from the quail's price. However, the innkeeper "rigidly refuses and [by Wang's tenacious request] finally calculated the meal expenses and accepts it" (固讓之，乃盤計飯直而受之; *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 161). While once again showcasing Wang's virtuous character detached from greed, this scene of profit-sharing epitomizes the innkeeper's *raison d'etre* in narrative.

active helper enables Wang's wealth without compromising the tale's emphasis on the Daoist virtue of passivity.

Active Passivity

To the reader's surprise, this figural composition is soon undermined by none other than Wang himself. In the final phase of the negotiation, Wang dismisses the innkeeper's signal and decides the price on his own. Even though the innkeeper "remains calm" (自若), which means Wang should wait for higher pricing, Wang closes the deal at six hundred taels.[83] Considering the symbolic status given to the innkeeper in the latter part of this story, it is highly probable that the eight hundred taels the innkeeper seeks would be more approximate to the fair value of the quail. Yet Wang defies the innkeeper's direction and, thereby, the ideal market order. In terms of narrative discourse, this non-market decision-making not only sacrifices the preceding passive characterization of Wang—for the first time, he makes a decision on his own—but also results in an unnecessary detail in which the innkeeper blames Wang, "Although I told you how to go about it, you arbitrarily sold it in haste! If you held out a little bit more, you could have eight hundred taels in hand"
(我言如何，子乃急自鬻也！再少靳之，八百金在掌中矣).[84] Being at odds with the general supposition that a narrative pursues an optimum economy of composition, this redundant insertion necessarily triggers a question as to why it occurs. What purpose, if any, does Wang's exceptional decision serve?

[83] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 160.

[84] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 161.

The question first takes us to the narrator's rationale for this decision. Right before the moment of Wang's response to the prince, the narration reads, "[His] desires in mind [had been met] to the full and [he] was afraid to lose his chance" (心願盈溢，惟恐失時).[85] The moral subtext underlying this interior description becomes apparent in reference to the Daoist proverb to "stop and be content" (*zhi zu* 止足). According to this established maxim, attributed to the *Daodejing*, "one who knows contentment will not suffer damage to his reputation, and one who knows how to stop will not place himself in danger. As such, he will last long" (知足不辱，知止不殆，可以長久).[86] In light of this ancient wisdom, Wang's decision is restated as another virtuous act that reveals his moral nature. Instead of viewing it as a loss in accepting a price two hundred taels of silver lower, Wang is credited with additional virtue that exceeds his apparent loss. In the long run, his unprecedented activity makes for a synthesis of his passivity at a higher level.

The Moral Affirmation of *Qi*-Nature

At least six factors support my reading of "Qing'e" and "Wang Cheng" as twin narratives: First, both stories feature *qi*-natured male protagonists, respectively the obscene Huo and the idle Wang. Second, the *qi*-nature of protagonists bring about desirable results. Huo marries Qing'e, starts a family, and becomes an immortal, while Wang achieves great success on his business trip and returns home with a great fortune. Third, an object of extraordinary caliber helps realize each protagonist's wishes on his

[85] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 160.

[86] *Daodejing* 44. 5. Translation is from Richard John Lynn, *The Classic of the Way and Virtue: A New Translation of the Tao-te Ching of Laozi as Interpreted by Wang Bi* (New York: Columbia University Press, c1999), 138.

behalf. Huo's chisel enables him to access Qing'e and Wang's quail makes a fortune for its incapable owner. The integration of various levels of concepts and objects in a single system of *qi* constitutes another commonality between the two stories. They transvaluate the protagonists' *qi*-natures, their extraordinary objects, and the desirable results brought by the objects, one to another. Both the chisel and the quail extend or supplement inherent *qi*-natures of their owners, and, as a result, protagonists acquire what they wish. Fifth, the two stories are also alike in that they each contain a narrative device that offers a moral rationale for the wish fulfillment of the *qi*-natured protagonists. "Qing'e" appeals to a conventional moral ideal, the establishment and maintenance of family, and thereby highlights that Huo's obscene and violent nature ultimately ends in a desired result. Similarly, "Wang Cheng" reinterprets Wang's idleness as Daoist passivity and uses virtuous passivity as a moral rationale for the fortune he earns in the end. These teleological justifications aim to fill the gap between the negative definition of *qi*-nature as morally flawed—as defined by the orthodox Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism—and our narratives about *qi*-natured characters.

That the two stories each employ a mother-son relationship constitutes the final common point. Mother figures—namely, Huo's mother and Wang's fox-grandmother—relocate the *qi*-natured protagonists as sons, a role through which they display their moral qualities before the eventual realizations of their wishes. Huo encounters an old man on his way back home after a filial trip to find fish soup for his sick mother, and, on the mountain where he returns to meet the old man, Huo instead finds his wife, Qing'e. And Wang brings home the money he earns by selling his quail, and makes a far greater fortune as he obeys his grandmother's discipline and is transformed into an industrious

person. These mother-son narratives thus draw out the inherent moral qualities and moral transformations of their *qi*-natured protagonists and thereby serve to offer a moral rationale for the subsequent events in which their wishes come true. In addition to the teleological justifications mentioned above, these narratives of *qi*-natured sons once again provide an answer to the question of how to secure moral self-sufficiency in the *qi* monistic world.[87]

The filial son narrative has a distinctive significance in the Daoist construction of the *qi* monistic world of "Qing'e." My summary of the plot below clearly articulates its role as a pivot point for the whole narrative. If the whole narrative can be schematized as a repetition of an identical sequence that consists of four sub-narratives—Huo's encounter with a helper (b and b'), his use of a chisel (c and c'), his (re)union with Qing'e (d and d'), and a funeral event (e and e')—the filial son narrative is placed in the middle of the two sequences.

a. Huo seeing Qing'e
  b. The appearance of a Daoist, and his endowment of the chisel to Huo
  c. Huo's first work of chiseling—a symbolic manifestation of his inherent sexuality
  d. Huo's marriage with Qing'e, and Qing'e's mundane cultivation
  e. Qing'e's disguised death and Huo's funeral for her
f. Huo's filial trip to get soup fish for his mother
  b'. The appearance of an old man, and his promise of matchmaking for Huo
  c'. Huo's second work of chiseling—an actual manifestation of his inherent sexuality
  d'. Huo's reunion with Qing'e, and Qing'e's mundane cultivation
  e'. The death of Huo's mother and Qing'e's arrangement of funeral for her
g. The encounter of Mengxian and Zhongxian, and the vanishing of Huo and Qing'e

[87] Mou Zhongjian 牟鍾鑒 finds that the late imperial Daoism actively used filial piety as an important leverage for incorporating Confucianism. For example, the school of Pure and Brightness (Jingming dao 淨明道), promoted loyalty and filial piety as necessary exteriorizations of Daoist inner cultivation and, by means of this, gained widespread support from people encompassing the ruling and lower classes. For the Daoist embracement of filial piety in late imperial period, see Mou Zhongjian, *Zhongguo daojiao* 中國道教 (Guangzhou: Guangdong renmin chubanshe, 1996), 139.

This plot schematization shows an important thematic role of the filial son narrative. By virtue of its structural position, the filial son narrative preempts potential criticisms on Huo's sexuality and violence featured in the second sequence unit (after f). In the same way in which his innocence as a young boy obscures the negative image of his sexuality and transgression in his first use of the chisel, his filial piety plays a similar role for the manifestation of his *qi*-nature in the second sequence. Filial piety replaces the young Huo's purity now in the setting of his adulthood when such child-like innocence can no longer be expected.

Huo's trip in search of fish soup is triggered by the ending of the first sequence unit, Qing'e's abrupt death. On top of the death of her daughter-in-law, her natural decrepitude leads Huo's mother to her sickbed. For his mother, who "feels repulsed by most food and drink but has only an appetite for fish soup" (逆害飲食，但思魚羹), Huo sets off on a trip of "over one hundred *li*" (百里外).[88] Obviously, this filial trip is an appropriation from the most famous filial child narratives, widely known as the "Twenty-Four Cases of Filial Piety" *(Ershisi Xiao* 二十四孝)."[89] One of the twenty-four paragons of filial piety, Wang Xiang's 王祥 malicious stepmother wants fish in the midst of a cold winter. To catch fish, Wang melts a frozen river by lying down on it while naked. Wang finally gets two fish that leap out of the ice.[90] Another exemplary figure, Meng Zong 孟宗, seeks bamboo shoots for his sick mother in winter. As soon as he implores heaven

[88] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1387.

[89] For cultural backgrounds of the popularity of the "Twenty-Four Cases of Filial Piety," see Norman Kutcher, *Mourning in Late Imperial China: Filial Piety and the State* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 45-46.

[90] Guo Jujing 郭居敬 (fl. ca. 1295-1321), "The Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars," tr. R. Keller Kimbrough, *Japan Review*, no. 34 (2019), 77.

that he might find bamboo shoots in deep snow, bamboo shoots grow up from the ground. He makes broth with the bamboo shoots and cures his mother's illness.[91] Huo's fish soup combines the major motifs of these two stories, fish from one and soup from the other. This thematic parallel to the exemplars of filial piety confirms Huo as another filial son. The shortly ensuing event in which Huo uses the chisel a second time, occurs in the wake of this textual definition of Huo's moral nature. In other words, his filial piety frames the hermeneutics on the manifestations of his *qi*-nature, which soon follows.

Beyond displaying Huo's filial nature, this filial son narrative has even greater significance in that it produces a causal connection for Huo's reunion with Qing'e. This begins upon Huo's return from his trip in search of fish soup. On his way home, Huo encounters an old man surnamed Wang 王. Wang cures Huo's blisters and suggests the making of a match. When Huo serves fish soup to his mother and returns to the mountain the old man directed him to, Huo cannot discern the old man's whereabouts. But Huo indeed meets the "beautiful woman" (*jia ren* 佳人) the old man promised, who turns out to be none other than Qing'e.[92] Dan Minglun's commentary on this scene is mainly dedicated to rationalizing the causality between the old man's emergence in Huo's filial journey and the following conjugal reunion: "Huo keeps his mind on his mother at all times, and the Daoist [the old man] also keeps his mind on Huo at all times. Although Qing'e's has slyly covered her traces, how can she escape [from Huo]?" (生時時有母在心，道士亦時時有生在心矣。青娥行踪雖詭，其焉能逃).[93] This commentary is based

[91] Guo Jujing, "The Twenty-Four Filial Exemplars," 74.

[92] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1388.

[93] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1388.

on the idea that Huo's filial piety is not just an individual moral virtue but also involves a cosmic correspondence. In response to Huo's filial act, the cosmic order, via its manifestation through the old man, arranges Huo's reunion with Qing'e.[94]

Dan endorses this in his commentaries on the succeeding events. On the scene in which Huo, while searching for the old man in the dark mountain, falls off a precipice but fortunately clings to "a thin shelf of rock" (*huang tai* 荒臺), Dan writes: "The old man Wang is present here" (此中有老王在).[95] Here, Dan emphasizes that the old man is not so much a character as a nature deity or a personified manifestation of the cosmic order. Another commentary by Dan reinforces this view. In the scene in which Huo finally encounters Qing'e and Qing'e asks him in astonishment, "How did you come here?" (郎何能來), Dan answers on behalf of Huo, saying: "The old man Wang guided him up to this place" (老王指引來).[96] As in his previous commentary, Dan here again claims that the entirety of the space where Huo arrives at Qing'e's cave, including the "thin shelf of rock," is a spatial embodiment of the old man, an omnipresent guardian. Dan specifies his thought in a marginal commentary to the same page: "In his search for the old man, Huo was lost in the village and fell off a precipice. He became startled in a cold sweat all along his way [on the mountain], but the old man Wang led him at every step. If that is

[94] Consistent with Dan Minglun's interpretation, Miaofen Lu argues that the concept of filial piety was extended to cosmic principle in Ming dynasty. Filial piety was believed as not only a principle underlying the generation of the cosmos but also a channel facilitating the correspondence between heaven and human beings (Miaw-fen Lu, "Religious Dimensions of Filial Piety as Developed in Late Ming Interpretations of the *Xiaojing*," *Late Imperial China* 27, no. 2 (2006): 1–37. Epstein summarizes Lu's argument from the perspective of the Yangming school. See Maram Epstein, *Orthodox Passions: Narrating Filial Love During the High Qing* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2019), 78-79.

[95] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1388. For *huang tai*, I modified Sidney L. Sondergard's translation in *Strange Tales from Liaozhai* (Fremont, CA: Jain publishing company, 2010), 1304.

[96] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1389.

not the case, how could a thin shelf of rock have little trees like railings? How could Huo come near the mouth of the cave?" (尋叟迷村，冥墮絶壁，處處驚心駭汗，却步步有老王在前指引; 不然，荒臺一線，何以小樹如欄？而足傍洞口何來).[97]

Dan Minglun's interpretation of the old man as a deity culminates in his identification of the old man as the Daoist who endows Huo with the chisel. Dan argues: "The old man is the Daoist. He knew the cause of the illness of Huo's mother and led Huo here to make him use the chisel again" (叟即道士也，知母得病之由，導之使再用其鑱而).[98] Dan's argument here is perfectly in line with his previous comments claiming that the old man leads and guides Huo to Qing'e. Like the Daoist who gives Huo the chisel and enables him to meet Qing'e at the beginning of the story, the old man, a return of the Daoist, once again creates an environment in which Huo can use the chisel. More importantly, the commentary points to the causal connection between Huo's mother becoming sick and Huo being lost in the mountain. He reminds readers of the textual description that his mother's illness is the result of Qing'e's death—"[Huo's mother] embraced her grandson, missing the [grandson's] mother every day. She felt like her organs were being destroyed. Because of this, she became sick" (每每抱子思母，如摧肺肝，由是遘疾)—and retroactively associates the subsequent reunion between Huo and Qing'e with the mother's illness.[99] While Huo finds on his filial trip a way to sustain the vitality of his sick mother, Dan implies, his reunion with Qing'e will bring a way to more fully and finally cure his mother. Dan's connecting of these two events, in fact, aims

[97] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1389.

[98] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1388.

[99] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1387.

at his second use of the chisel. As Huo commits himself to seeking fish soup for his sick mother, the cosmos, manifested in a human form as the old man and a natural form as the mountain recess, offers a genuine medicine that Huo can obtain through his use of the chisel. Although Huo's reunion with Qing'e involves the display of his sexual and violent nature and the corresponding work of chiseling, all of the processes by which Huo is reunited with his wife accomplish his filial piety.

In sum, the filial son narrative of "Qing'e" asserts that *qi*-nature does not belong to another moral dimension severed from the noble and pure mentality represented by filial piety. In a structural sense, that Huo's filial trip triggers his reunion with Qing'e, and also in a thematic sense that, as Dan Minglun argues, Huo's work of chiseling brings Qing'e home and thus cures his mother's illness, Huo's *qi*-nature takes part in the completion of his filial piety as an indispensable player.

Another mother figure, the fox-grandmother of "Wang Cheng" intervenes in that story's protagonist's *qi*-nature in a more direct and active way than Huo's mother does in "Qing'e." Compared with the latter, who exists as a trigger of Huo's filial nature, Wang's grandmother assumes a more specific role as Wang's educator. Her initial offer of money to Wang anticipates this education program. By making Wang depart for a business trip to Beijing, the fox grandmother intends to teach Wang about working on his own. As we know, however, the education program does not meet the grandmother's expectations because of Wang's unexpected and unintended success. So the grandmother's discipline geared toward transforming Wang's idle nature continues after he returns home. She first

makes Wang purchase “three hundred *mu* of good farmland” (良田三百畝)[100] and has Wang and his wife work on their own.

In fact, this epilogue about the transformation of Wang’s idle nature reflects a dilemma inherent to this story. Would Wang’s steadfast idleness and self-contentment not dissipate his fortune? Then, would this story not end up in a new catastrophe in which Wang returns to his initial poverty? On the other hand, if Wang changes his earlier personality by himself and exhibits scrupulous concern for his wealth, would this transformation defy Wang’s passivity, his core virtue? Even if Wang’s transformation is possible without compromising Daoist logic, then where can we find the causality for his transformation? Would the moral transformation to an industrious inclination be probable now in light of his wealth, an inclination Wang did not even attempt to have in his poverty?

This narrative dilemma between the overall Daoist theme of this story and its happy ending invites a consideration of the fox-grandmother’s education program. Since it is a heteronomous discipline, it does not compromise Wang’s passive nature. At the same time, the program inscribes a new propensity in Wang by making him become accustomed to the new moral inclination. The condition that a grandmother with familial authority carries out this sort of discipline enables this transformation without undermining Wang’s intrinsic passivity. This is why the text describes Wang’s moral change in terms of his relationship with his fox-grandmother:

> Wang’s grandmother got up early and made [Wang] supervise the cultivating and [his wife] supervise the weaving. When they become remiss in their duties, the

[100] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1389.

grandmother reproved them. Wang and his wife took this as natural and would not dare resent her for it.

嫗早起，使成督耕、婦督織。稍惰，輒訶之。夫婦相安，不敢有怨詞。[101]

By the same token, the completion of Wang's moral transformation is confirmed by the fox-grandmother's disappearance. Three years later "when [Wang's] household became wealthier" (家益富), Wang and his wife "went [to the fox-grandmother] to pay her an early morning greeting, but they found the grandmother gone without leaving a trace" (旭旦候之，已杳然矣).[102] In addition to the increase in Wang's fortune, his "early morning greeting" implies the completion of his moral transformation. Reminiscent of his earlier habit of oversleeping introduced at the outset of the story—"It was not until the sun reached three poles high that Wang got up and shambled home" (紅日三竿王始起，逡巡欲歸)—Wang's early rising suggests that he has acquired a new nature and therefore no longer needs his fox-grandmother.[103] While the early scene in which the narration of Wang's late rising is followed by his encounter with his fox-grandmother, now she departs from him when he comes early in the morning.

The transformation of moral propensity through education was one of the major issues for late imperial *qi* monism. As *qi* monists denied the transcendent source of morality, this necessarily addressed the problem of self-cultivation—to be specific, the problem of how to develop one's moral nature without drawing on the transcendent moral ideal. *Qi* monists looked to Zhang Zai and found inspiration in his theory of self-

[101] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 161.

[102] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 161.

[103] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 156.

cultivation, particularly in his theory of learning as an alternative source for moral development. Zhang Zai proposes learning as an alternative source for moral development: "Those who have evil *qi*-nature can shift [and therefore modify] it through learning" (氣質惡者學即能移).[104] As here illustrated by Zhang Zai's word choice, *yi* 移, meaning "to shift" and "to alter" in its essential sense, he believed that the moral cultivation of *qi*-nature is basically a physio-moral process: learning moves evil *qi* out of oneself and makes another kind of composition of *qi* in oneself. This is not a creation of a new nature.

Late imperial *qi* monism took over learning, the core thesis of Zhang Zai's theory of self-cultivation, and specified it in terms of moral epistemology. For example, Dai Zhen, on the basis of his major concern that the heart-mind is equipped with a cognitive faculty, argues that learning, therefore, can make a moral transformation within the intrinsic boundary of the phenomenal:

> All under heaven has only one root. There is nothing other than that. Having blood-and-*qi*, one has heart-mind awareness. Having heart-mind awareness, one can advance to spiritual clarity. [This is possible because blood-and-*qi* and heart-mind awareness] share the same root. Having blood-and-*qi* and heart-mind awareness, one can use the complete brightness that issues from the awareness of blood-and-*qi* as it is naturally so and can make no incipient flaw without taking the route that does not accord with benevolence and righteousness. [This is possible because blood-and-*qi* and heart-mind awareness] share the same root.
>
> 天下惟一本，無所外。有血氣，則有心知; 有心知，則學以進於神明，一本然也; 有血氣心知，則發乎血氣之知自然者，明之盡，使無幾微之失，斯無往非仁義，一本然也。[105]

[104] Zhang Zai 張載, "Qizhi 氣質," *Jingxue liku* 經學理窟, in *Zhang Zai ji* 張載集, ed. Zhang Xichen 章錫琛 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1978), 266.

[105] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.15:171. Although I have referred to Ewell's translation, my understanding of the syntax in the original text, especially in the clause of "發乎血氣之知自然者" has a significant difference. Ewell translates this passage as follows: "All under heaven has only one root, to

From the monistic perspective of Dai Zhen, learning is a reliable alternative for accomplishing morality in the "single root" without relying on an *a priori* goodness. The heart-mind awareness that originates from blood-and-*qi* recognizes right and wrong based on its own cognitive capacity and realizes such moral values as benevolence and righteousness. In another place, Dai Zhen confirms the moral self-sufficiency of the cognitive faculty in terms of the underlying notion of *qi* monism, the ontological homology of principle and *qi*:

> How could it be possible that principle and righteousness are discrete things [separate from phenomenal beings] and are sought outside our illumination and examination? Also, why should the human ability that advances from incipient luminosity to spiritual brilliance be sought outside what is endowed through *qi*? 理義豈別若一物，求之所照所察之外; 而人之精爽能進於神明，豈求諸氣稟之外哉! [106]

Wang's fox-grandmother's education presents an example of Daoist and narrative appropriations of Dai's *qi* monist theory of learning. On the one hand, the three years of discipline plants a new moral propensity in Wang and, as a result, he now comes to produce economic value by himself. On the other hand, the theme of education leaves Wang's moral transformation still in the framework of Daoist passivity. The context of his

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which nothing is external. Thus it is that having blood and breath one has conscious knowing, and having conscious knowing one can advance to spiritual clarity; and thus it is also that having blood, breath, and conscious knowing, when one has entirely clarified the spontaneity that issues from blood, breath, and conscious knowing and caused it to be without the least incipient flaw, it is in no respect not humanity and righteousness" (Ewell, "Re-inventing the way," 202-203). The underlined words show that Ewell reads the corresponding part of the original text as "[發乎(1)血 (2)氣之(3)知]自然者." Instead, I read this as "[發乎(1)血氣之知=自然]者," meaning that the spontaneous operation of awareness that is rooted in blood-and-*qi* serves as the ground for moral acts.

[106] Dai Zhen, *Mengzi ziyi shuzheng*, 1.6:156-157.

fox-grandmother's discipline implies that his additional fortune is not achieved by a purposeful activity but by his obedience to his grandmother. Like the innkeeper who makes possible the segment of the narrative in which Wang earns a fortune while remaining in his virtue of passivity, the fox-grandmother brings Wang fortune without inducing intentional activity and purposefulness directed toward wealth. In Dai Zhen's words above, Wang's learning cures his idleness in his "one root" of *qi*-nature.

The mother-son narratives of "Qing'e" and "Wang Cheng" affirm the moral vision in each story's *qi* monistic world. Huo fully realizes his *qi*-nature in his pursuit of filial piety to his mother, and Wang "moves" his idle *qi* through his fox-grandmother's discipline. By virtue of the operation of *qi*, protagonists who once possessed moral defects come to reach elevated moral personality and accomplish eventual good ends. Following their *qi*-nature, such morally incomplete protagonists participate in the cosmic movement of *qi*. In the course of corresponding to the interior and exterior *qi*, the protagonists form an ethical grounding of family, fulfill filial piety, and correct their moral defects.

CHAPTER IV

PHLEGM AND TEARS: THE MORAL PERFORMATIVITY OF THE BODY IN *RULIN WAISHI*

The works of Lu Longqi 陸隴其 (1630-1692), a strong advocate of Zhu Xi, may easily be read as symptomatic of an ideological fissure in late imperial Neo-Confucianism. At odds with appraisals by his contemporaries, including being heralded as "the purest Confucian of the dynasty" (*guochao chunru diyi* 國朝醇儒第一), his thesis of the body as a summation of Supreme Ultimate (*taiji* 太極) makes the neo-Confucian "purity" of his thought questionable.[1] His claim that "the entirety of the Supreme Ultimate is already equipped within our bodies" (太極之全體已備於吾身矣) encapsulates his dubious intellectual identity. His search for the Supreme Ultimate not in nature (*xing* 性), as orthodox Neo-Confucianism would approve as a human embodiment of principle (*li* 理), but instead in that same body that has generally been labeled as the locus of desire, is far from Zhu Xi's philosophy and mainstream neo-Confucian ideas in general. Nevertheless, Lu's thought in its specific context is indeed grounded in a self-sufficient logic that overrides such a symptomatic reading and overwrite the ideological fissure.

> Those who discuss the Supreme Ultimate must not seek to clarify the Supreme Ultimate of heaven and earth but seek to investigate the Supreme Ultimate of the human body. For, if [one would] clarify the Supreme Ultimate of the human

[1] Yong Rong 永瑢, et al., eds., *Siku quanshu zongmu tiyao* 四庫全書總目提要, *jibu* 4, *juan*. 94 (reprint. Taibei: Taiwan shangwu yinshu guan, Minguo 54 [1965]), 1945.

> body, the Supreme Ultimate of heaven and earth resides in it. … Scholars who sincerely have their intent focused on the Supreme Ultimate must incessantly cultivate themselves and incessantly examine themselves throughout their everyday affairs, without letting even a single thought exceed principle, without letting a single affair counter principle, and without letting a single word or a single behavior transgress principle—then the so-called Supreme Ultimate is [found to be] there. … If [the Supreme Ultimate] is like this, why should it be necessary to seek it in such distant things as heaven and earth, and all the creatures? The entirety of the Supreme Ultimate is already equipped within our bodies.
>
> 論太極者，不在乎明天地之太極，在乎明人身之太極。明人身之太極，則天地之太極在是矣。… 學者誠有志乎太極，惟於日用之間，時時存養，時時省察，不使一念之越乎理，不使一事之悖乎理，不使一言一動之踰乎理，斯太極存焉矣。… 若是者，豈必遠而求之天地萬物，而太極之全體已備於吾身矣。[2]

The notion that the body is an actual venue of self-cultivation underlies Lu's valorization of the body. When individuals endeavor to cultivate themselves in accordance with moral norms, Lu argues, the body as the locus of thoughts, words, and behaviors manifests the Supreme Ultimate, the conceptual source of the moral ideal that prescribes cultivation. The subversive aspect of Lu's argument lies in his claim that the body is a complete mimesis of the Supreme Ultimate, as emphasized in the phrase quoted above: "the entirety of the Supreme Ultimate is already equipped within our bodies." Although Lu by no means questions the existence of the Supreme Ultimate, his claim about the "Supreme Ultimate of the human body" or the Supreme Ultimate that fully manifests through bodily practices of moral ideals in part undermines the absolute dependence on metaphysical investigations for attaining the understanding of the Supreme Ultimate as dictated by the conventional teaching of orthodox Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. Insofar as the body

[2] Lu Longqi 陸隴其, "Taiji lun 大極論," *Sanyutang wenji* 三魚堂文集, *juan*.1, 1-2, in *Qinding siku quanshu* 欽定四庫全書, eds. Ji Yun 紀昀, et al (reprint. Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 1325.

manifests the "entirety of the Supreme Ultimate" in its moral practices, the body provides as much a secure route leading to the discovery of the Supreme Ultimate as a transcendent intuition about things does. At least in this epistemological sense, therefore, Lu's articulation of the body illustrates the new horizon of Neo-Confucianism in late imperial China. Free from its traditional stigmatization as a morally precarious site that invites immoral desires, the body brings the transcendent, absolute moral principle down to the phenomenal, tangible space of everyday life.

In its locating of the source of morality in quotidian spaces, *Rulin waishi* (*An Unofficial History of Confucian Scholars*) corresponds to this new horizon of late imperial Confucianism. This novel focuses on a wide range of people including male literati, commoners, and women from a moral perspective, offering an extensive portrait of eighteenth-century China. People who are engaged in indulgences of pursuing wealth and status take the foreground in the novel's portrait. While they violate ritual and moral norms to achieve worldly aims in a kind of institutionalized hypocrisy, the text unmasks the vulgarity of their desires. On the reverse side of such ubiquitous moral failings, however, there are also virtuous characters who build another quality, one of moral reality. Although not described as much in detail as various moral corruptions, these moral virtues, such as controlling one's desire and having sympathy for others, emerge as other major recurring motifs across the narrative. The episodic composition of this novel enables a complex mosaic that intertwines these inconsistent moral realities. For example, some events feature a ritual hypocrite alongside a moral exemplar. Other cases even show the virtuous and unvirtuous moral qualities of a single character as varying in accordance with particular situations. Whichever case it might be, however, these representations of

complicated moral realities have one thing in common: morality is not presented as a noble and abstract ethical ideal but as a quotidian value. *Rulin waishi* casts morality as emerging from everyday practice, existing on the same metaphysical level as pervasive moral failings, and as being attainable through regular actions demanded by moral norms.

Phlegm and tears are the primary object of discussion in this chapter, and these two humoral motifs bring the everydayness of morality all the more distinctively into a visible realm. Phlegm and tears respectively demonstrate the moral potential of the body and the moral performativity that occurs with the body as a medium. In its repeated representations of characters who are afflicted with phlegmatic symptoms due to their excessive avarice, *Rulin waishi* designates greed as the cause of phlegmatic symptoms. Meanwhile, the text places tears within moral contexts, with characters evincing their sympathy for the bereaved and the deceased through tearful laments. These persistent and repeated moral significations of the two humors embody the textual theme of the corporeal manifestation of moral principle. The physio-moral motifs locate the moral and the corporeal as mutually engaged in a single system, realizing Lu Longqi's "Supreme Ultimate of the human body" in a narrative fashion.

The two humors have different moral implications. Phlegm is characterized as retribution for moral failings of excessive avarice, whereas tears endorse the humanity of sympathy for the bereaved and deceased. The contrast between the two humoral motifs is important with regard to free will. Phlegm results from the metabolic operation of the body regardless of an individual's will, while tears, unless in the case of complete spontaneity, are intertwined with one's volition, adjusting emotion to sympathetic concerns. Despite these opposing meanings and roles, phlegm and tears converge in the

revelation of moral capacity. They respectively represent the body's spontaneous regulation for desire and intrinsic emotional sympathy for others. Phlegm and tears thus stage different levels of human morality, spontaneous and conscious, corporeal and emotional.

Researchers have paid attention to personal associations between Wu Jingzi 吴敬梓 (1701-1754), the author of *Rulin waishi*, and his contemporary eighteenth-century experts in ritual. For example, Stephen J. Roddy and Shang Wei argue that Wu had an indirect acquaintance with two renowned ritual masters of his time, Yan Yuan 顏元 (1635-1704) and Li Gong 李塨 (1659-1733), through family connections and his friend Cheng Tingzuo 程廷祚 (1691-1767) "known as Yan Yuan and Li Gong's most influential supporter in the Jiangnan region."[3] At the center of this literary circle is Yan Yuan, the representative figure of Qing ritualism. He criticized Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism as amalgamating Buddhism and making "classical ritualism" abstract.[4] Yan Yuan found in practice the key to eradicating the heterodox idea that had long permeated Confucian ritualism. Ritual practice based on concrete bodily performances, Yan Yuan thought, would recover Confucian ritualism in its genuine sense from the Cheng-Zhu school's idealized ritualism.[5] The fact that Wu Jingzi was connected to, if not necessarily a member of, the network of Qing ritual experts enables a discussion of humoral motifs in the context of ritualism. This ritualism relates phlegm—a self-regulating mechanism of

[3] Stephen J. Roddy, *Literati Identity and Its Fictional Representations in Late Imperial China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 63; Shang Wei, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 44-52.

[4] Chow, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism,* 60 and 63.

[5] Chow, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism,* 61-62.

desire—and tears—a representation of ritual sincerity in funeral rites—to the traditional concept of *li* 禮 that encompasses the conventional moral virtues of self-regulation and ritual propriety.[6]

The mutually shared connection to *li* helps bridge the gap between the moral significations of phlegm and tears. Whether it is retribution for immorality or confirmation of morality, and whether it is the body's spontaneity or the agent's free will, these humoral motifs transcend the difference and serve for the realization and manifestation of *li*. The two humors are also on a par with one another in that they share the same locus in their embodiment of *li*. The humors share the body in a broad sense of *qi*, including bodily mechanism and affective sentiment. The "locus" here does not simply mean a space. While the body is definitely a place in which phlegm operates and tears emerge, it more importantly elicits and establishes one's moral performativity. When phlegm responds to excessive greed, it adjusts and readjusts the body as a self-regulatory system of desire. Likewise, tearful laments mold a ritual being who attains and maintains a moral state in such a ritual practice. In these physio-moral terms—namely the engagement of the corporeal, affective, and performative dimensions of the body with a moral ideal—phlegm and tears stake their claims to belonging in a *qi* monistic world. Represented by the humors, the phenomenal foundation of the body produces morality on its own, prior to any institutional apparatuses. This physio-moral poetics of phlegm and tears forms the grounding of the moral vision of *Rulin waishi*.

[6] Chow, *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism*, 9-11.

Embodied Ritualism

Since the nineteenth-century, when *Rulin waishi* gained wide popularity with the publication of the Woxian caotang 臥閑草堂 edition (1803), social critique has served as the foremost framework for reading *Rulin waishi*.[7] In addition to the Woxian caotang commentary's consistent focus on how this novel presents a contemporaneous portrait of those who seek "fame and fortune," various critics have henceforth shared the idea, as illustrated by claims from Huang Anjin's 黃安謹 (ca. 1885; a son of Huang Xiaotian, one of the primary commentators of this novel) that the novel would "awaken the world" (*xing shi* 醒世), Yi Zongkui's 易宗夔 (1875-1925), "deride the world" (*ji shi* 譏世), and Qiu Weixuan's 邱煒萲 (1873-1941) idea that it was meant " to caution the world" (*jing shi* 警世).[8] The semantic boundary of the verbs used in these criticisms—"to awaken," "to deride," and "to caution"—contains the general hermeneutic paradigm of this novel, which is to give a moral lesson to readers. The common morphology of the critics' rhetoric, a verb plus *shi*, confirms this: contemporary society (*shi*) is amply corrupted and requires moral transformations as prescribed by moral lessons ("to awaken," "to deride," and "to caution").

Modern studies scarcely deviate from the premodern paradigms of social critique. The two representative critical achievements of English-language academia on *Rulin*

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[7] Roddy, *Literati Identity and Its Fictional Representations*, 233. Based on Cheng Jinfang's 程晉芳 (1718-1784) comment, "people compete with each other in circulating and transcribing it," Shang Wei assumes the popularity of the novel within the literati circle of Wu Jingzi by 1770 or 1771. Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 310.

[8] Huang Anjin 黃安謹, "*Rulin waishi* xu 儒林外史序," Yi Zongkui 易宗夔, "Xin shi shuo 新世說," and Qiu Weixuan 邱煒萲, "Shuyuan zhui tan 菽園贅談," in *Rulin waishi ziliao huibian* 儒林外史資料彙編, eds. Zhu Yixuan 朱一玄 and Liu Yuchen 劉毓忱 (Tianjin: Nankai daxue chubanshe, 1998), 442-449.

waishi over the last two decades, Roddy's *Literati Identity and Its Fictional Representations in Late Imperial China* (1998) and Shang Wei's *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation in Late Imperial China* (2003), also read this novel as a quasi-historical reflection of its contemporary literati society, especially in its intellectual association with the Qing vogue for ritualism. Both scholars reify the thematic definition of the three nineteenth-century critiques in terms of the historical reality of the Qing literati coterie in general, and, more specifically, the novel's repudiation of ritual failings of the times. Roddy traces how this novel parodies the intellectual ossification and ritual ostentation of the literati by unpacking the grim prospect of ritualism in which ritual fervor perverts humanity. Unlike the belief generally held by the ritualists in the Qing dynasty, Roddy argues, the author Wu Jingzi remained cynical about the expectation that ritual practice would cure general moral decadence.[9] Likewise, Shang focuses on the novel's concern with moral deterioration. Beyond Roddy's focus on ritual failings, Shang even reads the "irrevocable dissolution of the Confucian norm (*li*) itself."[10] Shang finds that the author's panoramic description of institutionalized ritual failings constructs a fictional totality of social morality. Shang argues "[the literati's] degeneration is not personal; it indicates how far the system allows or even encourages them to go."[11] However, Shang's reading, which takes the theme even further to the dissolution of the moral system as a whole, is partly at odds with Roddy's in that Shang goes so far as to embrace the novel's vision of moral recovery as still achievable through certain ritual

[9] For specific examples, see Roddy, *Literati Identity and Its Fictional Representations*, Chapter 6, especially, 136-141.

[10] Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 63.

[11] Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 62.

practices. Sincere ritual spirit, Shang argues, marks a breakthrough. Shang finds the ritual spirit in the two events of Chapter 37: the Taibo 泰伯 ceremony and a subsequent episode about Filial Guo 郭 who has been in search of his father for twenty years.[12] The collective ritual event and the ascetic ritualist fulfill rituals in everyday lives instead of being immersed in ritual discourses. Through quotidian ritual practice beyond discourse, Shang claims, *Rulin waishi* envisions a prospect of moral recovery in the midst of the corrupted present.[13]

The humoral motifs of phlegm and tears unfold yet another thematic layer that underlies the readings of Roddy and Shang. Phlegmatic symptoms as an individual response to excessive avarice reveal the general degeneration of Qing ritualism on a micro level. Also, the tearful lament as a token of individual empathy for the deceased and bereaved support the authorial prospect of the moral rehabilitation of the literati community. This focus on phlegm and tears in the individual realm of rituality shift the hermeneutic frame from Shang and Roddy's social domain to an individual one. This individual domain addresses topics which are more essential to human beings rather than to human society in general. Unlike the social issues that highlight institutional and collective ritual degenerations, the primary concerns of the motifs of phlegm and tears lie in universal conditions of human nature such as the body and affect.

This theme of embodied ritualism answers Shang's question about why Wu Jingzi chose the genre of fiction to represent his idea of ritualism. In the context in which Shang introduces the thematic weight of the Taibo ceremony, he asks:

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[12] Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 70.

[13] Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 53-83 and 285-303.

> Although Wu Jingzi, like his fellow literati, was interested in Confucian ritual, he chose to compose a novel instead of treatises, essays, and ritual manuals. The question is why. Did he achieve in fiction something more than his contemporaries did in their essays? What does Wu Jingzi, as a novelist, tell us about Confucian ritual? And how does the novel as a sensitive register of contemporary culture capture the symbolic system of *li* that is embodied in ritual?[14]

As he continues his argument, Shang answers that the genre of fiction is more advantageous than prescriptive modes of writing for showing ritual practice. According to him, while ritual inherently has a duality of discourse and practice, fiction can emphasize the latter while minimizing the former—this explanation leads to Shang's affirmation of the traditional claim, dominant since the Woxian caotang commentary, that the plain and direct presentation of the Taibo ceremony represents the zenith of the ritual narrative of this novel.[15]

My argument in this chapter shares Shang's view in part in that *Rulini waishi* as a fictional text proposes an ideal of ritual completion through everyday practice. However, my focus on the motif of phlegm and tears extends Shang's framework to a more fundamental level that enables the ritual ideal. Phlegm and tears highlight the moral capacity inherent in the human as a corporeal and affective being, suggesting that ritual accomplishment has already begun within oneself, within one's body and essential emotion. In other words, what Wu Jingzi attempts to show through phlegm and tears is not a conditional proposition—i.e., that one's morality can be recovered via ritual practice—but a categorical proposition—i.e., that human beings are equipped with moral

[14] Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 53.

[15] Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 53-83.

power in their bodies and affective heart-minds. These immediate forms of the phenomenal existence of the human mark the ideological source of ritual practice that phlegm and tears designate.

Phlegm and the Self-Regulation System of the Moral Body

The Etiology of Phlegm

Phlegmatic symptoms (*tan zheng* 痰症) are one of the most common motifs in *Rulin waishi*.[16] The text contains at least seven scenes that mention the word "phlegm" (*tan* 痰), showcasing various kinds of symptoms:[17]

> 1. In Chapter 3, Fan Jin 范進 becomes insane and unconscious as soon as he is told he has passed the official examination. When awakens, neighbors standing around identify phlegm as a cause for his collapse: "Master, congratulations on passing the examination! The joy you experienced a while ago gave rise to phlegm, yet you just coughed out a few mouthful of it and got well" (「老爺恭喜高中了。適纔歡喜的有些引動了痰，方纔吐出幾口痰來好了」).[18]
>
> 2. At the end of the same chapter, Fan Jin's mother also loses consciousness out of her joy in response to hearing from some maidservants that a bounty of luxurious tableware and even the maids themselves now belong to her: "As the old lady heard it, she took a look at each of the delicate porcelain bowls and cups and drinking tables with silver inlay, and she then laughed aloud, saying 'All these are mine!' With a howl of laughter, she fell on her back. Suddenly, phlegm gushed up and she lost consciousness" (老太太聽了，把細磁碗盞和銀鑲的杯盤逐件看了

[16] For the original text (*diben* 底本) of *Rulin waishi*, I use *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping* 儒林外史彙校彙評, ed. Li Hanqiu 李漢秋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2010). Li Hanqiu's edition is based on the Woxian caotang 臥閑草堂 edition (1803) of 56 chapters. For editions of *Rulin waishi*, see Shang, *Rulin Waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 307-319.

[17] I owe the English translations of Chinese medical terminologies in this paper to WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific, *WHO International Standard Terminologies on Traditional Medicine in the Western Pacific Region* (Geneva: World Health Organization, Western Pacific Region, 2007).

[18] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 3:42.

一遍，哈哈大笑道：「這都是我的了！」大笑一聲，往後便跌倒。忽然痰湧上來，不省人事).[19]

3. In Chapter 6, right before he entraps a boatman for eating his cloud wafers (*yun pian gao* 雲片糕) in order to avoid paying his boat fare, Senior Licentiate Yan (Yan gongsheng 嚴貢生; Yan Dawei 嚴大位) "suddenly feels vertigo, blurred vision, and nausea within his mouth, and throws up a mess of thin phlegm" (忽然一時頭暈上來，兩眼昏花，口裏作惡心，噦出許多清痰來).[20]

4. In Chapter 11, Compiler Lu (Lu Bianxiu 魯編修) comes down with paralysis and an occurrence of facial asymmetry after he becomes infuriated with his happy-go-lucky son-in-law. A doctor diagnoses him: "Sir, your pulse on the right wrist subtly indicates a string-like [taut] pulse and a slippery pulse. Because the lungs control *qi*, your slippery pulse symptomizes [the lung's malfunction in its circulation of *qi*, resulting in the production of] phlegm"
(「老先生這脈息，右寸略見弦滑。肺為氣之主，滑乃痰之征」).[21]

5. In the next chapter, Compiler Lu passes out at his own promotion party. Lu's son-in-law, Qu Laixun 蘧來旬 sends a servant to his maternal uncles, the Lou 婁 brothers, carrying an urgent message: "This is bad news. When Master Lu received the imperial order [of promotion], the whole family held a celebration banquet in delight. Unexpectedly, his phlegmatic symptom suddenly recurred. A visceral stroke attacked him immediately, and he is already unconscious. I beseech you two masters to urgently go over" (「不好了！魯大老爺接著朝命，正在合家歡喜，打點擺酒慶賀；不想痰病大發，登時中了臟，已不省人事了。快請二位老爺過去」).[22] When the brothers arrive at the gate of Lu's house, they hear wailing cries that inform them of his death.

6. In Chapter 17, Kuang Chaoren's 匡超人 father Old Man Kuang (Kuang taigong 匡太公), who has already been described as having a "phlegmatic symptom" (*tan zheng* 痰症) in the preceding chapter, is drastically debilitated after his son passes the official examination: "On that day when [his son] came back from a visit to his ancestors' graves [to inform them of his passing], the Old Man felt that he was not in good shape. From then on, his illness became more serious day after day. Medications had no effect, and the size of his meals also decreased gradually until he was unable to eat" (那日上墳回來，太公覺得身體

[19] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 3:45.

[20] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 6:82.

[21] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 11:151.

[22] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 12:164.

不大爽利。從此病一日重似一日，吃了藥也再不得見效，飯食也漸漸少的不能吃了).[23]

7. In Chapter 27, Bao Tingxi's second wife Madam Hu 胡 realizes her husband runs a theater company and goes mad. The doctor's diagnosis states: "This is [because] phlegm fills her stomach completely and she is deficient in healthy *qi*. She should take ginseng and amber" (「這是一肚子的痰，正氣又虛，要用人參、琥珀」).[24]

The characters experiencing phlegmatic symptoms listed here constitute a category of people who are obsessed with mundane desires. Whether for social status or material wealth, and whether for their own achievement or that of their family members, their desires matter to the extent that they form a sort of repertoire in the narrative. Commentator Huang Xiaotian 黃小田 (1795-1867) affirmatively points to the narrative focus on desire and its thematic reiteration.[25] On Compiler Lu's ironic death occurring at the pinnacle of his joy—in passage 4 listed above—Huang writes, "The imperial order hastens his death" (朝命乃催命耳).[26] In an obviously ironic causal parallel of the two *ming*-rhymed phrases—*chao ming* 朝命 ("imperial order") and *cui ming* 催命 ("to hasten death")—Huang implies that Lu's own desire for a higher official position causes his fatal phlegmatic symptom. Further, Huang relates Compiler Lu's case to that of Fan Jin's mother, from passage 2 above. On the same passage about Compiler Lu, Huang

[23] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 16:208; 17:218.

[24] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 27:337.

[25] Datings of the birth and death of commentators and their commentary editions of *Rulin waishi* in this chapter are based on David L. Rolston, *Traditional Chinese Fiction and Fiction Commentary: Reading and Writing between the Lines* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997). As to a historical overview of the commentaries of *Rulin waishi*, see Rolston, 312-328.

[26] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 12:164.

continues, "[He] is another old lady of the Fan family" (又是一個范老太太).[27] Zhang Wenhu 張文虎 (1808-1885), another commentator, echoes Huang's idea. Adding Compiler Lu's case to a list composed of the earlier incidents, Zhang likewise suggests the prototypicality of the phlegm motif: "[This is] identical to the illness of Fan Jin and his mother" (與范進母子同病).[28] While these characters do share in their outbreaks the same symptomatic loss of consciousness, the shared focus of the commentators is instead on its cause: it is their desire that results in the symptoms—the desire for, in the text's words, "success, fame, fortune, and status" (*gong ming fu gui* 功名富貴; I will refer to this as "fame and fortune" hereafter).[29]

To be exact, however, the text does not reject desire *per se*. Rather, the emphasis on desire lies in delimiting its boundary. The text's frequent employment of the conventional phrase "to stick to one's lot" (*shou benfen* 守本分) precisely clarifies this ethics. Demarcated from the Buddhist tenet of desirelessness (*wu yu* 無欲), this conventional ethics presupposes a certain lot destined to individuals in different measures and dictates that one stick to one's own lot.

Bao Wenqing 鮑文卿, who emerges in Chapter 24, is a paragon of this normative value. Bao, whose profession as an actor, a "despised profession" (*jian ye* 賤業), is nonetheless described as being more morally refined than the actual scholars who do not observe their lot and in some cases are even afflicted with phlegmatic symptoms.[30] The

[27] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 12:164.

[28] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 12:164.

[29] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 1:1.

[30] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 26:324.

text contrasts the high virtue of Bao and the vulgarity of the literati by putting Bao in the midst of the literati community. An episode from Chapter 25 reveals this narrative strategy for the promotion of Bao's virtue which is commonly understood to reflect Wu Jingzi's values. Two government clerks lobby Bao to use his intimacy with Prefect Xiang (Xiang Ding 向鼎) to persuade the prefect to accept the lawsuits that they would make. Bao declines their lobbying, identifying himself as "a man of lower status" (下賤之人), thus making it improper for him to convey such a request to the prefect.[31] As the clerks propose money in reward for his intermediation, Bao again rejects the money, revealing his humble self-awareness: "I know myself to be ill-fated" (「自己知道是個窮命」).[32] In a later passage, the text reaffirms Bao's virtue by praising him through Prefect Xiang's voice. Xiang introduces Bao to another literati officer by saying he has a "gentleman's demeanor" (*junzi zhi xing* 君子之行).[33]

The conceptual grounding of the phlegm motif is based on the ethics of sticking to one's lot, illustrated by Bao Wenqing. If this ethics designates the proper limiting of one's desires, phlegm displays how any pursuit that goes beyond this foreordained limitation is and should be restricted. Such a restriction is given in a way that is symmetrical to how sticking to one's lot is approved in the narrative; while Bao is praised for his self-restrictive moral virtues, phlegm is the retributive, visceral response to desire that exceeds the foreordained boundary.

[31] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 25:318.

[32] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 25:318.

[33] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 26:324.

In addition to this moral focus, an economic concern penetrates this physio-moral operation of phlegm. The etiology of phlegm is first economic in the sense that phlegm reacts to an economic object. As the cases of characters afflicted with phlegm listed above together illustrate, the desire described in this text is for material wealth or the social capital that promises wealth. More importantly, the phlegmatic symptoms are conceived in economic terms that presume a quantitative equivalence between one's lot and one's desire. As the latter exceeds the measure of the former, the excess desire undergoes a transvaluation into a surplus substance, phlegm, which is then accumulated within the body. The body would then discharge the surplus by means of its homeostatic nature, giving rise to various forms of disorders in the course of the discharge, surfacing as phlegmatic symptoms.

In fact, this fictional representation of phlegmatic disorders is highly derivative from traditional medicine. One common narrative found in traditional accounts describing phlegmatic symptoms demonstrates the origins of the fictional imagination of phlegm. Medicine books often point out that an emotional experience disturbs a person's normal homeostatic equilibrium, which in turn brings forth stasis in *qi* circulation. Of the accounts, Chao Yuanfang's 巢元方 (550-630) is particularly worthy of note for its exemplary record of early thoughts about how this *qi*-stasis would serve as a major paradigm of phlegmatic symptoms. In his comprehensive survey of symptomatology entitled *Treatise on Causes and Manifestations of All Diseases* (*Zhubing yuanhou lun* 諸病源候論), Chao writes: "If there is a blockage in the *qi*-pulse so that fluid and humor cannot flow, the retained fluid and *qi* are coagulated in the chest, which becomes phlegm"

(有氣脈閉塞，津液不通，水飲氣停在胸府，結而成痰).[34] This way of explaining phlegm as resulting from a blockage in the metabolic system would endure for over a millennium, even up to the eighteenth century. This is illustrated by the famous Qing medical scholar Luo Guogang's 羅國綱 theory as presented in his *Luoshi huiyue yijing* 羅氏會約醫鏡 (*Luo's Compilation of Medical Reflections*; 1789). In this work, Luo infuses the old etiology into the anatomical achievements from his era:

> What is clear from *yin* becomes fluid and humor, while what is turbid from *yin* becomes phlegm. Therefore, phlegm is formed by the coagulation of unclear fluid and humor. … When the spleen is deficient and cannot send its essence to the lungs but sends it down via routes for fluids, it is hard for the clear thing to ascend and for the turbid thing to descend. [As a result,] they stagnate in the diaphragm and coagulate as phlegm.
>
> 陰之清者，為津液，陰之濁者，即為痰。故痰者，乃津液不清，熏蒸結聚而成者也。… 惟脾虛不能致精於肺，下輸水道，則清者難升，濁者難降，留滯中膈，瘀而成痰。[35]

Luo builds on the established paradigm since Chao wrote that "blockage" (*bise* 閉塞) stemming from the "coagulation" (*jie* 結) of bodily fluids causes phlegm. At the same time, Luo sets apart the etiology of phlegm from the aspect of the metabolic circulation of *qi*. His elaborated concern focuses on the dysfunction of the spleen: when the spleen is deficient in its functional activity, it fails to maintain the circulation between the "clear"

[34] Chao Yuanfang 巢元方, *Zhubing yuanhou lun* 諸病源候論, *juan* 20, in *Zhongguo yixue dacheng* 中國醫學大成, ed. Cao Bingzhang 曹炳章, vol. 41 (reprint. Shanghai: Shanghai kexue jishu chubanshe, 1990), 5.

[35] Luo Guogang 羅國綱, *Luoshi huiyue yijing* 羅氏會約醫鏡, ed. Wang Shupeng 王樹鵬 et. al. (reprint. Beijing: Zhongguo zhongyiyao chubanshe, 2015), 187.

(*qing* 清) and "turbid" (*zhuo* 濁) fluids and humors, resulting in a lymphatic "stagnation" (*liuzhi* 留滯), which becomes phlegm.

The moral representation of the phlegmatic symptoms in our novel finds its imaginary origin in this medical notion of lymphatic stagnation. Excessive desire is a form of affect that does not exist in the original state of a body's intracorporeal *qi* equilibrium. Thus, the generation of this surplus *qi* disturbs the equilibrium, causing a metabolic disorder, which manifests in phlegmatic symptoms.

The homophonic relationship between greed (*tan* 貪) and phlegm (*tan*) buttresses the psycho-somatic imagination on a symbolic level. On the one hand, the text's frequent employment of *tan* for greedy characters' names may illustrate a thematic link between greed and phlegm. The name of the regional commander Tang Zhentai 湯鎮臺 who excessively represses the Miao 苗 people due to his "greed for merit" (*tan gong* 貪功) can be rendered as "[his] greed is really excessive" (*tan zhen tai* 貪真太). Also, the surname and given name of the judicial scrivener Tang Santan 唐三痰 who makes his living "extorting money from lawsuits" (*chi hunfan de* 喫葷飯的) doubly suggest his greed, *tan*. Phlegm (*tan*) as a material manifestation of greed (*tan*) may have its imaginary origin in such a homophonic association.[36]

In brief, traditional medical accounts on the intracorporeal circulation of *qi* and the allegorical possibility between the two *tan* words explain the causal link between

[36] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 43:535; 45:549. Though not quite so explicit as the two examples above, Chapter 52 provides another example of *tan* in a name marking a greedy person. Whiskers Mao (*Mao'er huzi* 毛二鬍子) fabricates a bankrupt pawnshop to elicit takeover funds from the Fourth Mr. Feng (*Feng si lao ye* 鳳四老爹), who covets interest. The fictitious pawnshop is said to have been run by the "Tan 談 family" (Tan *jia* 談家). The Tan family, which exists merely as a name within the narrative, indirectly indicates the greed (*tan*) of both Mao and Feng. *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 52:630.

desire and its major corporeal projection, phlegm. Desire is conceived as a material object triggered by one's affective pursuit of the external material and transformed into the bodily material, phlegm. This phlegm, a surplus, integrates this symbolic association between the extracorporeal object and the bodily affect.[37]

While all of this is true, the representation of phlegm in this novel has an even more concrete epistemological grounding aside from these analogical and allegorical associations. This is supported by the medical understanding that dysfunction of the spleen designates greed as one of its major causes. As in Luo's account above, the spleen was often engaged in lymphatic circulation and, therefore, its dysfunction would cause a metabolic stasis leading to the generation of phlegm. What matters here is that the spleen was believed as susceptible to emotional excesses. This widespread belief, dating as far back as the twelfth century, in part explains why those medical accounts that seek to address the pathology of phlegm often employ affect-related terminology. The term "seven emotions" (*qi qing* 七情) is representative of this psycho-somatic approach.[38] In

[37] In her analysis of the female ghost motif in late imperial fiction, Judith T. Zeitlin also employs medical accounts of stasis by which she defines the female ghost as "a symptom of fatal blockage and congestion, an interruption of the natural cycle, the pathological return of something incomplete and unresolved" (Judith T. Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine: Ghosts and Gender in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Literature* [Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007], 22). The phlegmatic representation of *Rulin waishi* deviates from Zeitlin's psycho-somatic definition of the repressed emotions of the ghost in that phlegm results from material desire rather than affective, reflecting an excess of desire rather than its repression. Nevertheless, Zeitlin's focus on the female ghost that manifests unresolved desires provides a representational predecessor of this eighteenth century novel along with being a sort of ancestor of this novel's homophonic allegory between the *tan*s, paralleling the homophonic association between a ghost's affective desire (*yu* 欲) and its physical stasis (*yu* 鬱).

[38] The specific factors of the "seven emotions" slightly vary by philosophical and academic divisions. Confucianism, based on the category of *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), mainly counts "joy" (*xi* 喜), "anger" (*nu* 怒), "sorrow" (*ai* 哀), "fear" (*ju* 懼), "affection" (*ai* 愛), "dislike" (*wu* 惡), and "desire" (*yu* 欲), whereas medical tradition, following the *Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor* (*Huangdi Neijing* 黃帝內經), refers to "joy" (*xi* 喜), "anger" (*nu* 怒), "anxiety" (*you* 憂), "thought" (*si* 思), "sorrow" (*bei* 悲), "fear" (*jing* 驚), and "fright" (*kong* 恐). The *Inner Canon* relates each emotion to different organs. Wang Meng'ou 王夢鷗, ed., *Liji jinzhu jinyi* 禮記今註今譯 (Taipei: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, Minguo 67 [1978]), 301; Zhang Zhicong 張志聰, *Huangdi neijing suwen ji zhu* 黃帝內經素問集注, *juan* 2 and *juan* 5, in *Zhongguo yixue*

line with the general tendency to "attribute the root cause of an illness to emotion," most likely stemming from the influence of Neo-Confucianism, Song pathology introduced the "seven emotions" in its etiology of phlegm as well.[39] An eminent Southern Song physician, Chen Yan 陳言 (1131-1189), for example, claims:

> That people have phlegm-retained fluid results from their unclean nutrition and defenses [*qi*], and their turbid and putrid *qi* and blood, which produce coagulation. Internally, the disarranged seven emotions and stagnated filthy *qi* are congested, thereby generating saliva. The coagulation of the saliva becomes [phlegm-] retained fluid, which constitutes an interior cause.
>
> 人之有痰飲者，由榮衛不清，氣血濁敗，凝結而成也。內則七情汨亂，髒氣不行，鬱而生涎，涎結為飲，為內所因。[40]

In the course of refining the classification system of phlegmatic symptoms throughout the late imperial period, the "seven emotions" became established as a typical category of phlegm etiology. Shen Jin'ao's 沈金鰲 (1717-1776) catalog verifies this change. For the sixth of his nine categories, he identifies "*qi*-phlegm" (*qi tan* 氣痰) and explains it:

> The sixth is *qi*-phlegm. When the seven emotions are coagulated and phlegm stagnates in the throat, that which looks like withered cotton or a plum pit would neither be coughed out nor swallowed up, which makes one feel a pressure on the diaphragm.
>
> 六曰氣痰，七情鬱結，痰滯咽喉，形如敗絮，或如梅核，咯不出咽不下，胸膈痞悶。[41]

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dacheng 中國醫學大成, ed. Cao Bingzhang 曹炳章, vol. 1 (reprint. Shanghai: Shanghai kexue jishu chubanshe, 1990), 5 and 44-45.

[39] Zeitlin, *The Phantom Heroine*, 22.

[40] Chen Yan 陳言, *Sanyin jiyi bingzheng fanglun* 三因極一病證方論, *juan* 13, in *Chen Wuze yixue quanshu* 陳無擇醫學全書, ed. Wang Xiangli 王象禮 (Beijing: Zhongguo yiyao chubanshe, 2005), 152.

[41] Shen Jinao 沈金鰲, *Zabing Yuanliu xizhu* 雜病源流犀燭, in *Shen Jinao yixue quanshu* 沈金鰲醫學全書,

These traditional pathologies of the phlegmatic symptom, including Luo's anatomical and Shen's psycho-somatic accounts, position the phlegmatic representation in *Rulin waishi* within a medical and moral epistemology. When this eighteenth century novel, contemporary to Luo and Shen, brings established medical knowledge to its moral narrative, the assumption that the body reacts to the individual's desire underlies the foremost premise of the phlegm motif: the body by itself concerns an aspect of the agent's morality.[42] This spontaneous moral responsivity of the body features not so much as a karmic retribution as it does a physio-moral rehabilitation. Phlegm, a token of excessive desire for what is beyond one's lot, is more essentially defined as a product of the body's physio-moral mechanism that discharges the moral surplus in such a material form and ultimately recovers the original moral as well as physiological states.

A story from *Liaozhai zhiyi* reveals a shared ground of imagination, implying that this sort of moral representation of the body's activity is by no means new to the Chinese literary tradition. Titled "A Discerner of Writing" (*Si wen lang* 司文郎), this story features a blind monk who distinguishes writing through the autonomous reactions of his body even preceding his rational judgment. While the preconscious operation of the monk's body evinces its thematic linkage to the discharges of phlegm in our novel, the linkage is even stronger in the sense that the bodily response involves a moral judgment. Whenever the monk smells the smoke that comes from the burning of poor writing, the

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ed. Tian sisheng 田思勝 (Beijing: Zhongguo yiyao chubanshe, 1999), 294.

[42] Based on the earliest known mention dating from 1749 and its gaining popularity as early as 1770 or 1771, Shang assumes a printed edition would have been published between 1771 to 1779. Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 310.

monk's body violently reacts. This composition reflects the premodern Chinese belief that writing reflects the writer's moral quality. In the context of this story, therefore, the abrupt metabolic disorder of the monk indicates that the moral quality of a writer is too inferior (or foul) to accept. The climactic scene of "A Discerner of Writing" captures how the body can carry out moral discernment. A haughty scholar whose writing the monk once discerned as being vulgar now passes the official examination and ridicules the monk. Then, the monk tries to discern his writing once again:

> The scholar burned [his writings one by one]. The monk [smells the burning smoke and] passed judgment on the quality of each piece of writing. But at the sixth, he suddenly began to vomit violently against the wall and emit gas with a thunderous sound. The people around them all smirked. Rubbing his eyes, the monk said to the scholar: "This is undoubtedly your master's. I had no idea at first, but once I smelled it, it assailed my nostrils and penetrated into my abdomen. [However,] the bladder cannot contain it and it directly came out of the back passage."
>
> 生焚之。每一首，都言非是; 至第六篇，忽向壁大嘔，下氣如雷，眾皆粲然。僧拭目向生曰:「此真汝師也! 初不知而驟嗅之，刺於鼻，棘於腹，膀胱所不能容，直自下部出矣!」[43]

The transvaluative associations in this passage assert that the burning scent carries a writer's morality and that this moral quality is in turn transformed into excreta, and in this way the text anticipates the visceral phlegm discharges above. Just as the monk's body instinctively emits gas in response to a physio-moral stimulus that is too foul to contain, the body of an avaricious protagonist discharges phlegm on their own account. In brief, the phlegm-discharging body is an extended instance of the discerner of writing. Now

[43] *Liaozhai zhiyi*, 1622-1623.

built into everyone's body, the embodied micro-discerner maintains its own physical and moral homeostasis by discharging immoral filth.

Competing Propensities: Moral Spontaneity and Immoral Will

Along with the spontaneous metabolic operation of the body, the role of free will is another major concern of *Rulin waishi* in its representation of inherent moral propensity. Some cases of the phlegmatic symptom conflate the autonomous moral system of the body with the classic themes of subjectivity such as moral decision-making, practice, and responsibility. Phlegmatic symptoms compete with an agent's free will, being aggravated or alleviated in degree of intensity. These cases illustrate that the physio-moral operation of the body involves the conscious intervention of an agent. This conscious realm extends the conceptual boundary of phlegmatic symptoms outside the physical realm of the moral body.

That greedy characters expectorate phlegm and thus successfully avoid potential dangers presents the relationship between phlegm and free will. While the body carries out its inherent propensity to discharge the nonessential desire-substance and return to its initial equilibrium of intracorporeal *qi*, characters still pursue their desire and accordingly produce phlegm without showing any signs of moral transformation. These competing propensities well reveal the author's awareness of the limitation of moral nature. Despite the moral operation of phlegm, an opposing inclination is still powerful in the real world.

Senior Licentiate Yan's phlegm-spitting enunciates the intertwined relationship between the body's physio-moral operation and the free will of characters. On the boat in which he returns home from the marriage of his son, Yan "suddenly feels vertigo, blurred

vision, and nausea within his mouth, and throws up a mess of thin phlegm" (忽然一時頭暈上來，兩眼昏花，口裏作惡心，噦出許多清痰來).[44] Fortunately, he manages to get through the crisis after he eats cloud wafers and farts twice. This brief crisis is immediately followed by an event that displays his obsession with money. As a scheme not to pay his boat fare, Yan puts the rest of the cloud wafers on deck, waiting for a boatman to eat them. Soon after, a boatman indeed eats them. When the boat arrives ashore, Yan berates the boatman for his eating of the wafers and finally succeeds in leaving the boat without paying his fare. Yan's quarrel over the wafers and the boat fare exactly marks the ascendency of a character's conscious greed over the body's moral nature. Despite phlegm's regulatory function, Yan does not show any change in his actual greedy personality. In this case, phlegm has no more significance than its designation of a character's moral state. Just as Yan exits the boat without paying his fare, he passes the bounds of the body's moral control without paying any cost for his greed.

The example of Old Man Cheng (Cheng laodie 成老爹) in Chapter 39 restages the intersection of free will and the moral operation of the body. At a drinking party held in Yu Huaxuan's 虞華軒 house, Cheng persists in speaking about rising in the world and experiencing success. Mr. Yu (Yu da xiansheng 余大先生), who cannot abide Cheng's vulgarity, suggests a drinking game. Instead of describing the game in detail, the text offers a brief summary of the rest of the party—"[They] right away played a drinking game with the phrase 'the pleasure of drinking,' which lasted until the dead of night, when everyone was drunk"

[44] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 6:82.

(當下行了一個「快樂飲酒」的令，行了半夜，大家都喫醉了)—and immediately shifts its focus to Cheng after the party: "In the middle of the night, [Cheng] vomited and also shat while vomiting" (半夜裏又吐，吐了又痾屎).[45] Commentator Huang Xiaotian's disdainful, terse comment, "the old dog is greedy for food" (老狗貪吃), explicitly points out *tan* or greed as the moral cause of the *tan* symptom.[46] Granted, the "greed" here in Huang's comment does not only refer to Cheng's gluttony. In making reference to his vulgar remarks at the party, the scene seeks to describe his desire in general.

Late imperial pathological discourse on phlegm categorizes Cheng's intense fecal and oral vomiting as a symptom of "food phlegm" (*shi tan* 食痰) or "food-accumulation phlegm" (*shi ji tan* 食積痰), one of the most common phlegmatic symptoms.[47] Cheng's phlegmatic symptom illustrates the body's enduring propensity to discharge vanity and vulgarity and to maintain physio-moral equilibrium. But such discharges still have a clear limitation in their moral influence on the real world. Vanity is a lasting quality of his personality, and, most presumably, Cheng would continue his life of vanity after his discharge of phlegm. At the intersection of these opposing moral forces—the physio-moral nature of Cheng's body and his vulgar personality—lies the excreta. When his body breaks its dire dyspepsia by ejecting the phlegmatized desire as excreta, the text shows Cheng's moral quality as being as filthy as the excreta. Standing for the two opposing forces of moral quality, the excreta suggest that either the body's physio-moral

[45] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 46:570.

[46] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 46:570.

[47] For an example of the categorization of phlegmatic symptoms, see Shen Jinao, *Zabing Yuanliu xizhu*, 309.

operation or one's greedy personality does not completely account for reality. Reality finds its total shape only in the sum and synthesis of the two.

No other symptoms portray the dynamics of the propensity of the body and free will better than the case of Madam Hu 胡, Bao Tingxi's second wife. As in the previous examples of the male characters' discharge, her phlegmatic symptom likewise highlights the body's moral recognition. However, her chronic symptoms are distinguished from the earlier temporary cases in that her symptoms fluctuate depending on her self-awareness of wealth. Her symptom breaks out when she realizes her newly-wed husband is nothing but a theater company owner, contrary to her expectation that he was a provincial examination graduate and a well-established shop owner who would fulfill her wishes for fame and fortune. At the moment when she becomes aware of this fact, she gets so upset that she falls into a stupor and, after being awakened, she even has a seizure. A doctor's diagnosis that "phlegm fills up her stomach" (這是一肚子的痰) confirms the phlegm-related nature of her symptoms.

Then, the text adds another layer of Hu's conscious moral quality upon the spontaneous physio-moral operation of the body. Her phlegmatic symptoms are alleviated when she becomes too poor to keep taking medicine, while it is aggravated more and more as she continues to recover her wealth.[48] Huang Xiaotian succinctly summarizes the variations as "the illness is gone with wealth" (病隨財去) and "the illness comes with wealth" (病隨財來). As the commentator clearly suggests, Hu's financial state affects her moral state, which in turn affects the state of her phlegmatic symptoms.

[48] Wu Jingzi, *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 27:338; 341.

The correspondence between the moral body and moral awareness juxtaposes Hu's case along with the aforementioned examples of phlegm-spitting. Despite its intrinsic propensity to return itself to its initial equilibrium, the body cannot create a complete moral cosmos, without another phenomenal moral force that occurs in the dimension of consciousness. The examples of Licentiate Yan, Old Man Cheng, and Madam Hu confirm this disjuncture between an individual's moral awareness and the body's preconscious moral operation. Although phlegm embodies and realizes the moral nature of the body, this nature actualizes moral reality in a complete sense only through its engagement with the subjectivity that encompasses the conscious will of a moral agent.

Tears and the Ritual Sincerity

Tearful Lament

The visceral ethics of the body refigures in another humoral motif, tears. While phlegm primarily denotes a mechanism for the regulation of one's desire, an aspect of *li* 禮, tears extend the narrative concern to another aspect of *li*, ritual propriety. Tears especially highlight one's sincere response to death-related events, as when characters reveal a deep sympathy in their involuntary lamentations for the deceased and the bereaved. This humoral humanity, transcending the ritual apparatus, embodies the interpersonal dimension of *li* in addition to the individual ethics of self-regulation as underscored by the phlegm motif.

The humoral ethics of tears resists emotional abstraction. In much the same way that phlegm represents the body's moral propensity through the metabolic mechanism that discharges a physical-*cum*-moral excess, the textual description of tears highlights a

bodily performativity rather than a mere emotional response. Undoubtedly expressions of ritual sentiment, tears and tearful lament display ritual performativity with the body as a medium.

One thing notable is that this ritual practice of lament not only confirms the moral quality of virtuous characters but also reveals the flip side of the moral personality of unvirtuous characters. Those who are opportunistic, egoistic, and cold-blooded display their sincerity in tears, just as virtuous characters shed tears in their sincere lament. The tearful laments of the unvirtuous characters are largely due to these characters being in certain situations in which they cannot help but sincerely lament. However, from a broader perspective, the tears that *Rulin waishi* draws out of its morally inferior characters reflect a direction in which the novel attempts to represent human nature. In parallel to the phlegm that shows a moral operation of the body, especially the body of the greedy, tears approve the universal possibility of ritual performativity that also occurs in the unvirtuous characters. If phlegm is defined as a spontaneous moral operation of the body, ritual tears are a conscious version of the phlegm as a ritual signal. This ritual sincerity of unvirtuous characters enables the fluid characterization of this novel. Tears deny such a simple fixation as good and evil. Instead, the humane tears of inhumane characters create multifaceted characters.

The two episodes in which Wang Hui 王惠 laments others' deaths are a case in point. Insofar as his everyday demeanor shows, Wang is not a virtuous character at all. Nevertheless, his occasional ritual commitment and sympathy for the bereaved and the deceased put forward another layer unreducible to his moral quality. This complicated description of Wang's moral state is obvious even in his first appearance. When he hears

the news that Xun Mei 荀玫, who passed the palace examination in the same year as Wang himself, has lost his mother, Wang persuades Xun to suppress his mourning, insisting that the observance of the three-year mourning will delay his official appointment. In accordance with Wang's advice, Xun requests a suspension of mourning, but this is soon rejected by higher office. When Xun returns home for the funeral, Wang accompanies him and even postpones his own official appointment. For the two months of the funeral, Wang helps Xun wholeheartedly and also provides financial support that the narrator refers to in concluding the narration of the event—he "lends Xun's household more than a thousand taels of silver in total" (共借了上千兩的銀子與荀家).[49]

The subsequent biography of Wang makes defining his moral quality more complicated. On his return from the funeral for Xun's mother, Wang is appointed as a magistrate of Nanchang prefecture, where he meets his predecessor, Magistrate Qu 蘧 and his son Qu Jingyu 蘧景玉. He is soon promoted to be superintendent of the southern Jiangxi 江西 region. However, there he is attacked by and surrenders to the rebel troops of the Prince of Ning (Ning wang 寧王). Later when the imperial army defeats the Prince of Ning, Wang again flees to Zhejiang, where he encounters Qu Laixun, the grandson of Magistrate Qu, and receives two hundred taels of silver from him. Facing the hermeneutic predicament that a participant in the rebel forces receives not punishment but help, contemporary commentators often invoke Wang's previous altruism in which he supports the funeral of Xun's mother. A commentator on the *Qixing tang* 齊省堂 edition (1874) writes, "it is due to Wang Hui's [previous] generous treatment of his friend that he

[49] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 7:101.

receives the silver as a reward from Qu's grandson"
(王惠待友頗厚，所以得蘧公孫贈銀之報).[50] The moral connotation of "retribution" in this commentary is further specified in Zhang Wenhu's 張文虎 economic parlance. In his second edition (1885), Zhang notes, "the father and son of the Qu family do nothing but pay the debt on behalf of Xun Mei" (蘧家父子只算代荀玫還欠).[51]

Very shortly before Laixun offers money to Wang, the text embeds a brief scene focused on his tears. In conversation with Laixun, Wang is told that Laixun's father—that is, the son of the magistrate Qu—Qu Jingyu has died. On the unexpected news of the death of his old acquaintance, "Wang Hui sheds tears upon hearing of it"
(王惠聽罷流下淚來).[52] From this lament, the conversation moves onto Wang's current situation and he reveals himself to be a fugitive. The money that the commentators above point out as a karmic reward emerges here. Laixun gives Wang the two hundred taels of silver for his travel expenses. In other words, the brief scene that describes Wang's tearful response to the death of his old colleague signals a turn in the narrative. The reciprocation for his earlier ritual spending follows these tears. He is rewarded for the money that he spent for another's funeral at the apex of his career, during this time of his complete abjection as a fugitive, when he has no other way to lament but his shedding of tears for another's death.

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[50] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 7:101.

[51] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 8:109. Consonant with the interpretations of these commentators, Qu Laixun's 蘧來旬 name may provide yet another implication of the mirroring structure. The character for his surname, *qu* which puns on "to go" (*qu* 去) and another character of his name, *lai*, "to come," correspond to the reciprocation between his ritual spending and his subsequent reward. The last character of his name, *xun*, "to make an equilibrium" and "to balance," reinforces this economic connotation of his name: the reward balances his karmic account.

[52] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 8:109.

One hermeneutic problem with Wang's tears in this reciprocating context is the possibility of hypocrisy. What if Wang's tears are fake, lacking any sincerity? What if his shedding of tears in front of Laixun is a scheme to get money from the son of his late colleague? The repeated moral failings in Wang's earlier career indeed make it hard to completely rule out a doubt on the sincerity of his tears. The present context focuses on Wang's behavior and conversation, and it does not explicitly confirm the state of his interiority.

With all the possible suggestions for Wang's hypocrisy, the text supports the sincerity of his lament in the context of his encounter with Laixun. At least three levels of thematic and structural correspondences—within this immediate current context, between the current context and his preceding career along his journey, and of his journey as a whole—suggest that the text describes Wang's lament as an embodiment of his obscured genuine humanity.

First, in the current scene, his tears serve as moral causality for the reward given through Laixun. While Qu's financial help obviously evokes Wang's earlier good deeds, the narrative composition in which his lament precedes his reward suggests that the reward is not only a thematic correspondence to a temporally distant prior event but also a verification of his sincerity at this point in this story. Wang's lament qualifies him as a proper recipient for the reward before its actual occurrence.

Second, the focus on Wang's lament serves to compensate for, if not offset, his moral failing in the preceding event, his surrender to the rebel forces. In the same way that his commitments to the funeral of Xun's mother overwrites his earlier error in inciting Xun to curtail his mourning, his tears in the present scene mitigate yet another

moral error of his, this time a violation of loyalty (*zhong* 忠) in parallel to his earlier violation of filiality (*xiao* 孝). More importantly, this moral offsetting is not only for Wang himself. At the same time, it also serves as a self-justification for this narrative in which moral reward is given to a disloyal character. As proved by the magistrate Qu's approval of his grandson helping the traitor even when the magistrate knows that Wang has committed treason by serving the rebel government, the text has an apparent self-awareness of its own dilemma of narrative ethics—the reward for a disloyal character. Wang's lament resolves this quandary. By shifting focus from his past error to his present manifestation of moral nature, the tears rationalize the reward for the opportunist, albeit superficially.

Third, from a broader perspective, Wang's lament even works to redefine his official journey as a whole. If Wang's itinerary, including his acquaintance with the Qu family and the unexpected encounter with Laixun, converges in a karmic reward at its end, the initial meeting with Qu Jingyu turns out to be a prerequisite for his final lament. This teleological logic reshapes his years of journeying as a course leading to the confirmation of his sincerity. Over the period of time in which Laixun grows to replace his late father, Wang is placed in a situation where he has nothing that can prove his identity but his tears.

Commentator Huang Xiaotian offers a rationale for the textual synthesis of Wang's ambivalent moral realities. On the scene in which Wang sheds tears, he writes: "[his] *liangxin* is accidentally seen" (良心偶見).[53] While *liangxin* literally means the

[53] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 8:109.

"good heart-mind," it does not simply refer to a morally ordered state[54] Having a positive implication of morality by itself, *liangxin* emerges in a negative context. A statement that one has *liangxin* refers to a fundamental morality that would not be identified in general situations. Therefore, the use of the term *liangxin* is essentially ironic. It conveys an overlapping of essential moral nature with quotidian moral failings, with the former's temporary predominance in a given context. Huang's usage of *liangxin* exactly corresponds to such pragmatics of the term. Like Wang, the term *liangxin* exposes, albeit only "accidentally" (*ou* 偶), Wang's underlying moral nature unaffected by his unstable moral consciousness in reality. The multiple semantic layers of *liangxin* take us back to the narrative grammar of tears in the text: the tears and tearful lament make "visible" (*jian* 見) the otherwise unseen moral essence of reality.

Yan Dayu's 嚴大育 concubine Madam Zhao 趙 is another example in which tearful lament reveals the humanity hidden by quotidian moral failings. Zhao's case is more complicated than Wang Hui's lament for Qu Jingyu above because the text employs tears to represent both her hypocrisy and humanity. The death of Madam Wang 王, Yan's legitimate wife, articulates the hypocritical tears through the repetition of the word *ku* 哭 ("to wail"). In the gradual deterioration of Madam Wang's symptoms, Zhao "while embracing her son at the foot of her sickbed, wails and cries (*ku qi* 哭泣) at night, wails

[54] There have been a variety of English translations *liangxin*. James Legge translates it into the "proper goodness of mind" (*The Chinese classics*, [New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1870], 315), W.A.C.H. Dobson into "sense of the good" (*Mencius: A New Translation Arranged and Annotated For The General Reader* [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963], 141), Benjamin Schwartz into "true heart" (*The World of Thought in Ancient China* [Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985], 268), and Irene Bloom into "the innate, good mind" ("Mengzian Arguments on Human Nature (*Ren Xing*)," eds. Philip J. Ivanhoe and Xiusheng Liu, *Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi* [Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 2002], 86). I translated *liangxin* in the most literal way as the "good heart-mind."

(*ku*) several times" (夜晚時抱了孩子在床腳頭坐著哭泣，哭了幾回); on an evening when Zhao is absent, a maidservant informs Madam Wang that Zhao "every night puts an incense table in the courtyard and petitions heaven and earth in prayer, wailing (*ku*) that she would die in place of [Madam Wang]" (每夜擺個香桌在天井裏哭求天地，他仍要替奶奶); the next evening, Zhao, "while wailing (*ku*) again says such words [that she wants to die in place of Madam Wang]" (又哭著講這些話).[55] The events following this fourth instance of wailing unmask the truth of Zhao's devotion. As soon as Madam Wang suggests that Zhao be her replacement, Zhao conveys the words to Yan, who immediately expedites wedding plans.[56]

The text maximizes the ironic effect of this nonritual marriage preceded by the legitimate wife's critical condition through its underscoring of Yan's ritual commitment in asking for an approval from Wang's brothers in advance. The extended account of their conversation amplifies the irony as it reveals the inhumanity of the brothers, willing as they are to approve the marriage under the guise of concern with "the three cardinal guides and the five constant virtues" (*gang chang* 綱常) but are in actuality concerned with the money offered by Yan. This ironic disjuncture between a character's intensive show of ritual engagement and lack of actual ritual sincerity is rehearsed in a more dramatic fashion in the detailed description of the wedding ceremony. The narrator traces every facet of the wedding, demonstrating in the end how the ritual gravity of the characters involved is far from their moral concerns: the Wang brothers choose an "auspicious day for wedding" (*ji qi* 吉期) and invite relatives; the bride and groom

[55] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 5:67.

[56] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 5:67.

inform heaven and earth, and ancestors of their marriage; all the family members, including the wives of the Wang brothers, relatives, and house servants, greet her; and finally Zhao enters Madam Wang's room so she can bow to her, though she "has already lost consciousness" (已發昏去了).[57] This final moment of the wedding ceremony, which not only ritually but actually confirms Zhao's new status as Yan's legitimate wife, soon leads to the culmination of all the ironies of this nonritual marriage. At the height of the wedding reception, the news of Madam Wang's death is delivered, which invites Zhao's monumental wailing, here focalized through Yan's eyes:

> When Yan entered [Madam Wang's room] wailing, he found Zhao knocking her head on the side of bed before she passed out while wailing (*ku*). A crowd held Zhao up in order to pour water down her throat but they could only do so after prying open her teeth. As she awoke, she tore her hair out and rolled around on the ground, wailing (*ku*) loudly.
>
> 嚴監生哭著走了進去，只見趙氏扶著床沿，一頭撞去，已經哭死了。眾人且扶著趙氏灌開水，撬開牙齒灌了下去。灌醒了時，披頭散髮，滿地打滾，哭的天昏地暗。[58]

Yan is not to be outperformed by Zhao in his own hypocrisy. In parallel to Zhao's near-lunatic lament, Yan also completes his ritual scrupulosity. He "from then on, goes on a vegetarian fast, makes offerings for forty-nine days, receives callers expressing condolences, carries the coffin to the graves for which he spends four to five thousand taels of silver and makes a fuss for almost half a year" (自此，修齋、理七、開喪、出

[57] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 5:69-70; 5:70.

[58] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 5:70. It includes another ironic moment that Zhao's hypocritical wailing is conveyed through the sight of Yan who is as hypocritical as Zhao. Even to his eyes, her hypocrisy is seen as being excessive.

殯，用了四、五千兩銀子，鬧了半年，不必細說).[59]

However, the critical undertone dominating the detailed description of Yan's ritual ostentation is soon diluted by the radical change in his characterization: in the scene that immediately follows the wedding, his heartbreaking longing for his late wife contests his earlier ritual hypocrisy, uncovering his underlying humanity. This abrupt change begins with the tears he sheds when he receives three hundred taels of monthly interest sent from a pawnshop owned by his late wife.[60] His sincere lament, expressed by his tears, is further intensified. As he happens to discover an additional five hundred taels of silver that his dead wife has left, he "again wails (*ku*) for a spell lying in front of the bier" (伏著靈床子，又哭了一場).[61] The text reaffirms his sincerity by stating that the wailing has become quotidian: "On account of [his longing for his wife], he did not go out to pay his respects on the New Year, only to unremittingly weep (*ku qi*) at home to the extent of choking with tears. He even became stupefied and delirious" (因此，新年不出去拜節，在家哽哽咽咽，不時哭泣，精神顛倒，恍惚不寧).[62] Yan's inveterate longing causes him pain in his heart, which ultimately leads to his death.

With the text having completed its advocacy for Yan's humanity obscured by his ritual ostentation but brought to light by his genuine wailing, now it sets out to discover the humanity of another inhumane figure, Zhao, through an expected retribution for her earlier ritual inappropriateness. The ritual retribution visited upon Zhao is characterized

[59] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 5:71.

[60] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 5:71.

[61] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 5:72.

[62] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 5:72.

by its ironic contrasts to the concurrent celebration of Yan Dayu's older brother, Yan Dawei. While the young son of Zhao and the late Dayu dies of smallpox, Dawei's son is getting married. One household's lineage is severed, whereas the other attains the prospect of carrying on its family line through marriage. Consequently, the widow Zhao becomes disenfranchised through the loss of her son while her brother-in-law attempts to extend his dominance over the family by substituting the rights of his own newly married son over those of the dead child. This asymmetrical juxtaposition of the fates of the two Yan families evokes the retributive nature of misfortune: Zhao, who once married while another stood on the verge of death (marriage and death), is now bereaved of her son as the family celebrates the marriage of his cousin (death and marriage).

This ironic twist even changes the moral connotation of Zhao's wailing. Unlike her previous hypocrisy, the reversed parallel between marriage and death now brings forth her genuine tears, heretofore unseen:

> Madam Zhao took charge of the household at home: money was heaped up over the Big Dipper, rice was rotting in the warehouse, and she had a multitude of servants and rows of cows and horses. She spent days enjoying all this bliss. Unexpectedly, it being that unseeing heaven fails to protect the good, the young child came down with smallpox (literally, the heavenly flower) and an endless fever. … On the seventh day, the plump and snow-white baby left. Zhao's wailing (*ku*) and weeping this time were incommensurate neither with her wailing (*ku*) for Madam Wang nor with her wailing (*ku*) for her husband. She kept wailing (*ku*) until she could not even wail (*ku*) tears. After wailing (*ku*) for three entire days and nights, she sent the baby away to be buried.
>
> 趙氏在家掌管家務，真個是(a)錢過北斗，米爛成倉，僮僕成群，牛馬成行，享福度日。不想皇天無眼，不祐善人，那小孩子出起天花來，發了一天熱。… 到七日上，把個白白胖胖的孩子跑掉了。(b)趙氏此番的**哭**泣，不但比不得**哭**大娘，並且比不得**哭**二爺，直**哭**得眼淚都**哭**不出來。整整的**哭**了三日三夜，打發孩子出去。[63]

[63] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 6:80.

The sudden turnaround of Zhao's fate in this passage is in step with a dramatic verbal shift on the part of the narrator. The grandiose account of Zhao's massive fortune which is rendered in consecutive four-syllable phrases—underlined in (a)—gives way to the colloquial style describing her unexpected misfortune—in (b). The verb *ku* also matters here. Describing the agitated mentality of the protagonist in an unrefined fast-paced colloquial voice, the verb now dramatizes her tragedy. Undoubtedly, the intentional intensive reiteration of *ku* implies that the present wailing is given as retribution for her earlier hollow wailing, even if the six occurrences of the verb in both sequences are taken to be coincidental.

Beyond retribution, the context adds another thematic layer onto Zhao's wailing. Like Yan's belated sincere grief for his late wife, the genuine tears that Zhao now sheds for her son vindicate her enduring humanity. The subsequent episode involving a lawsuit shows this changed view over Zhao's loss of her son and her lament for him. Dawei, who has just come back from the marriage of his second son, files a lawsuit against Zhao to have his son replace his nephew as his brother's heir. However, Magistrate Tang who "is also a son born by concubine" (也是妾生的兒子) frustrates Yan's plan, allowing Zhao to choose an heir herself.[64] This narration embeds the detail that Tang himself is a child of a concubine. This serves as a rationale for Tang identifying himself with Zhao's dead child and, furthermore, being sympathetic to Zhao, who was once a concubine. Tang's judgment represents the textual reframing of Zhao as an object of sympathy. A subsequent focalization of Tang's thoughts confirms this change in the text's views on

[64] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 6:87.

Zhao: "[It is said] 'Laws establish general rules and its operation follows human affect.' This Senior Licentiate is going too far" (『律設大法，理順人情』，這貢生也忒多事了).[65] The "human affect" that Tang takes as a principle of his judgment may also reflect the textual sentiment that underlies this scene. Even an evil character has a clue to their humanity represented by their sincere tears. This is a "human affect," or the affect that every human being must necessarily have.

In terms of narrative development, this lawsuit episode is no more than an epilogue to the two-chapter biography of the Yan family. After this brief legal event, the narrative focus abruptly shifts to Xun Mei, and the thread of stories about the Yan family completely disappears. The structural status of the lawsuit episode suggests that it is arranged to provide a supplemental textual message to the preceding major events. If the text only intended to demonstrate a retribution for Zhao's earlier ritual failings, this legal event would be redundant and inconsistent; instead, it approves the minimum humanity she exhibits upon the death of her son.

Episodes focused on Wang Yun 王蘊 rehearse the theme of the humoral humanity of otherwise inhuman figures. This thematic homogeneity designates Wang's lachrymal lament for his dead daughter as symmetrical to Zhao's wailing. Like the mother who wails for her dead son, the yet-remaining humanity of this once cold-blooded father is confirmed through his tears. The composition that finds Wang's story beginning with a ritual issue is another part of this symmetry. Learning of the decision of his daughter to follow her husband in death, Wang, rather than attempting to dissuade her, instead encourages her, since she will then be venerated as a virtuous woman, "leaving [her]

[65] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 6:87.

name in history" (青史上留名); when she finally dies, Wang celebrates her passing.[66] Wang's ritual obstinacy outdoes Zhao's hypocrisy. While the latter self-consciously affects sincerity, Wang, who is firmly rooted in and faithful to his beliefs, steps further away from the hypocritical characters. Ironically enough, a reversal in Wang's attitude also comes from ritual experiences. After the ritual that enshrines his daughter, Wang suddenly "feels pain in his heart as his thoughts were changed" (轉覺心傷).[67] He subsequently takes a journey for which he leaves because he "cannot bear" (*bu ren* 不忍) to see his wife grieving at home. On the journey, Wang even sheds "hot tears" (*re lei* 熱泪) thinking of his daughter.[68] The resurfacing of the "hot tears" suggests that it is no accident. By adding an additional mourning event over an old friend of his in which the phrase, "hot tears," recurs, the text confirms his humanity beneath his earlier stubbornness.

Wang's tears over his dead daughter symbolically compensate for his earlier moral failing. Parallel to Yan Dayu's mourning tears for his dead wife and Madam Zhao's for her dead son, however, the compensation occurs ironically in the context of retribution for his earlier obstinance. We find two extreme poles of rituality here. On one side, there is his ritual stubbornness that eventually drove his daughter to death. On the other side, there is his tearful lament for his daughter. The latter overwrites the former. His tears fill not only the moral lack of his earlier (wrong) belief regarding ritual purity but also the failure of ossified ritualism in general.

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[66] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 48:587.

[67] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 48:589.

[68] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 48:589; 590.

This notion that tears can carry out a belated ritual practice integrates the moral significance of tears in *Rulin waishi*. Tears represent the novel's theme of phenomenal morality in a way that makes up for what has been lacking in a character's ritual and moral career. Sympathy for others and sincere mourning for one's own flesh and blood endow the greedy, unprincipled, and obstinate figures with a moral image. In other words, however greedy, unprincipled, and obstinate, tears attest to the existence of humanity deep beneath the quotidian level inclined to moral failings. *Rulin waishi* by no means describes the coexistence of such opposing moral personalities as contradiction. If they are contradiction, they are intended contradictions.

Such intended contradictions account for the novel's view on the source of morality as discussed in the case of phlegmatic symptoms above. Just as greed, hypocrisy, and obstinateness are results of affective nature—or, more exactly, the "nature of *qi* and material" (*qizhi zhi xing* 氣質之性)—the humanity that is manifested by tears originates in none other than the same phenomenal aspect of human nature. This novel's dual characterization of unvirtuous-yet-humane figures derives from this belief that *qi* is the one and only origin of moral personality. The key lies in that one can determine the direction of one's moral inclination: sincere lament as a ritual practice takes the moral stream of *qi* in a morally desirable direction.

A Metonymy of Tears: Ritual Spending

The money that a character offers for others' funerals extends the thematic boundary of tears. *Rulin waishi* highlights the humanity of a character, virtuous or unvirtuous, in their ritual spending—the aforementioned episode in which Wang Hui

finances the funeral of Xun Mei's mother is an example of an unvirtuous character's ritual commitment. This ritual spending uncovers an extracorporeal realm connected to tears and tearful sympathy, completing the holistic view of the physio-moral poetics in and outside an individual's emotional realm. Furthermore, the practical nature of ritual spending relates tears to the concrete behavior of ritual performativity, as in when one sheds tears in lament for others. Then, the ritual money brings the theme of tears to a practical plane. These two aspects of funeral money—being itself the material used for ritual and a concrete expression of ritual practice—reaffirms it thematic nature as a twin to tears.

The two events involving death embedded within the biographies of Zhuang Shaoguang 莊紹光 and Officer You (You gong 尤公) reveal ritual money as a thematic extension of tears. These events appear in Chapters 35 and 38, respectively before and after the Taibo ceremony in Chapter 37. In Zhuang's biography, this happens on his way home from Beijing, where he declines an official position offered by the emperor. The event that shows Zhuang's virtue of self-contentment leads to an event that highlights another virtue through his altruistic ritual commitment. An old man who offers Zhuang a night's accommodation dies while Zhuang is staying at his home. Zhuang holds a funeral for him and his already dead wife, who has not yet been buried. The text traces his benevolence in a way completely focused on his sympathetic mind and monetary practice:

> Zhuang Shaoguang became heartbroken and said, "the poverty of these two old people has reached this point! Although I just stayed here one night, who would bury them if I don't?" He ordered his page boy and coachman to look for a marketplace. Zhuang bought coffins for several dozen taels of silver and hired a

> couple of people at the marketplace who would carry the coffins here and encoffin the dead. Then, he found a piece of land belonging to a neighbor and went to the neighbor to purchase the land. After purchasing the land, he buried the two old people. When the burial was completed, Zhuang bought sacrificial offerings and paper money, and also wrote a piece of funeral oration. Zhuang offered sacrifices while shedding tears.
>
> 莊徵君感傷道:「這兩個老人家就窮苦到這個地步！我雖則在此一宿，我不殯葬他，誰人殯葬?」因叫小廝、車夫前去尋了一個市井，莊徵君拿幾十兩銀子來買了棺木，市上雇了些人抬到這裏，把兩人殮了。又尋了一塊地，也是左近人家的，莊徵君拿出銀子去買。買了，看著掩埋了這兩個老人家。掩埋已畢，莊徵君買了些牲醴紙錢，又做了一篇文。莊徵君灑淚祭奠了。[69]

The word that frames Zhuang's sentiment in this passage "heartbroken" (*ganshang* 感傷) is echoed by commentator Huang Xiaotian in his citation of the Mencian phrase, "the heart-mind that cannot bear to see the sufferings of others" (*bu ren ren zhi xin* 不忍人之心). On Zhuang's benevolence, the commentator writes: "He does not want to sell his virtues [to gain profits] nor does he wish rewards for this. [His benevolence derives from] nothing but the so called 'heart-mind that cannot bear to see the sufferings of others that everyone has'" (非欲以此市德、以此望報也，所謂人皆有不忍人之心而已矣).[70] The idea that Zhuang's altruism is unsullied by any selfish motivations is salient to Huang Xiaotian's approval. This pure sympathy confirms the narrative grammar of funeral money in this novel. The funeral that Zhuang arranges with his own money is a manifestation of his humanity.

An identical structure of death, sympathy, and money emerges in the narrator's introduction of You. As in Zhuang's case above, money connects the agent and object of sympathy. Seeing a woman who has been bereaved of her husband in military service and

[69] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 35:437.

[70] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 38:470.

now would return home alone, You offers her fifty taels of silver. This introduction returns to the typical physio-moral poetics of this novel, realizing one's invisible moral state as a visible material token. Indeed, the narrator describes that his benevolence is the reflection of his "heart-mind that cannot bear to see other's sufferings" (心裏不忍).

The representation of ritual performativity through money is more complex than it simply accompanying sympathy. As in my argument regarding phlegm above, many cases within *Rulin waishi* demonstrate a money-triggered avarice that leads to physio-moral disequilibrium and ritual failings. However, it is equally true that other episodes including those of Zhuang and You present money as confirming humanity and fortifying it through the conscious performativity of spending. This divergence of money in its moral implications corresponds to the novel's multifaceted characterizations. Beyond such binary characterizations that would find characters as being merely greedy or sympathetic, the text depicts the reality wherein such inconsistent moral qualities converge and collide with each other. This dual contextualization of money claims another thematic affinity for tears that involves the dual signification of ritual hypocrisy and sincerity. In parallel to the multiple contexts of tears, money integrates the opposing moral tendencies of greed and sympathy.

Episodes involving Mr. Ma the Second (Ma er xiansheng 馬二先生) represent the dual contextualization of money. While traveling along the West Lake (Xi Hu 西湖), Ma meets an alchemist named Hong Hanxian 洪憨仙 who offers him an elixir as a trial. Ma soon becomes absorbed in alchemy as he finds the coal-like elixir transforming into sterling silver in a pot. The text indirectly conveys an evaluation of Ma's excitement through a description of another person who participates in the alchemical project. Hong

introduces the Third Son of the Hu Household (Hu san gongzi 胡三公子) to Ma, saying Hu has "an obsession with money" (*qianpi* 錢癖) despite his great wealth.[71] Hu mirrors Ma's moral state. Ma is fixated on money. In other words, the alchemy episode is arranged to uncover Ma's desire underlying his respectable profession as an eight-legged essay compiler.

Before long, however, Ma's dream of wealth finishes, as the alchemist dies. Then, Ma hears from Hong's son-in-law that the alchemy was in fact nothing but a fraud, needless to say that the elixir was fake. This moment when the truth of alchemy is unveiled stages another revelation of Ma's moral quality, this time also through a money-related event. Even though Ma realizes himself having been swindled, he finances all the funeral procedures for the fraud alchemist in place of his impecunious family. The narrator describes Ma's benevolence in a detailed manner:

> While encoffining him, [Ma] paid the rent [on behalf of the Hong family] for the rooms at the temple, and then hired porters to bear the coffin outside the Qingbo Gate. Ma prepared sacrificial offerings and funerary money, sent them to the burial place, and [went there in person] and watched until the grave was enclosed with bricks. He gave the remaining ten taels as traveling expenses to the four men [of the Hong family], who left with gratitude.
>
> 候著他裝殮，算還廟裏房錢，叫腳子抬到清波門外厝著。馬二先生備個牲醴紙錢，送到厝所，看著用磚砌好了。剩的銀子，那四個人做盤程，謝別去了。[72]

Ma's expenditures for the coffin, grave, and burial of Hong are reminiscent of the earlier example of Zhuang Shaoguang, who holds a funeral for the dead couple whose house he

[71] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 15:195.

[72] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 15:197.

has stayed a night at. Depending on one's perspective, Ma's benevolence can be taken as more virtuous than Zhuang's. Ma carries out all the funeral procedures by expending money for those who have deceived him, even in his money-obsessed state. Commentator Huang Xiaotian, who evaluates Zhuang's benevolence with the Mencian phrase above—"the heart-mind that cannot bear to see the sufferings of others"—employs another Mencian term for Ma's deeds here: "He has *liangxin*" (有良心)."[73]

And this theme, a manifestation of Ma's *liangxin* that has been covered by his mercenary desire, invites an allegorical reading of alchemy, which in turn serves as moral discourse. The remarks by Hong's son-in-law that disclose the dead alchemist's deceit integrate this alchemic allegory of moral nature. Asked by Ma about the efficacy of the elixir, the son-in-law says: "That is silver coated with charcoal! Once you put it into a brazier, the original color of the silver appears" (「那就是銀子，用煤煤黑了的! 一下了爐，銀子本色就現出來了」).[74] The fake alchemy that Hong has contrived to deceive Ma ironically corresponds to the narrative events in which the "original color" (*ben se* 本色) of Ma's humanity undresses the "charcoal" through his ritual expenditures. The commentator's term cited above, *liangxin*, makes explicit the moral connotation of this "original color." *Liangxin* confirms Ma's remaining moral nature as the "original color" of the fake alchemy. In this vein, the alchemy might not be a complete fake. Like alchemy, in which heterogeneous materials are mixed and transformed, the episode concerning Ma's alchemy introduces the amalgamation of his heterogeneous moral qualities and,

[73] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 15:197.

[74] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 15:196; 197.

moreover, their transformative process from an obsession with money to altruistic and ritual spending.

Manifestation, amalgamation, and transformation—these chemical dynamics of alchemy exactly account for the work of *qi*. *Qi* involves various spectrums of human sentiment, from desire to sympathy, in their multiple mixtures. And *qi* makes the invisible sentiment visible in a material dimension. As an embodiment of *qi* and a trigger of the various *qi*-natured emotions, money constitutes the vast landscape of moral reality in its engagement with human affect and practice. Beyond moral reality's complexity, the drama of *qi* has its focus on the prospect of moral recovery. Quotidian moral failings—like those of Ma—can nevertheless be imbricated by a possibility of manifestation of virtue. The representation of moral reality reaches its completest sense when it includes this possibility of moral regeneration.

Qi as the Source of Ritual Practice

Posthumously given the highest rank in Chapter 56, Dr. Yu (Yu boshi 虞博士) integrates the thematic concerns that phlegm and the tears present.[75] Even without any reference to the humors, episodes about Yu complete *li* 禮, the self-regulation of desire and ritual sincerity. This configuration of Yu as a thematic emblem provides a key to why he is posthumously evaluated as the highest of all the literati figures of Nanjing. Even higher than Zhuang Shaoguang, who declines the Emperor's call and is called the "great personage of the times"(*dangjin da mingshi* 當今大名士) and Du Shaoqing 杜少卿, who has even been referred to as "the author's own alter ego," the high appraisal of Yu is hard

[75] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 56:680.

to understand without considering his status in the narrative as the most exact incarnation of the core values of this novel.[76]

This posthumous degree points to Yu as having a distinguished status in *Rulin waishi*. Yu is both a fictional character and also plays the role of a quasi-narrator who explicates the ideal of *li* represented by phlegm and tears. This is more significant than the fact that Yu as a character fulfills ritual requirements. Rather, the characterization of Yu more specifically encodes fictional discourses on how morality operates in the phenomenal world—namely, how the body and affect produce moral virtues by themselves. Through the meaning of his name, the moral discourse his episodes evoke, and the ways in which he is evaluated within the narrative, Yu acts as a narratorial spirit of the meta-narrative world. He tells rather than shows what ideological contexts elicit phlegm and tears.

Yu's biography reveals one of these contexts. The account of Yu's birth-related episode is distinguished from the standard narrative mode employed for other characters, which focuses on a limited timeframe of their lives. The exceptional account begins with the God of Culture and Literature (Wenchang Dijun 文昌帝君) appearing to his parents in dream and delivering them a note that reads, "A gentleman nurtures virtue by decisive acts" (君子以果行育德). This phrase is from *The Book of Changes* (*Yi jing* 易經), or, to be more exact, the interpretation of the hexagram ䷃ named *meng* (山下出泉: "a spring

[76] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 34:428; Martin W. Huang, *Literati and Self-re/presentation: Autobiographical Sensibility in the Eighteenth-century Chinese Novel* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 52.

coming out below the mountains") in *Commentary on the Images* (*Xiang zhuan* 象傳).[77] The narrator explains that his name Yude 育德 and his courtesy name Guoxing 果行 are attributed to this prenatal dream.

The subsequent narrative embodies the moral allegory encoded in these names. For example, his poverty is illustrative of how he "nurtures virtue." In his abject economic condition, in which he cannot afford medicines for his invalid wife and even loses his job as a tutor, he remains unperturbed, knowing his foreordained lot is to receive "around thirty taels of silver every year" (每年大約有三十兩銀子).[78] Commentators echo this self-awareness in their idiomatic phrases: Zhang Wenhu induces "rejoicing at heaven and knowing his fate" (*letian zhiming* 樂天知命) while Huang Xiaotian refers to "knowing satisfaction and being content with his lot" (知足安分).[79] As Yu anticipates, soon after, he earns twelve taels from his service to find a burial ground for the Zheng 鄭 household. The dramatic event he faces on his way home from the Zhengs' home again spells out the connotation of his name: on a boat, he sees a man throwing himself into a river from the riverbank and "is so startled that he immediately asks the boatman to save the man" (嚇了一跳，忙叫船家把那人救了起來).[80] Undoubtedly, this scene appropriates the well-known parable about a drowning child in *Mengzi*: "if men suddenly see a child about to fall into a well, they will without exception experience a feeling of

[77] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 36:443; Huang Shouqi 黃壽祺 and Zhang Shanwen 張善文, ed., *Zhouyi yizhu* 周易譯注 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 51. Translation is from Bent Nielsen, *A Companion to Yi Jing Numerology and Cosmology: Chinese Studies of Images and Numbers from Han (202 BCE-220 CE) to Song (960-1279 CE)* (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), 177.

[78] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 36:444.

[79] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 36:444-445.

[80] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 36:445.

alarm and distress" (乍見孺子將入於井，皆有怵惕惻隱之心).[81] In addition to Yu's visceral reaction to the drowning man paralleling *Mengzi*'s predicate, *chuti* 怵惕 ("alarmed"), is a scene in which further adapts the Mencian message of natural goodness into the ritual motif in this novel, in which a character gives money for another's funeral. Realizing that the man could not afford the burial of his father, which is his reason for drowning himself, Yu who is also in a state of near poverty immediately gives the man four taels of silver out of his twelve. By offering his own money for another's funeral, Yu once again "nurtures his virtue" by his "decisive acts."

Indeed, the meaning of his name, "to nurture virtue," supports the relationship between Yu's virtuous acts and the moral theory of Mencius. Mencius introduces "to nourish flood-like *qi*" (*yang haoran zhi qi* 養浩然之氣) as one of the most representative methods for his self-cultivation, and it corresponds to Yu's "nurturing of virtue." If "to nurture virtue" means to encourage one's inclinations toward moral practice, then Mencius's phrase "to nourish *qi*" gears the affect and demeanor toward actual moral practices.[82] Yu's institutionalized self-contentment and benevolence correctly reveal the performative aspect that Mencius refers to as "what is generated by the accumulation of righteousness" (集義所生者) in his subsequent account of the concept that is "to nourish

[81] *Mengzi*, 2A6, English translation is from James Legge, *The Chinese classics*, 174.

[82] *Mengzi* 2A2. Jiao Xun 焦循 and Shen Wenzhuo 沈文倬, eds., *Mengzi zhengyi* 孟子正義 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 199. As to the moral interpretations of "to nurture virtue" in *The Book of Changes*, see Huang Mingcheng 黃明誠, "Yi zhuan Zhong rudao hudong yu rujia daode xingshang xue fazhan 易傳中儒道互動與儒家道德形上學發展," in *Yi quanshi zhong de rudao huodong* 易詮釋中的儒道互動, eds. Zheng Jixiong 鄭吉雄 and Lin Yongsheng 林永勝, (Taibei: Guoli Taiwan daxue chuban zhongxin, 2012), 131-145. Huang Mingcheng mentions "to nourish qi" (*yang qi* 養氣) in his explanation of the moral accounts presented in *The Book of Changes*, including "to nurture virtue." See *Yi quanshi zhong de rudao hudong*, 143-144.

qi."[83] In other words, the textual references in Yu's name suggest that his virtuous acts result from the cyclic movement of his nourishment of *qi*, affective and behavioral adjustments to a moral deed by the nourished *qi*, moral practices by the adjusted body, and the accumulation of righteousness as a result of the moral practice that in turn nourishes *qi*.

This self-generative mechanism of moral virtues is the reason I designate Yu as a figural embodiment of phlegm and tears. As Yu fulfills such virtues as self-contentment and ritual spending from his own virtue-nurturing or *qi*-nourishing, so do the self-regulatory phlegm and sympathetic tears find their sources in none other than the phenomenal existence of the human as *qi* that necessarily encompasses the body and affect. The fact that phlegm and tears depend on *qi* involves their *qi*-like qualities as represented in this novel. The essential qualities that conventionally define *qi*, including the transvaluation between the physical and the moral, constant flux, and potential transformation that ontologically connects multiple objects, serve as the key to the phenomenal and self-generative moral models of phlegm and tears. They convert an individual's moral state into material objects, flow in and out of the body, and respond to material values.

The moral ideal of phlegm and tears also highlights Yu's leading role in the Taibo ceremony (Chapter 37). As to the thematic status of this ritual event, the commentator of the Woxian caotang edition writes:

[83] *Mengzi* 2A2. *Mengzi zhengyi*, 202. For the corporeal connotation of *qi* in "To nourish flood-like *qi*," see A. C. Graham, "The Background of the Mencian [Mengzian] Theory of Human Nature" in eds. Philip J. Ivanhoe and Xiusheng Liu, *Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi*, 21-23.

> With this chapter, this book makes a major ending. … Prior to this [chapter], a gathering at Yingdou Lake makes a minor ending and a poetry gathering at the West Lake makes another minor ending. [The composition in which the two minor endings] arrive here is like the manner in which one reaches Mt. Tai via Mt. Yunting and Mt. Liangfu.
>
> 本書至此卷，是一大結束。… 前乎此，如鶯脰湖一會，是一小結束; 西湖上詩會，是又一小結束。至此如雲亭，梁甫，而後臻於泰山。[84]

Yu emerges at the beginning of this culminant chapter. The Confucian scholars from Nanjing visit Yu to ask him to preside over the rite. Yu accepts the request and the narrative leads to the Taibo ceremony.[85] The Taibo ceremony has its primary significance in that it suggests "an alternative" to ossified rituality.[86] For Yu and his contexts, the Taibo ceremony is also significant in that it reaffirms Yu as the embodiment of rituality. As a presider of the ceremony, Yu leads the advent of the "alternative."

Phlegm and tears are thematic precursors to the ritual ideal represented by Yu and the Taibo ceremony. Except for that of Wang Yun's tears in Chapter 48, most of the episodes about phlegm and tears appear before the Taibo ceremony that occurs in Chapter 37.[87] Long before this landmark event, phlegm and tears prefigure the prospect of ritual recovery in the corrupted present. If it were not for this prospect, the Taibo ceremony would have no thematic grounding but would just be an abrupt inconsistency within the

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[84] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 37:465-466.

[85] *Rulin waishi huijiao huiping*, 37:455. Yu's symbolic status in this narrative becomes more apparent when this chapter is viewed in relationship with previous chapters about Du (Chapters 31 to 33) and Zhuang (Chapters 34 to 35), the two only characters listed in "the first group" (*di yi jia* 第一甲) of the posthumous award alongside Yu. Arranged in proximity of the ceremonial Chapter 37 in corresponding sequence with their posthumous ranking—Du is the third, Zhuang the second, and Yu the first of the group—the sequence of this climactic segment of the narrative endorses the thematic role of Yu.

[86] Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 26.

[87] In fact, Wang's trip to Nanjing in which he mourns the death of his late daughter recalls the Taibo ceremony. Like his belated lament, Wang visits the site of the Taibo ceremony far later than the ceremony.

overall narrative, which highlights pervasive moral failings. Shang Wei's argument about the Taibo ceremony supports its symbolic continuity with our humoral motifs. Shang maintains that the ritual event replaces mere discourses of rituality with practice in which one can "turn moral propriety into a permanent disposition, into a durable way of standing, walking and speaking, as well as interacting with other human beings."[88] Phlegm and tears anticipate this ritual vision. Prior to such a collective and institutional way as found in this culminant ritual ceremony, the humors embody the moral capacity derived from the body and affect, the intrinsic conditions of the human as a being of *qi*.

[88] Shang, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation*, 76.

CHAPTER V

THE GEOLOGY OF *QING*

The cult of *qing* has long been one of the foremost topics in the field of English-language scholarship on late imperial culture and literature. Especially, since the 1990s, cultural historians and literary scholars have shown an unprecedented concern with *qing*. Works representative of this scholarly tendency include Wai-yee Li's *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* (1993), Dorothy Ko's *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (1994), and Maram Epstein's *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction* (2001). These works, despite differences in focus, share the common claim that *qing* is a salient keyword for explaining the literature and culture of the late imperial period. Furthermore, they have established a conceptual paradigm that relates *qing* to an interior quality of the self. With these two lines of inquiry, the studies of *qing* have opened a new realm of discourse on interiority in the premodern Chinese context.

Wai-yee Li's pioneering work is significant in that it proposed the moral rationalization of *qing* as a topic of academic discourse. Li finds that late imperial narratives commonly cast *qing* as simultaneously an attachment to and detachment from worldly desires. Those phrases that Li borrows from Redology (*Hong xue* 紅學), "Detachment through attachment" (*yi qing wu dao* 以情悟道) and "transcendence of passion through passion" (*yin qing ru dao* 因情入道), succinctly formulate the dialectical

meaning of *qing* in her argument.[1] Indeed, in the late imperial narratives that Li examines, *qing* not only drives characters to "attachment" but ultimately makes them see through the ephemerality of worldly passions. In addition to her translation of *qing* as "feeling," *qing* in Li's argument thus has as much epistemological potential as it does emotional quality.[2] Various examples among the narratives examined by Li present characters who have been deluded by *qing* but eventually transcend the worldly illusion by virtue of the very worldly form of interiority, *qing*. This dual thematic layer completes the dialectical poetics of *qing*—in Li's own terms, the "dialectics of feeling and transcendence of feeling."[3]

Dorothy Ko shares Li's essential understanding of *qing*. Through her discussion of *The Peony Pavilion: Commentary Edition by Wu Wushan's Three Wives* (*Wu Wushan sanfu heping mudan ting huanhun ji* 吳吳山三婦合評牡丹亭還魂記), Ko argues that *qing* implies a sublime force that conflates reality and illusion and that accomplishes an existential transcendence from reality.[4] Ko's elaboration on the commentators' response to one of *The Peony Pavilion*'s famous scenes, in which Du Liniang 杜麗娘 draws a self-portrait before her impending death, reveals her own understanding of *qing* as a sublime interiority. Ko quotes the commentary and reads it as follows:

Their comments on the above scene read: "That Liniang is the greatest love-

[1] Wai-yee Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment: Love and Illusion in Chinese Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 3.

[2] Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 36-40, and passim.

[3] Li, *Enchantment and Disenchantment*, 156.

[4] Dorothy Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 83-85.

> crazed (*qing chi* 情癡) one in history is seen in this episode. Had she been without it, posterity would not have found [her love] credible." Love, embodied in Du's portrait and her ghost, is a vital life force unconstrained by the passing of time or corporeal death.[5]

In fact, Ko's romantic interpretation of *qing* derives from her general understanding of the culture of seventeenth-century Jiangnan 江南. A passage in which Ko relates *qing* to the heart-mind learning movement of the seventeenth-century illustrates the hermeneutic foundation that props up her interpretation of the female commentators' *qing* above:

> [The followers of Wang Yangming in the seventeenth century's Jiangnan] championed intuition, spontaneity, and expression of emotion. Focusing on its ramifications in literature and domestic life, I call one aspect of this inward turn the "cult of *qing*" (feeling, emotion, love). This introspection has far-reaching consequences not only for philosophy and religion, but also for literature, social life, and gender relations.[6]

Ko's account in this passage is noteworthy in that her assumptions about *qing* represent our conventional understanding of late imperial subjectivity. Along with offering her own translations for *qing* as "feeling, emotion, love," those "in"-prefixed predicates such as "*in*ward turn" and "*intro*spection" (italics added) pronounce the author's firm demarcation of *qing* as an inner sphere of self. This concept of an interior self presupposes that there is an invisible domain of human existence and that this domain operates as the locus of emotion. Ko's reading of the female commentators above is perfectly predicated on her own understanding of *qing* as being interior. The female discourse on *qing*, Ko insists, was a reflection of seventeenth-century Jiangnan's "cult of

[5] Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 85. The original text for "love-crazed" added by myself.

[6] Ko, *Teachers of the Inner Chambers*, 17.

qing," a collective enthusiasm for recovering the hitherto-suppressed emotional interiority.

Maram Epstein's *Competing Discourses* builds on the achievements of its two 1990s precursors discussed above. On the one hand, Epstein employs Li's definition of *qing* as a force that transcends epistemological boundaries and further argues that such a trans-dimensional quality of *qing* served to nullify an ontological border of gender in the late imperial context. On the other hand, Epstein zooms out from Ko's sub-cultural scope focused on the Jiangnan female literati to the topic of late imperial intellectual history in general. Epstein's synthesis of the insights of her predecessors is employed to new ends through two particularly productive points in her readings of the late imperial narratives: First, Epstein finds that fictional texts of the period not only connect *qing* to female figures but also value the feminized *qing* as an authentic form of self-expression.[7] For example, Baoyu 寶玉, the male protagonist of *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hong lou meng* 紅樓夢) idealizes feminine values and even wishes that he were born a girl because he finds a better emotional authenticity in feminine values than in their male counterparts, which are far from authentic under social repression.[8] This feminine valorization of *qing* is imbricated with another significant point, the rearrangement of the traditional Confucian paradigm. Epstein examines the development of heart-mind learning and derives a thesis that a feminized interiority in *qing* narratives promoted a new aesthetic criterion for truth. In conjunction with the invention of *qing* as a channel of authentic self-expression, Epstein argues, these feminized and interiorized pursuits of truth staked

[7] Maram Epstein, *Competing Discourses: Orthodoxy, Authenticity, and Engendered Meanings in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 88-92.

[8] Epstein, *Competing Discourses*, 153.

out a new orthodoxy.[9] They challenged the neo-Confucian moral norms that underscored "externally observable patterns of behavior."[10]

Despite the undeniable significance of these studies of *qing* for explaining the culture of China from the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, the connection of *qing* to the topos of interiority may carry a risk of obscuring the material and corporeal realms that *qing* equally involves. Ko's "in"-prefixed predicates and Epstein's highlighting of interior authenticity articulate that these works, in their respective cultural and aesthetic discourses, are inclined to focus on the inner realm of the self. Although concepts of interiority unequivocally reflect an important aspect of the cultural transformation of the late imperial period, this does not mean that *qing* can be reduced to interiority. Rather, along with such an interior definition, the engagement with material and corporeal realms recovers *qing* in its complete sense.

Linguistic approaches to *qing* make explicit its multi-layered semantic nature. Halvor Eifring's summary of the term's semantic evolution reveals a concrete, non-interior foundation of *qing*. Eifring argues that before the meaning of *qing* was extended to "emotions," "positive feelings of intimacy," and finally "love," the inchoate phase of the term mainly conveyed "basic facts (of a matter)" and "basic instincts (of man)."[11] Christoph Harbsmeier provides a conceptual link that accounts for these semantic changes. He argues the textual corpus formed before Buddhism was imported into China shows that the original sense of *qing* as "the facts of a matter" had shifted toward a

[9] Epstein, *Competing Discourses*, 61-87 and 303-304.

[10] Epstein, *Competing Discourses*, 61.

[11] Halvor Eifring, "Introduction: Emotions and the Conceptual History of *Qing*," in *Love and Emotion in Traditional Chinese Literature*, ed. Halvor Eifring (Leiden: Brill), 2004, 9-11.

definition that encompassed a metaphysical sense, "the facts that constitute the underlying driving force in developments," and that this was extended to "essential inner driving forces that determine the course of changes in the universe."[12] As a result, Harbsmeier finds, *qing* later came to be more commonly used in regard to the subjective realm in parallel to other terms that convey "objective facts," for example, *shi* 實.[13]

Eifring underscores that the semantic development of *qing* is not an exclusory process in which later meanings rule out earlier ones, but rather an accumulative system that allows for the coexistence of different connotations.[14] From this perspective, *qing*'s meaning as "love," a later derivation of the term, is not severed from its genealogy originating from its non-interior definitional forefathers. Rather, it would be reasonable to assume the varied connotations of *qing* have existed as relative intensities in accordance with the contexts in which they are arranged. By "relative intensities," I intend that meanings are always in a relationship of potential connection to and compromise with one another. As put forth by Harbsmeier's claim above, *qing* as a signifier that referred to the objective world underwent a phase in which its association transferred to the interior realm of humans, but the earlier meanings pertaining to the material and corporeal realms remain in the substratum of the semantic layers of *qing*. Without being replaced by interior realms in the semantic valences of the term, such non-interior realms constitute

[12] Christoph Harbsmeier, "The Semantics of *Qing* in Pre-Buddhist Chinese," in *Love and Emotion*, 76.

[13] Harbsmeier, "The Semantics of *Qing*," in *Love and Emotion*, 80. Both A. C. Graham and Anthony Yu explain *qing* in comparison to *yu* 欲. Graham argues *qing* did not mean "passion" before the Han dynasty, whereas Yu emphasizes the proximity between *qing* and *yu*. See A. C. Graham, "The Meaning of Ch'ing," in *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature* (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1986), 59-66; Anthony Yu, *Rereading the Stone: Desire and the Making of Fiction in Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 56-66.

[14] Eifring, "Introduction," 11.

accumulated parts in the "geological" history of *qing*.[15]

What is the Surname of *Qing*?

"Du Shiniang Sinks Her Jewel Box in Anger" (*Du Shiniang nu chen baibao xiang* 杜十娘怒沉百寶箱), collected in Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1574-1646) *Stories to Caution the World* (*Jingshi Tongyan* 警世通言), one of the most famous *qing* vernacular narratives of the late imperial period, spells out the multi-layered structure of *qing*.[16] The course of the plot involves exterior and material realms as much as it does any interior self. In particular, the symbolic and causal conflations of affect, money, materiality, and the body in the narrative demonstrate this holistic vision. Exemplifying the way in which the theme of *qing* was consumed, this story restages the *qi* monistic idea that corporeality and materiality constitute inevitable parts of subjectivity.

Li Jia 李甲, a student at the national university in Beijing 北京, is fascinated (affect) with a courtesan named Du Shiniang 杜十娘, over whom he spends up his cash (money), when Du's madam urges Du to turn away from Li. However, Du decides to marry Li (affect) and ransoms her from the pleasure quarters by using her savings and the assistance of Li's friend (money). On his return home to his family together with Du, Li meets a merchant named Sun Fu 孫富 who reminds Li of his present penniless state, stimulating Li's fear of his father's disapproval of his marriage with a courtesan (affect),

[15] Along with "geology," which I use in the title of this chapter, my trope of semantic strata here is indebted to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), Chapter 3, "10,000 B.C.: The Geology of Morals (Who Does the Earth Think It Is?)."

[16] For the original text, I use Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言, in *Guben xiaoshuo congkan* 古本小說叢刊, eds. Liu Shide 劉士德, Chen Qinghao 陳慶浩, and Shi Changyu 石昌渝, vol.32 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 1537-1580.

and Sun Fu offers to instead pay one thousand taels for Du (money), which Li accepts. Brought to despair by the betrayal of her fiancé (affect), Du throws all the jewels (material) she has been carrying to start her married life with Li (affect) into the river and eventually throws herself with the jewel box (the body) into the river as well. In this story, the interior—affect or *qing*—is intertwined with the ways in which protagonists pursue or handle the material, and, likewise, the body functions as a performative institution of the interior of the self.

The name-allegories of the two protagonists endorse the *qi* monistic logic that intertwines an interior realm with material and corporeal ones. Most of all, the names' symbolic references to the jewel box support the story's claim that these characters driven by affect are essentially inseparable from materiality. The phonetic value of the female protagonist's surname, Du, is equivalent to *du* 櫝, meaning "box." The same material association applies to her partner, Li Jia, whose given name Jia presents through orthographic resemblance another word that signifies "box," *xia* 匣. The climactic scene indeed stages these materially configured names. Shortly before throwing the jewel box and finally herself into the river, Du says in her reproof of Li: "I am not unlike a jewel box (*du*) that contains precious jade, but you have eyes that fail to recognize value" (妾櫝中有玉，恨郎眼內無珠).[17] The word *du* here is soon morphed as *xia* in the next scene when she "throws herself into the middle of the current, the jewel box (*xia*) in her arms" (十娘抱持寶匣，向江心一跳).[18]

[17] *Jingshi tongyan*, 1577; English translations are from *Stories to Caution the World: A Ming Dynasty Collection*, trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang's version (Seattle; London: University of Washington Press, c2000), 564.

[18] *Jingshi tongyan*, 1577; *Stories to Caution the World*, 564.

In addition to their material associations, the surnames of the main characters also relate to interiority. "Du" puns on *du* 肚, meaning "abdomen" and "heart-mind," while "Li" is homophonic with *li* 裏, similarly meaning "inside" and "inner mind." The combinations of these surnamed interiorities with the moral values of their given names make the textual play of the name-allegories more complicated. One potential pun on the "Shi" in Du Shiniang's name evokes *shi* 實, "genuine," which thus suggestively frames Li Jia's interior quality in binary opposition as *jia* 假, "fake."[19] These hermeneutic pairings in the protagonists' surnames and given names indeed correspond to their moral characterization by the text: Du's love for Li is "genuine," whereas Li's turns out to be "fake." The name-allegories discussed so far can be summarized as follows:

	Material quality	Interior quality
Du Shiniang 杜十娘	*du* 櫝 (a "box")	*du* 肚 + *shi* 實 (a "genuine heart-mind")
Li Jia 李甲	*xia* 匣 (a "box")	*li* 裏 + *jia* 假 (a "fake heart-mind")

This two-tiered figuration shows that two discrete levels of materiality and interiority are over-determined in a single name belonging to each character. Surnames that encompass both the material and interior qualities of the characters are again tied to the moral natures implied in their given names. In other words, the given names suggest a certain moral quality, which find anchor in the material sign, the "box." Whether a character's *qing* is "genuine" or "fake" cannot be detached from the material symbol, which is rendered as *du* and *xia*.

[19] I owe Maram Epstein for the moral interpretations on the names of the protagonists as "genuine" and "fake."

Du's plunge into the water while "embracing" (*baochi* 抱持) the jewel box vividly embodies this semiotic inseparability.[20] Considering that the box incarnates Du's personal history up to this point "since the loss of her virginity at thirteen" (自十三歲破瓜), including all her past corporeal and affective expenditures as a courtesan, it is not difficult to see why she cannot find any other options but to abandon herself with—and as—the box when her genuine *qing* is trampled by her inconstant fiancé.[21] This precise reciprocity between the rejection of Du's sincerity and her ensuing throwing away of the body-box performs a narrative analogy for the inextricability of the interior and the corporeal and material.

Likewise, this inextricability is also key in accounting for Li's fake *qing*. The falsity of Li's *qing* is already demonstrated by the fact that he does not make any contributions equivalent to the value of the box. Not only in relation to the box, in fact, but throughout the story, Li does not produce any material value by himself: at first, he spends on Du in the pleasure quarters the money that his father sends him to support his studies in Beijing—even the qualification for studying at the national university has been purchased by his family. And later, on his way back home, being penniless himself, he chooses to recover his previous loss-through-spending by trading his fiancée to a rich merchant.

Aside from the jewel box, there is another material object, also a container that anticipates Du's jewel box: Du's mattress. In order to ransom Du from the quarters, Li is given six days to raise three hundred taels, but he earns nothing. On behalf of her weak-

[20] *Jingshi tongyan*, 1577.

[21] *Jingshi tongyan*, 1577.

kneed fiancé, Du produces half of the required amount, which she has had concealed in her mattress. Li takes it to his friend Liu Yuchun 柳遇春. At first skeptical as to Du's authenticity, upon seeing the money from the mattress, Liu confirms her *qing* as genuine and promises the other half.[22] When he finally delivers the one hundred fifty taels to Li, Liu once again singles out Du's sincerity: "I went into debt on your behalf, not for your sake, but because of Du Shiniang's devotion (*qing*) to you"
(吾代為足下告債，非為足下，實憐杜十娘之情也).[23] In this remark, Liu assumes the narrator's voice in making an assurance of Du's genuine *qing* while at the same time implying Li's falsity on account of the fact he earns no money for Du himself.

The facts that Du earns the jewel box and its contents through monetary exchanges for her sexuality and affect and that she eventually discards it together with her own body point to the box not being a merely material allegory for her interiority. Given that the box is a material metamorphosis of what she has paid for it in both terms of body and emotion, the box has no ontological detachment from these *qi*-currencies. In Andrew Plaks's term, they are "on one plane."[24] On this "one plane," when Du throws her jewels into the river out of the box, her death is already beginning not symbolically but actually.

The *qi* monistic vision that this story restages points out that interiority is indissoluble from its concrete material signifier. In other words, the material is not simply a visible reflection of the interior. Du's box is not just a symbolic object of her invisible *qing* but also a material extension of her vitality in a physical sense. As manifestations of

[22] *Jingshi tongyan*, 1552.

[23] *Jingshi tongyan*, 1552; *Stories to Caution the World*, 553.

[24] Andrew H. Plaks, *Archetype and Allegory in the Dream of the Red Chamber* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976), 109.

qi, both Du's *qing* and her box engage one another, not just in a symbolic dimension but is also in a concrete material dimension. Likewise, morality, an integral component of *qing*-subjectivity, is also located in the body and its material extension. In the same way that the surnames Du and Li stand for both interior qualities and the box, an interior morality verifies itself in its concertation with a material dimension.

Conclusion

A historical reality is an accumulation of various ideologies. No single discourse can cover all the heterogeneous natures of dynamic reality, nor can it be free from the collisions and mixtures of varied ideologies existing in reality. The *qi* monistic vision as a narrative discourse is also no more than a part of the variegated thoughts that constitute our complex reality. Those texts I have examined through the lens of the *qi* monistic vision in this dissertation must undoubtedly contain other ideological reverberations from Neo-Confucianism and heart-mind learning. They form the multi-layered hermeneutics of the texts along with the *qi* monistic vision. To make matters more complicated, these Confucian frameworks make thematic compounds with non-Confucian ideologies, as I have argued in Chapters 2 and 3, and also with a changed paradigm within Confucian traditions as I put forward in Chapter 4. Far from negating existing hermeneutics based on Neo-Confucianism and heart-mind learning, my purpose in this dissertation has been to reveal another layer that has hitherto received less attention in academic discourses on late imperial literature.

Apart from this hermeneutic diversity, however, the *qi* monistic vision has a clear advantage in explaining the increased presence of certain phenomena in late imperial

narratives: the correspondence between an affective self and its material surroundings, the inter-conversion between morality and corporeality, and a tendency to designate material and corporeal values as sources of morality. As in the *qi* monistic claims of Wang Fuzhi and Huang Zongxi that I introduced in Chapter 1, nothing exists in this *qi* monistic cosmos merely as an abstract and absolute value, isolated from and transcending the phenomenal realms of materiality and corporeality. However sublime a moral ideal and affective mind might be, they emerge as being in exchange with multifarious manifestations of *qi*, for example, with sexual bodies and materiality (Chapter 2), natural phenomena and market mechanism (Chapter 3), and intracorporeal metabolism and moral practice (Chapter 4). The fact that such exchanges are not symbolic but actual—namely, that exchanges are carried out through the concrete material and quasi-material mediation of *qi*—marks the unique quality of the *qi* monistic vision. Physio-moral exchanges mediated through *qi* produce causality in narrative and reconfigure so-called interiority as a part of the self that is potentially open to the holistic being of the self beyond any boundary between interiority and exteriority.

These new ideas about the moral potential of phenomenal beings, the phenomenal nature of morality, the holistic structure of the self, and the self-regulatory mechanism of the world integrate the identity that the *qi* monistic vision claims as a literary discourse. What does fiction do? What can and should it do? For these questions that foregrounds fiction's *raison d'être*, the *qi* monistic vision answers with yet more addressed to readers: What is the essence of the human? And where is the source of moral reality?

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