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Constructing Patients: Medical Narratives in Late Imperial Chinese Vernacular Fiction

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Constructing Patients: Medical Narratives in Late Imperial Chinese Vernacular Fiction

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in Asian Languages and Cultures

by

Ying Wang

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Constructing Patients: Medical Narratives in Late Imperial Chinese Vernacular Fiction

By

Ying Wang

Doctor of Philosophy in Asian Languages and Cultures

University of California, Los Angeles, 2020

Professor David C. Schaberg, Co-Chair

Professor Keith McMahon, Co-Chair

My dissertation explores fictional medical narratives in late imperial China by focusing on representations of sickness, with particular attention to the patient. I argue that these fictional medical narratives produced a unique representation of sickness in terms of the patient's subjective experience of an identity crisis. Through various patients' individual experiences in fictional medical narratives, it can be seen that "sickness" indicates not only an unhealthy state, but also a process that uncovers disorders of family, ethics, and power structures, and can lead to the remaking of social identities and interpersonal relationships. As the rise of vernacular fiction as a narrative genre during the late Ming was closely related to the contemporary obsession with individual desire, the study of fictional medical narrative will help us understand and contextualize the new emphasis on the value of the individual. This dissertation takes fictional

representations of sickness as a lens through which the tension between patients' subjectivity and socially normative models is made manifest.

I define the medical narrative in Ming-Qing vernacular fiction as a story that focuses on a character's experience of illness and on the way illness influences the character's social life and interpersonal relationships. In other words, it is the existence and the experience of the patient that constitutes the central feature of fictional medical narratives. Around the existence and the experience of the patient, the other characters have various responses and perform various roles, thereby contributing to the construction of the patient as a distinct type of character. We can conclude that these vernacular stories reflect the humanization of medicine, transforming the typology of patients in non-fictional medical narrative into various descriptions of patients as "whole persons in contexts and relations." Fictional medical narratives reflect a more complex understanding of the cause, progress, and result of the sickness, revealing how patients' experiences of suffering go beyond physical symptoms, diagnoses, and treatment. Therefore, fictional medical narratives formulate and convey contemporary understandings of the social meanings of illness in a way not found in other kinds of texts.

The dissertation of Ying Wang is approved.

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2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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Chapter 1 Introduction

1. Medical Narrative in Late Imperial Chinese Fiction

The creation and publication of vernacular fiction flourished in late imperial China. Many candidates who failed imperial examinations became authors of vernacular fiction. The development of the publishing industry and commodity economy contributed greatly to the production of vernacular fiction in cities, especially in the Jiangnan 江南 region. Whereas classical tales in the Tang Dynasty focused on marvelous and strange occurrences, which is to say, on the extraordinary, Ming-Qing vernacular fiction paid increasing attention to individual emotions and the ordinary life of common people.[1] This shift can be seen in the preface to *Curious Perspectives, New and Old* (*Jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀),[2] "As for buildings which are transformed from a magic clam's breath and cities arising in the ocean [i.e. mirages], flaming mountains and fiery wells, people observe them as strange occurrences. However, because they are not scenes experienced by our eyes and ears, readers cannot help disbelieving them, like insects who doubt the existence of ice. Actually, the real strangeness in the world inevitably derives from what is commonplace" 夫蜃樓海市，焰山火井，觀非不奇；然非耳目經見之事，未免為疑冰之蟲。故夫天下之真奇才，未有不出於庸常者也. [3] This statement points to a shift away from unfamiliar oddities situated in fantastic realms to the representations of strange occurrences in ordinary life. The experience of sickness is a unique feature of fiction in that it

[1] Chen Dakang 陳大康, *Mingdai xiaoshuo shi* 明代小說史 (Shanghai: Shanghai wenyi chubanshe, 2000), 109–110.
[2] *Jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀 is a collection of forty short stories which were selected from *Sanyan* 三言 and *Erpa*.二拍 by Baoweng laoren 抱甕老人. Its earliest extant edition was published by Wujun baohanlou 吳郡寶翰樓 in the late Ming or early Qing. There were more than twenty editions published during the Qing Dynasty.
[3] Baoweng laoren 抱甕老人, ed., *Jinggu qiguan* 今古奇觀 (Jinan: Qilu shushe, 2002), 1.

straddles both the strange and the ordinary. As a universal experience of everyday life and a deviation from the normal and healthy state, sickness has a considerable potential to produce strangeness based on readers' life experiences. The representation of sickness in Ming-Qing fiction also provides us with a unique perspective from which to understand the subjectivity of patients and their social lives at the time.

It is hard to say that there is another narrative genre during the Ming-Qing period in Chinese literature that can tell us more about the subjective suffering and life experiences of ordinary patients than medical narratives in vernacular fiction. The reason is that they represent sickness at the level of subjective experience. My dissertation aims to explore medical narratives in late imperial vernacular fiction by focusing on the representation of sickness, with particular attention to the patient. I argue that fictional medical narratives in late imperial China produced a unique representation of sickness in terms of the patient's subjective experience of an identity crisis. Through the individual experiences of patients in fictional narratives, we can see that "sickness" does not only indicate an unhealthy state, but also a process that points to disorders of family, ethics, and power structures as well as representing social identities and interpersonal relationships. The representation of sickness functions as a lens through which to view the tension between patients' subjectivity and social norms.

The themes of individualism and *qing* 情 that appear prominently in late imperial China facilitate the understanding of the fictional representations of sickness. As Tang Chun-I argues, in the 16th century, Wang Yangming's 王陽明 (1472–1529) "Learning of the Mind" (*Xinxue* 心學) movement asserted that "innate knowing" (*liangzhi* 良知), which always exists in our mind but needs awakening, accords with the principle of Heaven.[4] Later, Yuan Hongdao's 袁宏道 (1568–1610) "Gongan School" (*Gongan xuepai* 公安學派) advocated that a writer should be

[4] Tang Chun-I, "The Development of the Concept of Moral Mind from Wang Yang-ming to Wang Chi," in Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 110.

able to express his "innate sensibility" (*xingling* 性靈) in his writing.[5] Both of them emphasized intrinsic individualistic feelings over extrinsic ideological principles as they began to challenge the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200). One of the results of these influences was the frequent appearance in vernacular fiction of the portrayal of the individual experiences of ordinary patients, as well as the social relationships that were transformed by their sickness. Martin W. Huang has emphasized the relationship between changing views about *qing* and the development of traditional Chinese fiction. He argues that the rise of vernacular fiction as a narrative genre during the late Ming was closely related to the obsession with individual desire.[6] According to Huang, in Ming-Qing fiction there are two kinds of *qing*: one is the issue of the physical aspects of desire (usually understood in a narrow sense as *yu* 欲); the other is the expression of romantic sentiment.[7]

I argue that in medical narratives in Ming-Qing fiction, sickness related to *qing* reflects the tension between individual emotion and social norms at the time. In many fictional works, the psychological states of people who cannot repress their desires according to social normative models were transformed into physical symptoms. My hypothesis is that this is because physical conditions are more easily accepted by society. As the medical anthropologist Robert Hahn points out, "In somatization, for example, psychological conditions and stressful mental or interpersonal conditions are experienced as bodily conditions."[8] The medical narrative in Ming-Qing fiction provides us with a greater understanding of the meaning of sickness. It reflects a more complex understanding of the cause, progress, and result of a sickness, and thus formulates

[5] Chih-P'ing Chou, *Yüan Hung-tao and the Kung-an School* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 113.
[6] Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 3.
[7] Ibid., 4.
[8] Robert A. Hahn, *Sickness and Healing: An Anthropological Perspective* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 25.

and conveys contemporary knowledge about the self and the world in a unique way not found in other kinds of texts.

Beginning with the biographical account of the famous doctor Chunyu Yi's 淳於意 (216–150 BCE) in *the Records of the Grand Historian* (*Shiji* 史記), famous physicians' biographies in official histories have constituted the major source of medical narratives.[9] Their purpose was to depict the physician's consummate skill in healing, but not the patient's life story. Both non-fictional and fictional medical narratives flourished in the Ming Dynasty. One part of this rise of medical literature was the spread of medical casebooks and encyclopedias (*leishu* 類書) in the prosperous region south of the Yangtze River during the sixteenth century.[10] Jiang Guan's 江瓘 *Famous Doctors' Classified Cases* (*Mingyi lei'an* 名醫類案) was the first casebook that used the term "case" (*an* 案) in its title. But Charlotte Furth has argued that this book's use of the categories of *leishu* had "limited value to physicians seeking to make cases clinically useful,"[11] for the "distinction between symptoms (a cough), syndromes (a cold), and taxonomic disease labels (cholera, diabetes) was weak."[12] According to Furth, it is worth noting that although many non-fictional medical narratives were compiled from a desire to promote the reputation of a medical lineage,[13] some authors also addressed formal standards for properly presenting the narrative of a case, which could better serve medical epistemology. Han Mao 韓懋 and Wu Kun 吳昆 are two early examples.[14] In the Qing dynasty, casebooks made an even greater effort to present technical knowledge.[15] By contrast, as will be made clearer below, the representation of sickness in fictional works usually served as a plot mechanism that reflected a more complex

[9] Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), Vol. 9, 3363–3386.
[10] Charlotte Furth, "Producing Medical Knowledge through Case, History, Evidence, an Action," in Charlotte Furth ed., *Thinking with Cases: Specialist Knowledge in Chinese Cultural History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), 131.
[11] Ibid., 134.
[12] Ibid., 136.
[13] Ibid., 138.
[14] Ibid., 138.
[15] Ibid., 146.

understanding of the cause, progress, and result of sickness by both authors and readers. Central to this complexity was the exploration of the patient's life experience, as well as the role of social forces, including other figures' responses to the sickness and the actions of healers.

I define the medical narrative in Ming-Qing vernacular fiction as a story that focuses on a character's experience of illness and on the way illness influences the character's social life and interpersonal relationships. In other words, it is the existence and the experience of the patient that constitutes the central feature of fictional medical narratives. Around the existence and the experience of the patient, the other characters have various responses and perform various roles, thereby contributing to the construction of the patient as a distinct type of character. The reason for the sickness, the experience of the patient, the interpretation of the sickness by the patient and the healer, and the responses of other characters to the patient—all these are the key components of fictional medical narratives.

Compared to non-fictional medical narrative, such as medical casebooks, popular encyclopedias, biographies of doctors, and official medical history, the fictional medical narrative has several particular generic characteristics. First, the non-fictional medical narrative focuses on the doctor, prescriptions, the therapy, and its effects. By contrast, the existence and the experience of the patient constitute the central features of fictional medical narrative. In other words, the doctor and the treatment are indispensable in non-fictional medical narrative, but they can be absent in fictional medical narrative. Moreover, the doctors and their treatments are often lampooned in the fictional narratives. Second, when describing a patient, the non-fictional medical narrative focuses on the physical or psychological cause of sickness and symptoms, but rarely refers to the patient's social life, identity, and interpersonal relationships. In contrast, aside from physical and psychological factors that cause the sickness, the fictional medical narrative also considers the problems of the patient's moral and social relationships. The destruction of the patient's social identity is particularly central. Third, diagnosis is the main concern in non-

fictional medical narratives. By contrast, many fictional medical narratives do not mention the diagnosis of sickness, often just relating how someone becomes ill and dies because the patient may have to be simply eliminated according to the author's plot. Fourth, in fictional medical narratives, sickness and therapy often symbolize disorder and reconstruction of the patient's social life, family ethics, and even the political system, which is not typically discussed in non-fictional medical narratives. Fifth, in non-fictional medical narratives, almost all the patients consider sickness an undesirable state and wish to recover. However, in the fictional medical narrative, many authors represent patients who depend on sickness as a kind of tool; sometimes sickness is even represented as not being a negative condition. That is, when the patient wishes to be exempted from some normal responsibilities in social life, or to be exiled to the marginal space of relational networks, he or she may benefit from sickness. In these situations, the meaning of sickness for the patient is rewritten, turning potential death into possible life.

The unique representations in fictional medical narratives played a key role in the evolving understanding of sickness in the culture of the time, for these stories represented sickness within the context of a variety of social factors. Through the study of these representations, I try to answer the following question: Among various traditional Chinese medical theories, which ones were commonly emphasized by authors of vernacular fiction? How did the construction of the patient in fiction disseminate medical concepts and knowledge? How did authors construct a narrative of pathogeny and represent the subjective experience of the patient? Which kinds of ideas were communicated through the representation of the influence of sickness on the patient's body and his/her social body? Compared to other kinds of medical texts, such as professional medical books, popular encyclopedias, or official medical histories, what do fictional medical narratives achieve that non-fictional medical works are unable to accomplish?

2. Basic Concepts and Review of Existing Literature

I. Early Images of the Doctor

In Chinese historical records, the image of the doctor underwent an evolution that begins with what might be called the "legendary doctor" and finishes with the "erudite professional doctor."

From inscriptions on bones and tortoise shells of the Shang Dynasty (*jiaguwen* 甲骨文), it seems that people believed sickness was caused by the gods' punishment or their ancestors' ghosts. They regarded shamans (*wu* 巫), who were able to communicate with the gods, as the only healers. The process of healing was completed through a series of divinations and prayers.[16] However, the earliest of the famous doctors who left their names in history were not shamans, but important statesmen. It is important to note that these statesmen were able to fully perceive the process of sickness and healing without evidence of scholastic learning.[17] For example, the conversation between Huangdi 黃帝 and his minister Qibo 岐伯 in *The Basic Questions (Suwen* 素問) displays their intuitive knowledge about sickness. Another example is Yi Yin 伊尹, who was a prime minister in the Shang Dynasty. He found a way to boil herbal medicine in addition to managing busy political affairs.[18] Following the Spring and Autumn period (711–476 BCE), the role of doctor became separated from that of the shaman. Bian Que 扁鵲 (?–316 BCE) claimed that he did not treat patients who believed in shamans, but not in doctors,[19] which indicates that the profession of the doctor had now become an independent profession to some extent. On the other hand, this implies that there were still a lot of people who did not consider

[16] Chen Bangxian 陳邦賢, *Zhongguo yixueshi* 中國醫學史 (Beijing: Renmin weisheng chubanshe, 1956), 12.
[17] Ibid., 6.
[18] Ibid., 18.
[19] Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2013), Vol. 9, 3361.

doctors as major healers. The biography is sparse in detailing this rivalry and in indicating Bian Que's specific practices.[20]

In the Western Han Dynasty, doctors' activities became more professional. The biography of Chunyu Yi 淳於意 (216–150 BCE) indicates that he did not diagnose a disease by employing any supernatural signs, but read the patient's pulse (*maixiang* 脈象). Nevertheless, "method masters" (*fangshi* 方士) inherited the shaman's role as doctors, diviners, and magicians. They prayed for patients and also supplied pharmaceutical and hygienic medicine.[21] In the Han Dynasty, their practices of medicine and divination were developed through cosmological heaven-man-earth parallels.[22] Although these *fangshi* left a great number of seemingly absurd stories from the Confucian perspective, they made a significant contribution to Chinese medical history. Their collection of pharmaceuticals and alchemical practices built a foundation for pharmacy and chemistry in later periods. Also, their theoretical system of *yin* 陰, *yang* 陽, and the five phases (*wuxing* 五行) profoundly influenced medical theory and terminology for two thousand years afterwards.[23]

From the Han to the Tang Dynasties, legendary doctors in official history, such as Hua Tuo 華佗 (145–208 CE), Zhang Zhongjing 張仲景 (150–219 CE), and Ge Hong 葛洪 (283–343 CE), can be considered as continuing the practices of Bian Que. Their predictions were always confirmed, and the patient who followed their instructions always recovered. Moreover, it is worth noting that the official historical records in the Six Dynasties emphasized legendary doctors' achievement in the practice known as "cultivating life" (*yangsheng* 養生, also known as "nourishing life"). Their biographies not only stressed their long lives, but also pointed out

[20] Kenneth J. DeWoskin, trans., *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China: Biographies of Fang-shih* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 20.
[21] Ibid., 17.
[22] Ibid., 2.
[23] Chen Bangxian*, Zhongguo yixueshi*, 58.

that in their practice of cultivating life they were able to keep a seemingly young appearance and boundless energy even when they were old.

Famous doctors before the Tang Dynasty had absolute authority in healing sickness, though this came despite significant limitations. As Nathan Sivin writes, early doctors "used only two or three herbs, and not more than six or seven charges of moxa, but there was no disease they failed to cure."[24] Since the Tang Dynasty, this authority encountered an effective challenge. Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (581–682 CE) began to question previous prescriptions and presented many new ones.[25] Another significant evolution was the system for acquiring medical knowledge. Most doctors before the Song Dynasty studied medicine as apprentices, and were called "generational doctors" (*shiyi* 世醫), which means that their medical knowledge was transmitted from one generation to another, although kinship ties between teacher and apprentice were not necessary. In the Song dynasty, the figure of the scholar-doctor (*ruyi* 儒醫) emerged for three reasons. First, the atmosphere of venerating medical skill was pervasive in the Song, for the key principle of medicine, benevolent skill (*renshu* 仁術), corresponded to the core concept of Confucianism, "benevolence" (*ren* 仁). Second, more and more literati had the opportunity to acquire medical knowledge because of the development of printing and the publication of professional medical texts. Some officials also took medicine as an elegant hobby. Third, because of the fiercely competitive imperial examination, a great number of literati who failed the imperial examination chose medicine as their career.[26] This can be seen in literary representations. According to Wilt Idema, a new character type of the scholar-doctor appeared in literary works from the Song Dynasty on. As he writes, "The best doctor is a gentleman, quite often an eccentric, who has taken to medicine as a hobby and does not care for money, but insists on being very politely

[24] Nathan Sivin, "Text and Experience in Classical Chinese Medication," in Don Bates ed., *Knowledge and the Scholarly Medical Tradition*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 189.
[25] Chen Bangxian, *Zhongguo yixueshi*, 141–142.
[26] Chen Yuanpeng 陳元朋, "Songdai Ruyi" 宋代儒醫, in Academia Sinica, ed., *Zhongguoshi Xinlun* 中國史新論 (Taibei: Lianjing chuban sheye gufenyouxian gongsi, 2015), 248.

invited. He may be accessible only at odd hours or on certain days, but his prescriptions are most effective."[27]

In the Jin and Yuan Dynasties, medical theory was divided into different schools. Doctors began to have disputes over different diagnoses and healing methods, which influenced the integral authority of doctors and also left more room for critical discussion of medicine. During this period, more and more southern literati chose the medical profession because of special restrictions which were imposed on them in imperial examinations. For example, from 1238 to 1314, the Yuan government held no imperial examinations. After 1314, although imperial examinations were held, the quota of native Chinese candidates was strictly limited. Thus, it was hard for them to obtain official positions through the examinations. Many of them became scholar-doctors, and the class of *ruyi* grew rapidly.[28]

The image of doctors in the Ming and Qing dynasties was that of an erudite and professional healer. Official historiography emphasized their diligence and great learning. The transmission of medical knowledge benefited from the further development of printing and a prosperous publishing industry. Thus, as Yi-Li Wu says, "the ranks of men who compiled and authored medical texts at large comprised a diverse range of individuals, ranging from lifelong practitioners to those who dabbled in healing as a hobby or charitable pursuit. Some of them were even motivated by their suspicion of, or disillusionment with doctors."[29] Some patients who were knowledgeable about medicine were recorded in *Famous Doctors' Classified Cases*. They even discussed their diagnosis and healing methods with the doctor.[30] On the other hand, the wide dissemination of medical knowledge encouraged the increase of quack doctors, who played negative roles in medical narratives. Another type of doctor, old female doctors (*yipo* 醫婆), was

[27] Wilt Idema, "Diseases and Doctors, Drugs and Cures: A Very Preliminary List of Passages of Medical Interest in a Number of Traditional Chinese Novels and Related Plays," *Chinese Science* 2 (1977): 42.
[28] Chen Bangxian*, Zhongguo yixueshi*, 216–217.
[29] Yi-Li Wu, *Reproducing Women: Medicine, Metaphor and Childbirth in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 11.
[30] Jiang Guan 江瓘*, Mingyi lei'an* 名醫類案 (Beijing: Renmin weisheng chubanshe, 2005).

also despised by *ruyi.* Most of them were old women from the underclass who did not read many medical books but instead had practical experience in treating gynaecopathia. To summarize, as Charlotte Furth has said, "the late Ming was the golden age of case history writing in China, reflecting a medical culture that had become extremely decentralized, its sources of authority diffuse, its classical roots subject to question, requiring the successful physician to stand as an individual on his medical opinion and to look for social support from whatever literati or lineage identity his circumstances permitted."[31] This diversification of medical culture continued during the Qing dynasty.

Although the image of doctors consisted of many historical layers and ideological traditions, according to non-fictional medical texts, there are some consistent attitudes towards doctors. First, the medical profession became increasingly respected. It was said that "if one does not become a good prime minister, he should become a good doctor." (*buwei liangxiang, jiwei liangyi* 不為良相, 即為良醫)[32] Second, medical practice was considered a benevolent skill. Famous doctors were represented as caring about the patient more than their own reputation and income. If necessary, they even healed the poor for free. Only quack doctors were insistent on receiving money. Third, most of the famous doctors were not enthusiastic about pursuing an official position. There were few famous doctors who worked in an official medical institution, such as the Grand Academy of Medicine (*taiyiyuan* 太醫院).[33] Fourth, in non-fictional medical texts, an overwhelming majority of healing activities were successful. Failed medical practice was only noted when it was corrected by a later doctor, who served as the protagonist of the narrative.

[31] Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin, Gender in China's Medical History: 960–1665* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 226.
[32] Ibid., 309.
[33] Ibid., 226.

II. Early Images of the Patient

Before the Ming and Qing Dynasties, most patients mentioned in historical records were rulers and high-ranking government officials rather than ordinary people. The patients were mentioned because their illnesses affected the political order of the state. One of the earliest resources about a king's sickness is the "Metal Bound Box" chapter of the *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書). When King Wu of Zhou falls sick and grows despondent, the Duke of Zhou makes a reverent divination to their ancestors, asking them to take him as a substitute for the king to serve the ghosts and spirits. He then seals documentation of the divination in a box. As the divination brings an auspicious answer, the Duke believes that he has obtained a renewed mandate from the three previous kings. King Wu recovers the next day. In this anecdote, King Wu's image as a patient is somehow vague, for the narrative focuses on the Duke of Zhou's performance in order to highlight his loyalty. It is worth noting that the Duke of Zhou is misunderstood by King Cheng after King Wu dies, for the duke's brothers spread rumors around the country that the duke is not acting in the young king's interest. But the Duke of Zhou's loyalty is resoundingly proven when King Cheng discovers his great writings in the metal bound box. *Shiji* adds one more anecdote about how the duke prays for King Cheng when he is sick, offering to die in the king's place. These prayers are discovered by King Cheng after the duke is slandered. King Cheng receives more attention than King Wu. On the one hand, King Cheng's sickness tests the duke's loyalty, for the duke has the power to take the throne, but he chooses instead to sacrifice himself to the gods. On the other hand, King Cheng's confidence in the duke is also tested. According to *Shiji*, the duke prays for King Wu and King Cheng once separately when they are sick, and King Cheng discovers the prayers twice after the rumors about the duke are spread. He cries regretfully after reading the prayers. This implies that he actually doubted the duke's loyalty.

In *Zuozhuan* 左傳, the ruler's diseases also receive special attention. A few anecdotes tell of how a ruler falls ill and asks for help from a physician. Most of these anecdotes focus on discussion of the causes of the sickness. For example, in 541 BCE, Lord Ping of Jin asks a physician from Qin about his illness and is warned that he will not be cured unless his intercourse with women is properly regulated. In an expanded discussion, the physician explains that there are six heavenly influences, namely, the *yin*, the *yang*, wind, rain, obscurity, and brightness. When any of these is in excess, it can result in disease. This view reflects emerging notions of correlative cosmology, that is, the sense of the correspondence between the human being and the universe. The physician even tells Zhao Meng 趙孟 that he will suffer calamity because the ruler has brought disease on himself through his excesses and will be unable to consult for the good of altars.[34] The ruler's poor health reveals not only his excessive desire for women, but also the political disorder of the state. In this anecdote, the physician acts in the role of an official, for his observation of the political affairs and the ruler's disease are equally incisive, while the anecdote omits any mention of the details of the prince's sickness.

Another ruler of Jin, Lord Jing, gives a more vivid image of the patient when *Zuozhuan* recounts his dreams and his response to sickness.[35] The time is 581 BCE. After dreaming of a huge vengeful ghost that invades his private quarters, the ruler summons a shaman of Sangtian 桑田 to discuss about the dream, who predicts that the ruler will not be able to eat the grain of the new harvest. The prince falls seriously ill and asks for help from a Qin physician named Huan. He dreams that his illness assumes the form of two boys who lodge above his diaphragm and below his heart in order to evade treatment. Therefore, the physician cannot heal the prince's illness. The prince gives the physician gifts because his diagnosis corresponds to the dream. In the sixth month, the prince wants to taste the new grain. He shows the shaman the new grain and

[34] *Zuo Tradition: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals,"* tans. Stephen Durrant, Wai-yee Li, David Schaberg (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2016), 1329–1331.
[35] Ibid. 787.

has him killed. But the prince himself dies before he eats the grain. This anecdote represents the patient's subjective experience of illness in terms of his dreams and his attitude towards the shaman and the physician. Both the shaman and the physician describe his situation in a way that corresponds exactly to his dreams, but he grants a handsome reward to the physician and kills the shaman. These differences reveal the prince's internal conflict and extreme anxiety. He understands that the dreams signify that he is doomed to die of sickness, but he still wants to challenge his destiny by showing the shaman the new grain he is about to eat. But destiny reasserts its authority when the prince falls in the privy and dies. The dream is an important medium between heaven and the human being.

The biography of Bian Que 扁鵲 and Chunyu Yi 淳于意 in *Shiji* 史記 includes a great number of medical cases, but the goal of these accounts is to demonstrate the physician's skill and competence.[36] The patient's individual experience of illness is not the focus. Only the attitude of one patient, Lord Huan of Qi, towards Bian Que's diagnosis is recorded, for the prince believes that he does not have any illness and refuses treatments. By contrast, a *Hanshu* 漢書 anecdote about Emperor Wu's concubine, Lady Li, represents the patient's subjective experience in terms of her response to the emperor's request to see her face. As Lady Li is afraid that her appearance is not as beautiful as it was before she fell ill, she covers her face when the emperor hopes to see her. Even when he promises to award her a thousand pieces of gold and appoint her brothers as officials, she still refuses to remove her cover. After the emperor leaves, she explains to her sister that her purpose is to take care of her brothers after her death, for the emperor will lose his love for her if he sees her appearance disfigured by illness. As she predicts, the emperor mourns deeply for her and appoints her brothers as high-ranking officials after her death.[37] Lady Li is characterized as a wise patient because she is fully aware of the essence of the emperor's

[36] Sima Qian 司馬遷, *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1962), 2785–2820.
[37] Ban Gu 班固, *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2000), 2909.

love, which is completely built on the basis of her beauty. Therefore, her beauty is the only thing that she can rely upon to keep the emperor's love. She gives up the chance to bid farewell to the emperor in order to benefit her family. This represents her strong subjectivity as a patient and an indictment of the superficiality of the emperor.

In the Six Dynasties, sickness was an important motif in *zhiguai* tales. Liu Yuanru 劉苑如 paid special attention to two causes of sickness closely related to alienation in space.[38] One arises when a person leaves the place of his or her daily life and travels to an alien space, where he or she is more susceptible to illness. The other arises when a ghost or spirit invades people's living environment and creates alienation within the daily space, often leading to sickness among the residents. The first cause is also common in vernacular fiction, which is examined in the third chapter of this dissertation. According to Li Jianmin's 李建民 study of traditional Chinese medicine, an important cause of ghost illness (*suibing* 祟病) is that the patient transgresses in a space belonging to ghosts or spirits.[39] For the second cause, in which an alien ghost or spirit enters the patient's house, it is often a dog in the house that discovers the invasion and warns the human inhabitants. Sometimes an animal or spirit can even invade the human body directly and cause sickness. A snake or snake spirit is most common in this kind of case. These tales treat sickness literally as an invader of the human body. The sickness can be healed only when the invader is expelled. It is also worth noting that dreams serve as a point of contact for human beings, gods, ghosts, and spirits. These entities are able to cross their boundary and communicate with each other in dreams, just as the Prince of Jin encounters a ghost and embodiments of his sickness in his dreams in *Zuozhuan*. Nevertheless, most sicknesses in *zhiguai* are recorded to

[38] Liu Yuanru 劉苑如, Luo Peixuan 羅珮瑄, Qiu Wanchun 邱婉淳, Chen Yalin 陳雅琳, "Weijin nanbeichao bijixiaoshuo jibingwenben de xidu yu yuandu" 魏晉南北朝筆記小說疾病文本的細讀與遠讀, *Qinghua zhongwen xuebao* 清華中文學報 22 (2019): 76

[39] Li Jianmin 李建民, "Suibing yu changsuo: chuantong yixue dui suibing de yizhong jieshi" 祟病與場所：傳統醫學對祟病的一種解釋, *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 1(1994): 101.

demonstrate the rules and changes of the supernatural realm. How the sickness affects the patient's family and/or social network is rarely a matter of interest.

Tang Dynasty *chuanqi* tales devote a good deal of attention to the experience of patients. Some of the tales resemble *zhiguai* in the strange accounts they record. For example, in *Gujing ji* 古鏡記, a girl in Bianzhou 汴州 is sick and groans in grief every night. The itinerant healer Wang Du 王度 has her look in a magical ancient mirror, where she says she sees "a man with a high hat being killed."[40] Later a rooster is discovered dead under her bed, apparently the spirit that had caused her illness. In other tales, the sickness may reconstruct the patients' interpersonal relations. In *Huoxiaoyu zhuan* 霍小玉傳, after Li Yi 李益 abandons Huo Xiaoyu, she contracts a serious illness and has to stay in bed. She asks many friends and relatives to inform Li Yi that she wants to see him, but Li Yi refuses to visit her anymore. A man adept in martial arts sympathizes with Huo and forces Li Yi to go to Huo's house, where Huo expresses her suffering and resentment, then dies. She vows to take vengeance for Li's infidelity after her death.[41] In another tale, *Liwa zhuan* 李娃傳, the courtesan Li Wa regrets having cheated a young man from Xingyang 滎陽 after seeing how miserable and sick he becomes afterward. She takes him back to her home and cares for him attentively, and within a year he recovers.[42] In these two tales, the patients' experiences of illness are highlighted in terms of the reconstruction of their social relations. Nevertheless, both Li Yi and the young man from Xingyang belong to the elite. Patient protagonists in Tang tales do not yet include the common people.

Ming dynasty authors would later revise some Tang tales about patients' experiences into vernacular stories, emphasizing subjective aspects of patients' illness. For example, the Tang tale

[40] Lu Xun 魯迅 ed. *Tangsong chuanqiji* 唐宋傳奇集, *Lu Xun Quan Ji* 魯迅全集, Volume 10 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1973), 201.
[41] Ibid., 249–251.
[42] Ibid., 276–277.

Xue Wei 薛偉 tells of an official, Xue Wei, who falls ill and sinks into a deep coma.[43] After twenty days, he wakes up and tells of having dreamt of becoming a fish. This tale was adapted by Feng Menglong as the basis for the twenty-sixth story in *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言. In contrast to the classical tale, Feng added many details to express Xue's feelings after his metamorphosis. In the tale of *Xue Wei*, Xue attempts to talk with his colleagues after he is caught by a fisherman and taken away by an official in his county yamen, but they cannot hear his voice and only see the fish's mouth opening and closing. Feng Menglong exaggerates this plot with more vivid and seemingly comic descriptions. In the vernacular story, Xue keeps complaining to his colleagues, "How can you have no regard for me after we've worked together for all these years?" "I know. You bear me such malice because you are jealous of me in my position as the keeper of the seal."[44] Those thoughts may expose his subconscious feelings, ones that he had never yet expressed. Before changing into a carp, he was on friendly terms with his colleagues for a long time. He had never recognized his subconscious feelings. When his colleagues do not recognize him and even want to kill him, his suspicion and discontentment, which were disguised by his intimate friendships with his colleagues, now gradually emerge. Xue's emphasis on his position as the keeper of the seal reveals his fear of losing this position, for he is deeply afraid that other people will change their attitude towards him if he does not serve as the assistant magistrate. This kind of dread is expressed through his experience of metamorphosis. Further, when Xue cries and shouts, his colleagues cannot hear his voice, and this mortal threat heightens Xue's state of anxiety. Xue loss of his human body and his inability to communicate with his former friends emphasize his difficult position and force reflection. The goal of the Tang tale of *Xue Wei* was to record a strange event, while Feng Menglong paid special attention to Xue's subjective experience in terms of his bodily metamorphosis.

[43] "Xue Wei," Niu Sengru 牛僧儒 ed. *Xuanguailu* 玄怪錄, Li Fuyan 李複言 ed. *Xu Xuanguailu* 續玄怪錄(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1982), 176–178.
[44] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Awaken the World* (Seattle and London: University of Washington press, 2009), 602.

III. The Definition of Sickness

The definition of sickness varies in different cultural and social contexts. Generally, there are two approaches to define sickness: one following from scientific pathology and the other from medical anthropology.

Modern biomedicine always defines sickness following the principles of pathology. In his "Standpoints in Scientific Medicine" (1874), German pathologist Rudolf Virchow argued that "diseases are neither self-subsistent, circumscribed, autonomous organisms, nor entities which have forced their way into the body, nor parasites rooted on it." Virchow believed that diseases "represent only the course of physiological phenomena under altered conditions."[45] Rudolf Virchow's viewpoint reveals how standards of normality were defined in order to differentiate disease states and health states in the 19th century. Christopher Boorse's definition of sickness may be taken as representative of the contemporary era. He writes, "A disease is a type of internal state which is either an impairment of normal functional ability, a reduction of one or more functional abilities below typical efficiency, or a limitation on functional ability caused by environmental agents"[46] Here, the physical condition is the foreground without any consideration of the patients' cultural background.

From the perspective of medical anthropology, the definition of sickness is culturally constructed in medical discourse. The meaning of sickness varied greatly over time and culture, because it had a close relationship with the social system, religion, lifestyle, and psychology. In "Protein Energy Malnutrition as a Culture-Bound Syndrome," Claire Monod Cassidy points out that a culture-bound syndrome cannot be understood apart from its specific cultural or sub-cultural context, and the etiology summarizes and symbolizes core meanings and behavioral

[45] Rudolf Virchow, "Standpoints in Scientific Medicine," quoted in Julia Epstein, *Altered Conditions, disease, medicine, and storytelling* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995), 7.
[46] Christopher Boorse, "Health as a Theoretical Concept," in *Philosophy of Science*, 44/4 (1977): 555. {Some of your notes are in 9-point font, others in 10-point font. Fix throughout for consistency.}

norms of that culture.[47] More generally, in *Sickness and Healing: An Anthropological Perspective,* Robert Hahn regards the systems of sickness and healing everywhere as cultural systems which are organized patterns of thinking, judging, and behaving shared by the members of a society.[48] In order to determine the features of sickness that cultures have in common, Hahn argues that "the essence of sickness is an unwanted condition in one's person or self, including one's mind, body, soul, or connection to the world."[49] It is worth noting that he defines sickness according to the patient's subjective experience and values, which coincides with the focus of my dissertation. However, the patient's experience in fictional works is more complicated. Although many patients regard sickness as "an unwanted condition," there are some patients who may rely on and even be attached to the sickness in some specific situations so that they solve a dilemma or avoid a role they do not want to play in the family or society.

According to Roy Porter's explanation of disease and illness, Hahn's definition of sickness is closer to illness, rather than disease. Porter draws a distinction between disease and illness, pointing out that "disease is normally an objective thing, often triggered by a pathogen, such as a bacillus or a virus, and marked by telltale symptoms—a rash or a raised temperature. Illness, on the other hand, denotes something subjective, feelings of malaise or pain."[50] In other words, illness leans toward emphasizing the subjective feelings of patients, while disease emphasizes the physical situation. Because my dissertation will examine the representation of sickness in a cultural context, I will rely on medical anthropology and medical cultural history to define sickness. Based on these concepts, I employ the term "sickness" to include both "illness" and "disease" as defined by Porter. In fictional medical narratives, the representation of the

[47] Claire Monod Cassidy, "Protein Energy Malnutrition as a Culture-bound Syndrome," *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry* 6 (1982): 326.
[48] Hahn, *Sickness and Healing*, 2.
[49] Hahn, *Sickness and Healing*, 5.
[50] Porter, *Cambridge Illustrated History of Medicine*, 82.

pathology of the patient can be a mixture of illness and disease, so sickness is a more flexible, inclusive rubric.

In the context of traditional Chinese medicine, sickness refers to an absence of a dynamic balance between *yin* and *yang*.[51] In other words, the difference between normality and abnormality was defined based on a philosophical system in which the actions of man on earth and the behavior of the cosmic forces of the universe are intimately linked.[52] As Kenneth J. DeWoskin states, "the combination of *yin* and *yang* dualism and the five phases resulted in an elaborate pattern to serve as a model for interpreting the interaction of natural forces and things."[53] Therefore, disease or health state serves as a metaphor of the (dis)order of the cosmos, country, family, and moral and ethical relationships. According to the famous statement of *The Inner Canon of the Yellow Lord*: "One *yin* and one *yang* (i.e., their constant alternation) are called the Way; bias toward yin or bias toward yang is called disease."[54] Disease thus signifies a contravention of the Way. In this sense, the healing process in fictional texts usually symbolizes the recovery of the balance between *yin* and *yang* in the patient's physical condition, in the society's ethics, and even in the proper order of universe.

IV. Previous Studies of Sickness in Chinese Literature

Currently, most study of sickness in Chinese literature has been focused on modern Chinese literature. Tan Guanghui's 譚光輝 *Zhengzhuang de zhengzhuang* 症狀的症狀 (Symptoms of symptoms) surveys the different formulas employed by literati in their discourses on illness in Chinese fiction from 1902 to 1949, reviewing the value of the literati's pursuit through their

[51] "Health is defined as the balance of Yin and Yang, and the various manifestations of diseases are excess and deficiency states of Yin and Yang." See May Loo, ed., *Integrative Medicine for Children* (St. Louis: Saunders Elsevier, 2009), 74.
[52] N.H. Van Straten, *Concepts of Health, Disease and Vitality in Traditional Chinese Society* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH), 14.
[53] DeWoskin, *Doctors, Diviners, and Magicians of Ancient China*, 11.
[54] Sivin, "Text and Experience in Classical Chinese Medication," 193.

different attitudes toward illness.[55] Wang Jian's 王健 "*Bing de xushi yu shenti de zhengzhixue*" 病的敘事與身體的政治學 (Medical narrative and bodily politics) explores the way Lu Xun's 魯迅 imagination of family and country was formed in his medical narratives.[56] Wang Dongmei's 王冬梅 "*Jibing yinyu yu nüxing shuxie*" 疾病隱喻與女性書寫 (Metaphor of sickness and women's writing) compares lung disease, venereal disease, and mental disease, arguing that even the same kind of sickness can combine different metaphorical meanings according to the sex of the patient and narrator.[57]

Almost all of those works analyze metaphors of sickness in fiction combining historical and political circumstances under the influence of Susan Sontag's *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors*. Sontag's book is pathbreaking in its investigation of the relationship between literary rhetoric and sickness.[58] In this book, Sontag reveals the metaphorical meaning of several special sicknesses, such as tuberculosis, cancer, and AIDS, and the ways of thinking of metaphors of sickness. She argues that tuberculosis was a disease in the service of a romantic view of the world and that cancer is now in the service of a simplistic view of the world that can turn paranoid.[59] Although she uses examples from literary works and writers who have the experience of illness, her point is that the most truthful way of regarding illness, and the healthiest way of being ill, is by avoiding metaphorical thinking, for the nature of sickness is not a metaphor. It would be harmful, for example, if a patient with cancer thinks that his/her sickness is sinful. As a result, she does not analyze how the metaphorical meaning of sickness influences the writing of literary works; nor does she explore how sickness causes a series of changes in the patient's life and interpersonal relationships.

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[55] Tan Guanghu 譚光輝, *Zhengzhuang de zhengzhuang* 症狀的症狀 (Beijing: Zhonguo keji chubanshe, 2007).
[56] Wang Jian 王健, "*Lun xiandai xiaoshuo zhong feibing de yinyu* 論現代小說中肺病的隱喻" (Master thesis, Central China Normal University, 2005).
[57] Wang Dongmei 王冬梅, "*Jibing yinyu yu nüxing shuxie* 疾病隱喻與女性書寫" (Master thesis, Qufu Normal University, 2007).
[58] Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), 69.
[59] Ibid.

Nevertheless, Sontag's theory is helpful in analyzing the functions of the metaphor of sickness in fictional narratives rather than in connecting the metaphor of a specific sickness to political or social movements at the time. In my dissertation, I will draw on Sontag in discussing how the metaphor of sickness functions in constructing patients and other figures. In some cases, all pathogeny, symptoms, prescriptions, and recovery can be employed as metaphors for morality, and for defining the personality of the patient. However, it is necessary to consider the historical circumstances in late imperial China when applying Sontag's theory, for the context in which Ming-Qing vernacular fiction was produced and circulated was different from Western fiction in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The name of a specific sickness, diagnosis, and healing process in traditional Chinese medicine often does not correspond to those of modern medicine. For example, depletion (*laozhai* 勞瘵) in the Ming and Qing Dynasties cannot be equated with tuberculosis, and so the representation of *laozhai* in late imperial China may not share the metaphorical significance of tuberculosis in Sontag's book.

The modern study of medical narrative in pre-modern Chinese literature has so far been limited. In Chinese scholarship, Hu Siao-chen's 胡曉真 *Xujiu, fengdian, yu dushen* 酗酒、瘋癲與獨身 (Excessive drinking, madness, and singlehood) focuses on the stereotypes of drinking mother, mad wife, and single daughter as examples to study *tanci* 彈詞 storytelling,[60] arguing that these figures enrich the text of *tanci* and constitute important elements in the narrative. [61] Li Binghai's 李炳海 *Cong pinkun feibing dao buyibing weibing* 從貧困非病到不以病為病 (From the concept that poverty is not sickness to sickness should not be treated as sickness) asserts that Daoist literature in the pre-Qin period distinguishes poverty from sickness and studies

[60] *Tanci* performs romantic and domestic stories through singing accompanied by simple music. See C. T. Hsia, *The Classic Chinese Novel: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968), 9.
[61] Hu Siao-chen 胡曉真, "Xujiu, fengdian, yu dushen" 酗酒、瘋癲與獨身, *Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy* 28 (2006): 51–80.

psychological illness as well. [62] He points out that in Daoist literary works, the suffering and misery brought about by sickness is seen only in negative figures. Li Mengyun's 李萌昀 *Hewei diankuang* 何為癲狂(What is madness) studies a type of story about madmen, who are represented by Crazy Ji (Jigong 濟公) and Zhou Dian 周顛.[63] He argues that fiction with a theme of madness is remarkable in that actions outside of those we expect from a rational agent are treated as madness.

Madness in pre-modern Chinese literature is endowed with metaphorical meanings that differ from those employed in professional medical texts. Through study of the history of a Chinese deity, Meir Shahar investigated the relationship between Chinese popular belief mechanisms and Ming-Qing vernacular fiction in his *Crazy Ji: Chinese Religion and Popular Literature*.[64] He argues that the "madness" of Crazy Ji was hardly regarded by Chinese people as sickness. No one tried to cure him. Instead, Crazy Ji's eccentric behaviors implied that he was a mad monk with supernatural power. The "holy fool" who serves as a messenger between the human and the divine realms also plays an important role in other Chinese novels, such as the mad monk in *Honglou meng*.[65] In my dissertation, aside from those madmen with supernatural powers, I will also discuss the ordinary people whose social identities are destroyed by madness. Special attention will be paid to the process of transformation from sanity to madness.

The study of the representation of sickness in Ming-Qing fiction in Western scholarship is even less common than in Chinese. Christopher Cullen's "Patients and Healers in Late Imperial China: Evidence from the *Jinpingmei*" analyzes several kinds of sicknesses.[66] His method is to collect all the symptoms and treatments of patients in *Plum in the Golden Vase (Jinpingmei* 金瓶

[62] Li Binghai 李炳海, "Cong pinkun feibing dao buyibingweibing" 從貧困非病到不以病為病, *Research on Chinese Literature* 3 (2005): 36–40.
[63] Li Mengyun 李萌昀, "Hewei diankuang" 何為癲狂, *Journal of Guangxi Normal University* 3 (2009): 63–67.
[64] Meir Shahar, *Crazy Ji: Chinese Religion and Popular Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).
[65] Ibid, 45.
[66] Christopher Cullen, "Patients and Healers in Late Imperial China: Evidence from the '*Jinpingmei*,'" *History of Science* 31:2 (1993): 99–150.

梅) as "new data on the activities of literate practitioners independent of the explicitly medical sources,"[67] and as new data on the popular and folk doctors, which have hardly been studied,[68] in order to find "evidence that the drugs prescribed are generally well within the range of possibilities that a Ming physician could rationally have chosen for the illnesses in question."[69] Cullen also observes the social circumstances in which the sickness occurred. His conclusion is that "when someone is recognized as ill, social obligations are removed or reduced."[70] However, he aims to examine the condition of traditional diagnosis and healing through fictional works. In other words, the author adopts the view of a medical historian. He is not interested in the construction of the figures of patients in *Jinpingmei*, or how the author employs sickness and medicine as literary devices.

Andrew David Schonebaum is the only scholar who has done systematic study of medical discourses in Chinese traditional fiction in current English scholarship. His dissertation, "Fictional Medicine: Diseases and Doctors and the Curative Properties of Chinese Fiction" tries to discover the source of Lu Xun's 魯迅 thought.[71] After explaining the intricate relationship between literati, physicians, and fiction authors, he argues that there was an evolution of the doctor in pre-modern fiction from the charlatan, quack, or clown (a tradition carried over from Yuan and Ming dynasty drama) to the noble Confucian scholar-doctor. His contribution is that he analyzes the archetype of the scholar-doctor (*ruyi* 儒醫) and the relationship between "the themes of restoring order to government" and "healing." Moreover, Schonebaum also points out that the rise of medical narrative in late imperial China influenced the writing of fiction. He argues that the medical case (*yian* 醫案), which was popular in the Ming and Qing dynasties,

[67] Ibid., 104.
[68] Ibid., 104.
[69] Ibid., 120.
[70] Ibid., 108.
[71] Andrew Schonebaum, "Fictional Medicine: Disease, Doctor and Curative Properties of Chinese Fiction," (PhD diss., Columbia University, 2004).

produced new narrative forms and thematic content for fictional works. The examples of pre-modern fiction which are analyzed in his dissertation are limited to several long novels.

Schonebaum published a monograph, *Novel Medicine: Healing, Literature, and Popular Knowledge in Early Modern China*, in 2015.[72] Though he uses many materials and arguments from his dissertation, the book focuses on medical cultural studies rather than on the archetype of the scholar-doctor, and regards fiction as providing objective information about medical knowledge for readers who were not experts in medicine. Therefore, Schonebaum adopts an approach similar to Christopher Cullen's historical study of Chinese medicine: he compares Ming-Qing fiction with other contemporary medical literature (medical theories, pharmacopoeia, and medical cases) in order to "examine how vernacular knowledge of medicine and the body was created and transmitted, and how much of it persisted into the modern era."[73] He pays special attention to the nationalistic meaning of the healing process by the scholar-doctor, connecting it to healing a nation. Compared to his dissertation, Andrew Schonebaum's new book uses fewer fictional examples to support his arguments and instead relies more heavily on non-fictional medical texts. On the whole, his conclusions are limited to a few full-length romantic novels alone.

My dissertation takes a new direction by focusing on the patient's experiences of illness in vernacular fiction, especially in short stories. Whereas Schonebaum pays more attention to doctors than to patients, and mainly discusses women's sicknesses in *Honglou meng* 紅樓夢 and *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅, by contrast, I focus on patients' experiences of illness rather than doctors' diagnoses and treatments. In addition to sickness at home, I explore a great many male figures' sufferings when they become ill away from their family. Also, I explore how the authors utilized sickness as a plot device to manipulate the tension between normal life and the abnormality

[72] Andrew Schonebaum, *Novel Medicine - Healing, Literature, and Popular Knowledge in Early Modern China* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2015).
[73] Ibid., 6.

caused by sickness, and how they created some new story types based on different roles for patient and healer. Medical narratives in Ming-Qing fiction, I suggest, provide us with a new perspective to measure authors' creativity in devising plot mechanisms. I further explore the metaphorical meaning of the healing process, arguing that in Ming-Qing vernacular fiction healing an individual patient may symbolize a restoration of the balance between *yin* and *yang* in the cosmos, or a return to proper ethical and political order.

To sum up, most existing studies of medical narratives in Ming-Qing fiction focus on medical history or medical cultural history. They collect fictional medical narratives in order to get more data for historical studies. By contrast, in my dissertation, medical knowledge and medical culture are part of the context of medical literature. Knowledge of the kind found in medical literature was a secondary concern in the creation of late imperial vernacular fiction. Surveying and employing a wide assortment of vernacular short stories, I focus on how fictional texts represented the experience of illness in late imperial China.

3. Major Textual Sources

For this dissertation, I examine a large number of fictional texts from the Ming-Qing period, including vernacular short stories and full-length novels, and some pre-Ming narratives, including historical records and classical tales. I also consult professional medical texts about traditional Chinese medical history, focusing on some representative theoretical books and medical cases in the Ming-Qing period.

In selecting fictional medical narratives during the Ming-Qing dynasties, I attempt to strike a balance between several famous novels and collections of short stories and some vernacular fiction that has not been widely discussed. Among the well-known works, I pay special attention to Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 (1574–1646) *Three Words* (*Sanyan* 三言),

including *Stories to Instruct the World* (*Yushi mingyan* 喻世明言, aka *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說),[74] *Stories to Caution the World* (*Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言),[75] and *Stories to Awaken the World (Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言),[76] Ling Mengchu's 凌濛初 (1580–1644) *Two Slaps (Erpai* 二拍), including *Slapping the Table in Amazement (Pai'an jingqi* 拍案驚奇)[77] and *Slapping the Table in Amazement II* (*Erke paian jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇),[78] and Li Yu's (1611–1680) *Twelve Towers* (*Shi'er lou* 十二樓)[79] and *Silent Dramas* (*Wusheng xi* 無聲戲).[80] These authors are enthusiastic about telling patients' stories. Their works have a wide range of themes, from sickness within the home space to sickness in unfamiliar spaces, from "severe repulsive diseases" (*eji* 惡疾) like leprosy to more common ailments like fever and cold, from real sickness to fake sickness, and so on. Li Yu is an especially innovative writer. Most of his stories are comedies. In order to pursue comic effect and instinctual pleasure, the majority of the plots in his fiction involve reversals of accepted situations. He also relies on ingenuity (qiao 巧) of the characters to produce new and unusual outcomes.[81] In Li Yu's stories, he often uses sickness to test human nature. The theme of testing plays an essential role in fictional medical narratives, because sickness often serves as a touchstone to test the patients' interpersonal relationships. After being ill, the sincerity or hypocrisy of their spouse, children, and friends can be perceived.

I often also explore some collections of short stories and medium-length novels that are not well-known, such as *the Stone Awakened from Drunkenness* (*Zuixingshi* 醉醒石), *Eight Cave Paradises* (*Badongtian* 八洞天), *The Reward of a Distinguished Son* (*Lin'er bao* 麟兒報),

[74] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1958).
[75] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991).
[76] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009).
[77] Ling Mengchu 淩濛初, *Paian jingqi* 拍案驚奇 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1991).
[78] Ling Mengchu 淩濛初, *Erke pai'an jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1996).
[79] Li Yu 李漁, *Shi'er lou* 十二樓 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1990).
[80] Li Yu 李漁, *Wusheng xi* 無聲戲 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006).
[81] Patrick Hanan, *The Invention of Li Yu* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 50–51.

to name a few. *The Stone Awakened from Drunkenness* (*Zuixingshi* 醉醒石) includes fifteen short stories that were composed by Master Gukuang of Eastern Lu 東魯古狂生.[82] It was completed and published at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty. Its sixth story is very unique, for it creatively explores metaphors for madness in the bodily metamorphosis of a Tang scholar, Li Wei 李微, who turns into a tiger. *Eight Cave Paradises* is a collection of eight short stories composed by Biliange zhuren 筆練閣主人 during the early Qing.[83] At least four stories include plots concerning sickness. Each of them is distinctive to some extent. For example, one is about a woman who misunderstands her stepson, for he falls ill due to sadness after his mother's death and is unable to show his respect for his new stepmother. However, she comes to understand how inconsolable his sadness and grief are when she falls ill after her own mother dies suddenly from an acute illness. That is to say, her genuine sympathy with her stepson is not aroused until she enters the patient's world. The experience of illness establishes a foundation for their emotional communication and rewrites their relations. *The Reward of a Distinguished Son* (*Lin'er bao* 麟兒報) is a medium-length novel which was printed in 1672 with a preface by Tianhuazang zhuren 天花藏主人. The true identity of the author is unknown. This is a love story about a talented scholar and a beauty (*caizi jiaren xiaoshu*o 才子佳人), which includes the strategic use of a feigned illness in order to adopt another person's identity.

I also refer to some historical records, philosophical books, and classical tales before the Ming dynasty, including *Zuozhuan* 左傳, *Shiji* 史記, Zhuangzi 莊子, *Soushenji* 搜神記, *Yijianzhi* 夷堅志, and some other notebook-form anecdotes (*biji xiaoshuo* 筆記小說), for many Ming-Qing vernacular stories were adapted from classical tales, or inherited metaphorical significance of some illnesses and/or story patterns from these earlier narratives. For instance,

[82] Donglu Gukuangsheng 東魯古狂生, *Zuixingshi* 醉醒石 (Zhenzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985).
[83] Biliange zhuren 筆煉閣主人, *Badongtian* 八洞天 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1985).

Feng Menglong appropriates for his own vernacular tales anecdotes about the pre-Han thinker Zhuangzi's 莊子 faking of his death as a strategy to test his wife's chastity. Many authors of Ming-Qing vernacular fiction adapted motifs of male politicians feigning illness from historical records in early China, such as *Zuozhuan* and *Shiji*. This dissertation examines many other sources of Ming-Qing vernacular stories as well. The story of how Honglian 紅蓮 seduces Monk Yutong 玉通 in Feng Menglong's *Stories Old and New* is a typical example. The original source of this story is an anecdote in the *Gujin shihua* 古今詩話, from the Northern Song dynasty (960–1127). The earliest record that provides the reason and process of Honglian's seduction is from Tian Rucheng's 田汝成 *Xihu youlan zhiyu* 西湖遊覽志餘, which was first printed in 1547. Another Ming collection of classical tales, *Lunhui xingshi* 輪迴醒世, includes a similar anecdote, "A Buddhist Monk is Reincarnated" ("Faseng toutai" 法僧投胎). Through tracing the origin and development of this story type, we find that the prostitute's subjectivity grows stronger as the strategic use of feigned illness is added to the story.

Besides a large number of fictional works, I explore abundant materials in specialized medical texts. When analyzing different types of illness in vernacular stories, I have often consulted *The Inner Canon of the Yellow Lord* (*Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經), [84] long considered the fundamental doctrinal source in traditional Chinese medicine and "comparable to … the Hippocratic writings in ancient Europe."[85] It comprises two texts: *The Basic Questions* (*Suwen* 素問), which covers the fundamental theories, and *The Numinous Spindle* (*Lingshu* 靈樞), which discusses acupuncture therapy in detail. In the *Suwen*, "the vessels (*mai* 脈) carrying blood (*xue* 血) and vapor (*qi* 氣) through the body were seen to constitute the essential physiological

[84] Wang Bing 王冰, ed., *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經 (Beijing: Zhongyi guji chubanshe, 2003).
[85] Paul U. Unschuld, *Huangdi neijing suwen: Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text*, (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2003), ix.

structure around which the other constituents of the body were organized."[86] The titular author, Huangdi, was a legendary leader in the mythological age. In the 20th century, the work was generally dated to between the late Warring States period (475–221 BCE) and the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE).[87] *The Inner Canon of the Yellow Lord* drew upon basic features of this cosmology—*qi, yin yang*, and Five Phase theory—to explain health and disease, firmly establishing correlative relationships between the cosmos and the microcosm of the body.[88]

Other medical texts I often refer to include Chao Yuanfang's 巢元方 *Origins and Symptoms of All Diseases* (*Zhubing yuanhou lun* 諸病源候論), which was composed in 610, Zhu Zhengheng's 朱震亨 (1281–1358) *Danxi's Mind Methods* (*Danxi xinfa* 丹溪心法), Zhuang Lu's 張璐 (1617–ca. 1700) *Zhangshi's Treatise on General Medicine* (*Zhangshi yitong* 張氏醫通), Li Shizhen's 李時珍 (1518–1593) *Compendium of Materia Medica* (*Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目), and Wang Ji's 汪機 (1463–1539) *Shishan's Medical Cases* (*Shishan yi'an* 石山醫案), to name a few. These medical books provide medical theories, diagnoses, and prescriptions of different sickness. Through comparison of professional medical texts and fictional representations of sickness, we can see that Ming-Qing authors usually adopt the interpretations, diagnoses, and/or symptoms of leprosy, syphilis, mania (*kuangji* 狂疾) in their vernacular fiction.

This dissertation further stages the tension between medical and moral perspectives on women's bodies in vernacular fiction. For example, many medical texts focus on women's reproductive vitality, while in fictional works women's infertility is always resolved through morality rather than through medical interventions. A great number of medical texts call

[86] Donald Harper, "Iatromancy, diagnosis, and prognosis in Early Chinese medicine," in Elisabeth Hsu, ed., *Innovation in Chinese Medicine* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 99.
[87] David Keegan, the first Western scholar to write a dissertation on the structure and origin of *Suwen*, believed that the language and ideas in all the versions of *Neijing* were composed between 400 BCE and 260 CE. See Unschuld, *Huangdi neijing suwen*, 1–3.
[88] Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin, Gender in China's Medical History: 960–1665* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 21.

attention to women's emotions in the etiology of gynecological disorder. They claim that men and women must have sexual relations after puberty if they are not to develop diseases brought on by unfulfilled desire. This idea laid a theoretical foundation for the legitimation of sexual desire in Ming-Qing vernacular fiction.

4. Chapter Overview

The following chapters are organized as an investigation of medical narratives as they take place in various settings and on various scales. Chapters Two and Three explore the diverse experiences of patients in vernacular stories in two settings, namely, at home and on the road. The spaces in which sickness arises bring into play different forces that may destroy and remake the patient's life. In Chapter Two, the home-centered space is characterized by a settled family setting in which the patient is surrounded by familiar people and objects. Once sick, patients are no longer able to fulfill the duties associated with their family roles and stop participating in the activities of ordinary life. They often experience a loss of family identity, unforeseen incidents in marriage, the transformation of family power, and the rewriting of family relations. As Confucianism identifies family as the basis of society, it demands that every family member fulfill the obligations prescribed for his or her role in order to maintain a stable and well-organized family system. These expectations form a firm foundation for social ideals. However, the dimension of the body is typically absent from this overarching ethical framework, while morality receives the most attention. By contrast, fictional representations of patients' experience of illness at home reassert the importance of the body and the embodied subjectivity. The body may be mute and unrecognized in certain normative views, but the truths about body and mind that vernacular stories articulate through tales of illness reveal flaws in the ideally integrated Confucian familial and social structure.

Chapter Three turns to narratives of illness suffered while the patient is away from home. External space becomes relevant as the patient journeys to unfamiliar places in which he or she may experience danger or romance. Travel brings increased exposure to factors that can cause illness, such as bad weather, rugged environments, and uncertain food. Since contracting illness in an unfamiliar space indicates a double departure from the patients' normal life, the transformation of a patient's identity during an illness on the road is more complex and dramatic in terms of psychological stability and even, as we shall see, in terms of gender stability. No matter whether patients are at home or on the road, they are universally nostalgic for their former state of good health and integration with family. The authors of late imperial Chinese fiction are eager to tell stories of sick travelers, conveying the message that it is not possible to lead a peaceful life during a journey, as the journey always represents an unsafe state. Returning home represents both a physical and spiritual salvation. When a patient fails to go back to his family or build a new family, an endless exile or degeneration is inevitable.

Although most fictional medical narratives discussed in Chapters Two and Three focus on how sickness destroys and reconstructs patients' identities and interpersonal relationships, patients' reliance on and occasional exploitation of sickness introduce an important theme of subjectivity into fictional explorations of the experience of illness. The fourth chapter examines how patients strategically use sickness and occasionally cling to it. Many authors in fictional medical narratives are eager to represent patients who rely on and are even attached to sickness in some specific situations so that they can free themselves from a dilemma or rid themselves of a role they do not want to play in the family or society; their dissatisfaction can make them willing to "create" an illness or feign illness. These stories tend to foreground sexual desire and the virtues of chastity, telling how a woman is able to refuse marriage or intercourse on the pretext of sickness, and how a prostitute relies on a feigned illness to seduce an eminent monk. By using or feigning illness strategically, a weak and powerless female patient may gain some

power and overcome a powerful enemy. This chapter also discusses a special story type concerning false reports of death from illness. The false report of a man's death from sickness is strategically used to test his wife's chastity, for it seems like a rehearsal of what will happen after his death. The extreme importance of chastity also informs the story of a false report of a woman's death from sickness. Through this strategic use of illness, a father is able to celebrate a chaste daughter, supposedly deceased, while meanwhile concealing the truth about her elopement with a lascivious man.

The fifth chapter focuses on sicknesses of *qing*, especially lovesickness, the kind of sickness that most clearly stages the importance of the patient's subjectivity. This chapter explores dynamic interactions between medical books and fictional medical narratives. On the one hand, medical theorizations of sicknesses of *qing* justify timely marriage for both men and women, since their sexual desires need to be fulfilled after puberty. Fictional medical narratives go further in legitimizing passionate love between young people that their parents could not at first permit, especially in cases where parents have delayed in arranging a marriage. On the other hand, Ming-Qing vernacular tales about lovesickness undermine doctors' absolute authority in diagnosing and treating lovesickness in professional medical books while figuring the patient's subjective experience as the key factor in bringing a cure. Consequently, the motif of "disguising oneself as a doctor" (*jiaban yisheng* 假扮醫生) is created in vernacular fiction. Therefore, if we say lovesickness is a medicalization of *qing*, the process of diagnosing and healing lovesickness in vernacular stories indicates a tendency toward de-medicalization.

Up to now, the study of medical narrative in Chinese traditional fiction has been limited. My dissertation fills a lacuna in the systematic study of the representation of sickness in vernacular short stories in late imperial China. I analyze how the representation of sickness functions in driving the plot and portraying the characters and explore how representations of sickness leads to transformations of social relationships surrounding the patient. A large issue in

Chinese literary studies is the rise of "individualism" in Ming-Qing literature.[89] In contrast with the typology of patients in non-fictional medical narrative, the authors of Ming-Qing vernacular fiction devoted themselves to describing the feelings and emotions of individuated characters through their experiences as patients. Thus, the study of medical narrative in vernacular fiction helps us understand the new trend that emphasizes an interest in the subjective experiences of individuals.

I employ both literary and cultural studies approaches in my dissertation, treating the element of sickness as a common literary technique and as a symptom of broader cultural ideologies and changes. Fictional medical narratives may serve as data for social history or medical history, but their deeper function has since the beginning been to reveal the ways in which people understood the self, the world, and their social lives. In late imperial China, medical narratives in vernacular fiction thematize sickness as a way of thinking through and making sense of the subjective experiences that complicate social identity and relationships. These tales present the subject as the potential sufferer, or patient, whose cure is to be found not in medicine but in the remaking of relationships.

[89] WM. Theodore de Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 145–248.

Chapter 2 Sickness at Home: Destruction of Daily Life

The existence of the patient is the necessary condition for constructing a fictional medical narrative, for medical narrative is produced when illness enters the patient's life. In fictional works, once a person is considered a "patient," sickness indicates not only physical suffering, but also the patient's alienation from normal social relations. In other words, sickness threatens to damage and even destroy the patient's identity and role within the society. For patients, sickness occurs not only in the body, but also in a variety of sites that constitute the patient's social relationships, which can be understood as a network encompassing both close and distant relations. That is to say, the patient's social life is subverted and reconstructed through the process of sickness. This subversion and reconstruction forms different story types in vernacular fiction.

Much of the experience of sickness is related to space. In the next two chapters, I will focus on two themes: sickness at home and sickness on the road. The different spaces where sickness occurs determine different elements in the destruction and remolding of the patient's life. The home-centered space is characterized by a static and settled family where the patient is surrounded by familiar people and objects. External space is typically represented in journeys to unfamiliar places in which the patient may experience danger or romance. This chapter will examine how fictional medical narratives are structured according to the home space and family relationships, and how sickness destroys and reconstructs both patients' identities and family relations.

As presented in vernacular fiction, the home space is structured by some of the ideals and tenets associated with Confucian and ritualistic models of the family. To maintain a stable and well-organized family system, a codified system of ritual propriety demands that every family member fulfill the duties prescribed for his or her role. For example, the third-century BC

Classic of Rites (*Liji* 禮記) gives a prescriptive vision of family members' daily behaviour and attitudes: "kindness on the part of the father and filial duty on that of the son; gentleness on the part of the elder brother and obedience on that of the younger; righteousness on the part of the husband and submission on that of the wife; kindness on the part of elders and deference on that of juniors."[90] This blueprint of the family system puts the emphasis on norms of hierarchy and morality. Once sick, a patient may be exiled to the margins of his or her family network. As Talcott Parsons put it, to be sick is to be socially "deviant" in some way. A deviant person threatens social stability because that person is not playing his or her proper, assigned social role.[91] It is in the nature of illness that patients fall short not only in the duties associated with their social roles, but also in activities of their normal lives and family relationships. The vernacular tales therefore tend to reassert the dictates of body, which are sometimes neglected in the prescriptions of the Confucian classics. In medical narratives about sickness at home, sickness often causes an identity crisis in the patient and affects his or her relationships with other family members, testing bonds between parents and children, between siblings, and between spouses.

In this chapter, I examine four common patterns in fictional medical narratives set in the home. First, because some sicknesses of the young were chronic and difficult to heal, sending the patient to a temple was a common plot element in late imperial vernacular stories, and a move that revoked a patient's family identity and in this way underlined the centrality of family. Because these patients do not become nuns or monks of their own accord, they usually attempt to return to a family and re-establish a new family identity through marriage. Second, when the patient stays with the family, the tale of illness plays out within the family. Since a family is built upon marital relationships, disease, especially a disfiguring disease, may destroy or damage a

[90] Yang, Tianyu, *Liji yizhu* 禮記譯註 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1997), 376.
[91] John Burnham, *What Is Medical History* (Cambridge UK: Polity Press, 2005), 37–38.

marriage. But if the patient is the husband, the wife usually insists on preserving the marital relationship or engagement. Third, since fictional medical narratives on sickness at home tend to highlight the role of the wife and transformations of power within the family. Finally, sickness can force a rewriting of familial relations, including relations of parent and child. A female's disability may not only impede the realization of the goals of marriage but also symbolize the decline of a family. In these stories, the disorder of the individual woman's body comes to inform relationships both within the family and beyond. As a threat to a family and its members, the representations of illness show the weaknesses of the familial and social structure and challenges individuals to preserve it; the stories show us not only the cures for illness but the cures for ailing families and much more beyond.

1. Becoming a Nun or Monk Because of Sickness at Youth

Compared with the variety of unpredictable factors that can affect a journey, family is represented as steady, familiar, and safe. However, this stability is disrupted when a family member is attacked by sickness. In many cases, his/her identity has to be redefined. In late imperial fictional medical narrative, "becoming a nun or monk because of sickness at youth" 自幼多病，舍入空門 is a common expression. For example, in Chapter 18 of *Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢, when Li Zhixiao's wife introduces Miaoyu 妙玉, she mentions how Miaoyu became a nun because of her sickness:

> There is another girl who entered holy orders without shaving her head. She comes from a Suzhou family of scholars and officials. She frequently got ill as a child, and although they bought many substitute novices for her it was no use—her health did not improve until she joined the Buddhist order herself. That is how she became a nun.[92]

[92] Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), Vol 1, 469.

外又有一個帶发修行的，本是蘇州人氏，祖上也是讀書仕宦之家，因自幼多病，買了許多替身，皆不中用，到底這姑娘親自入了空門，方才好了，所以帶发修行。

Miaoyu, originally the cherished daughter of a well-educated family, was dramatically transformed into a nun because it seemed the only way to cure her sickness. Besides, both of her parents had passed away before she was invited into the Jia household on the pretext of admiring her fame. So her entrance into the Buddhist order and the Jia household imply that she has completely lost her own family identity. In other words, she is isolated from her hometown and secular life. It seems that she is fully aware of her situation, which is signified in her pseudonym, "the one outside the threshold" (*jian wairen* 檻外人). The image of "threshold" indicates separation, and a clear line between religious and secular worlds. The new identity is seemingly internalized by Miaoyu, or she uses this pseudonym as a sign of her rejection of mundane affairs. In the meantime, she still keeps her hair, which implies it may be hard for her to be completely cut off from the world inside the threshold. This conflict is the starting point of her tragic destiny.

It is worth noting that the expression "becoming a nun or monk because of sickness at youth" in vernacular fiction often implies that these kinds of patients do not live in reclusion of their own will. A common case is that their parents send these patients to Buddhist temple because it is considered to be the only way to cure their sickness. After they join the religious world, the fiction usually pays special attention to their desire for secular life, and especially, love. In *Hongloumeng*, the author describes Miaoyu's subtle attitude toward Baoyu several times. For example, she considers the cup used by Granny Liu too dirty to keep, but when Baoyu comes to drink tea with her, she offers him a green jade beaker that she normally drinks from herself (chapter 41). She does not observe anyone's birthday, but deliberately drops a pink card for Baoyu's (chapter 63). However, she does not dare to express her feelings because of the restrictions of her Buddhist order. Instead, she struggles with her desire and strives to suppress it. After drinking tea with Baoyu, she emphasizes that she treated him only because of Baochai and

Daiyu's coming. "If you'd come alone, I wouldn't have offered you tea." Considering the special beaker which she provided to Baoyu, this statement makes it sounds as if she is concealing her intentions.

Compared with other vernacular fictional works involving a nun's love story, Miaoyu's attitude seems too ambiguous and indirect, indicating the double constraints on her desire, both from religious order and from herself. However, once the desire exists, it means that she has not realized the empty nature of reality according to Buddhist norms. The difficulty of eliminating desire shows the danger that it will cause disaster. In chapter 87, the author describes Miaoyu's blushes several times when she meets with Baoyu: "Miaoyu flushed but said nothing, lowering her head to keep her eyes on the board"; "Miaoyu glanced up at him, then lowered her head again, blushing furiously"[93]; "Her heart misgave her and her cheeks burned—she knew she must be red in the face too."[94] These manifestations indicate it is difficult to hide her emotion when facing Baoyu. Her internal struggle finally leads to a severe sickness. The novel depicts her nighttime illusions vividly:

> Her fancy, now running as wild as galloping horses, made her imagine that the couch was rocking and she was no longer in the nunnery. Many young lordlings had come to ask for her hand and, against her wishes, go-betweens were tugging and pushing her into a carriage. Then brigands kidnapped her and threatened her with swords and clubs, so that she screamed for help.[95]
>
> 怎奈神不守舍，一時如萬馬奔馳，覺得禪床便恍蕩起來，身子已不在庵中。便有許多王孫公子，要來娶他；又有些媒婆扯扯拽拽扶他上車，自己不肯去。一回兒，又有盜賊劫他，持刀執棍的逼勒，只得哭喊求救。

Miaoyu's self-suppression and her dangerous dream form a sharp contrast. The transgressive potential of her desire is transformed into concrete images of young lordlings, go-betweens, and even brigands, all of whom force her to leave the Buddhist order.

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[93] Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), Vol. 5, 2667.
[94] Ibid., 2669.
[95] Ibid., 2673.

After entering the Buddhist order, Miaoyu's delicate health has not been mentioned in the novel, indicating that her sickness is healed physically. However, she falls ill again psychologically here because of her unsatisfied desire. According to the doctor's diagnosis, the sickness came on "because evil thoughts crossed her mind and kindled a hot humor."[96] Her illusion is called "evil thoughts," implying the destructive potential of desire. A telltale sign of the failure to contain it is the crimson shown in Miaoyu's face after waking. In *Hongloumeng*, "redness" on a girl's face and "hotness" usually expose the difficulty she is experiencing as she tried to contain her desire. For example, when Daiyu writes three poems on the handkerchiefs given by Baoyu, poems that expressed their love, her entire body is afire and her face burning. Through the mirror, she sees that her flushed cheeks were redder than peach blossoms, but fails to realize that this is the first symptom of consumption (Chapter 34). Both Miaoyu's and Daiyu's redness and hotness represent their romantic desire, which is considered the origin of their sickness. If we compare the childhoods of Daiyu and Miaoyu, a striking similarity emerges: Daiyu also fell ill frequently starting in her early childhood. When she was three years old, a scabby monk wanted to take her away to be a nun, but her parents refused because they could not bear to part with her. So the monk predicted that her sickness would never be healed. "The only other remedy is to keep her from hearing weeping and from seeing any relatives apart from her father and mother."[97] The one "relative" she should especially be kept away from is Baoyu. So this prescription means she should be cut off from any secular affairs, especially desire. However, she entered into the Jia household and fell in love with Baoyu, and her failure to marry him led directly to her death. In this sense, Daiyu can be seen as Miaoyu's counterpart in secular life. Neither becoming a nun nor staying at home is of avail in curing Miaoyu's and Daiyu's sickness as long as their desire of love cannot be fulfilled. Thus their tragic outcome is inevitable. As

[96] Ibid., 2675.
[97] Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), Vol 1, 67.

shown in her dream, Miaoyu is kidnapped by a robber, meaning that she was in the end unable to preserve chastity in her religious order and had to return to lay life.

In fictional medical narrative, religious vows cannot effect a radical cure of a sickness in most cases. Marked suspicion of this approach to therapy appears in the thirty-fourth story of *Slapping the Table in Amazement II* by Ling Mengchu, which offers a detailed account of the process by which Lady Yang becomes a nun. Because she is usually sick, her mother is afraid that she will die young. When she is twelve, an old nun from Cuifu temple visits her home and persuades her mother to send her to the temple. She tells her that Lady Yang will recover only when she leaves her family, and her health will deteriorate if she is betrothed. So the best way to avoid disaster is to become a nun. Lady Yang's mother is convinced and has to agree. After Lady Yang becomes a nun, her mother feels her daughter's health is improved because she cannot observe her daughter's health every day. Sometimes the daughter even conceals her sickness to ease her mother's worries. The narrative of this process provides an alternative explanation of how the daughter's sickness seems to be cured, expressing suspicions about becoming a nun to heal sickness. In the meantime, the narrator also reveals the old nun's real motivation to induce Lady Yang into her temple: She usually lures in young men with the aid of several seductive disciples. Because Lady Yang is extremely beautiful, the old nun hopes that Lady Yang will help her in the future. The temple becomes a cover for an immoral life.

An interesting phenomenon in late imperial vernacular fiction is the tendency of many authors to dwell on the licentiousness of nuns and monks. Those narratives convey the concept that when a person's legitimate desire is suppressed, he/she may seek every chance of sexual transgression, and even have excessive sex, reflecting the tension between an overwhelming desire and an oppressive environment. Considering this background, sending a patient to a temple is a particularly ironic choice of treatment. Obviously, Lady Yang's mother is cheated by the old nun. Soon afterwards the narrator directly warns parents not to force their sick children to

join Buddhist orders, because they may be simultaneously driven and consumed by their desires and thus pollute the Buddhist temple. In Lady Yang's story, the outcome of those licentious nuns is death in prison after their scandal is revealed, an ending that can be considered retribution for an excess of sex.

Lady Yang also has her desire for love. Nevertheless, she tries to keep a distance from those licentious nuns after realizing the real situation in the temple. When Wen Rensheng, a handsome scholar, passes by the temple, Yang falls in love with him. They pledge to marry secretly. Afterwards Yang elopes with Wen to his aunt's home, where she lets her hair grow long. They eventually formally get married after Wen succeeds in the civil service examinations. The story provides a detailed account of how Yang loses and reestablishes her family identity. It implies that it is nearly impossible to get rid of private desire, but one should control it appropriately and with great care. In other words, a person has his/her right to seek fulfillment of desire, but excessive desire often leads to disaster.

In vernacular stories about a male becoming a monk because of sickness, desire also plays an important role in driving the patient to leave the Buddhist order. It is similar to female patients in that they are not able to establish a self-identification in the temple. In the first story of *Jingwuzhong* 警寤鈡,[98] Shi Jianjie 石堅節 is sent to a temple by his brother and sister-in-law after their parents' death on the pretext of his frequent illnesses. But the truth is that his brother is conspiring with his sister-in-law to monopolize their parents' legacy. Belief in "becoming a monk because of sickness" completely loses its validity and instead becomes a narrative strategy to force the patient to abandon his original family identity. Shi Jianjie cannot endure the lonesomeness of the temple and resumes secular life. He marries a girl and joins her family, signaling that he has regained a new family identity. Both his and Lady Yang's life trajectories

[98] *Jingwuzhong* 警寤鈡, Zhongguo gudai zhenxiben xiaoshuo 中國古代珍稀本小說 (Liaoning: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1994), Vol.6.

indicate a cycle of family, temple, and return to family. The longing for secular life always motivates these characters to reestablish a family identity.

If a monk who joins Buddhist order because of sickness has an excessive desire which is hard to fulfill, the outcome is destructive. In the fifth story of *Kuatianhong* 跨天虹, Liu Zhangtai falls in love with Chunniang and becomes lovesick.[99] His father does not know the reason for his sickness and makes a vow to the god that he will send his son to a temple if he can be healed. After Liu Zhuangtai recovers, he has to become a monk in order to keep his father's promise. By this time Chunniang has already married another man, and Liu carries on a clandestine love affair with her and murders her husband. After a period of time, Liu wants to marry another girl and quarrels with Chunniang. They become enemies. Liu's crime is eventually revealed. He is punished, ostensibly because of his murder but on a deeper level as retribution for his excessive desire. Another example of destruction through desire is the twelfth story of *Zuixingshi* 醉醒石,[100] in which the main character also has an insatiable desire, in this case for political power. He becomes a monk because he frequently suffers from illness at youth. After meeting a fortuneteller who predicts that he will be an emperor, desire of imperial power burns within him. He decides to organize a rebellion. At last he is captured by the court and put to death. In these two stories, the protagonists lose their family identity because of sickness, and adultery or rebellion means that they are not able to regain a new identity in secular life. Thus a destructive result is inevitable.

To sum up, becoming a nun or monk because of sickness in youth indicates that the patient does not abandon family identity of his or her own accord. In vernacular fiction, desire for love or secular life usually drives the patient to leave the temple and try to reestablish a new identity. Thus joining a religious order because of sickness often portends the soul's treachery instead of

[99] *Kuatianhong* 跨天虹, Mingqing xijian xiaoshuo congkan 明清稀見小說叢刊(Shandong: Qilu shushe, 1996).
[100] *Zuixingshi* 醉醒石(Henan: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985).

an embracing of religion. When patients succeed in retrieving a family identity, they enjoy secular life and put behind them the unfortunate effects of sickness in youth. But if they fall into excessive indulgence, it usually brings about great destruction of life. So their sickness in youth and loss of family identity can be seen as the starting point of the tragic outcome.

2. Threat and Damage to Marriage

A great many fictional medical narratives focus on marital relations, since marriage is a fundamental and key factor in the constitution of traditional Chinese family ethics. According to *Zhouyi* 周易, "There are heaven and earth first, and then all things of creation come into existence. There are all things of creation first and then there are men and women. There are men and women first and then there are husbands and wives. There are husbands and wives first and then there are fathers and sons. There are fathers and sons first and then there are kings and subjects. There are kings and subjects first and then there are distinctions between superiors and subordinates. There are superiors and subordinates first and then proprieties and righteousness can be described and effectively implemented." Thus, marriage between men and women gives expression to basic principles of heaven and earth. It is the foundation for human relations, familial systems, and feudal rituals. Three main goals of marriage are to offer sacrifices to ancestors, to secure a helpmate, and to produce offspring.[101] The representation of marriage in late imperial fictional narratives is closely related to these goals. If one partner in the couple falls ill, especially through severe and physically unpleasant diseases, these goals are difficult to realize. Thus, the patient's marriage is often threatened or damaged.

[101] Chen Peng 陳鵬, *Zhongguo hunyin shigao* 中國婚姻史稿 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 16.

Beginning with *Dadai liji* 大戴禮記 in the Former Han Dynasty, "severe repulsive disease" (*eji* 惡疾) is listed as one of seven situations when the husband can divorce the wife, "for not submitting to parents, divorce; not bearing a son, divorce; for licentiousness, divorce; for jealousy, divorce; for severe repulsive disease, divorce; for garrulousness, divorce; for stealing, divorce."[102] It also explains why severe illness can become a legal excuse to abandon a wife, "because a wife with severe disease is not able to sacrifice to ancestors."[103] *E* 惡 means foul and nauseating. *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 defines *li* 癘 as "repulsive disease" (eji 惡疾) which includes leprosy and plague. According to the *Gongyang zhuan* 春秋公羊傳, *eji* include muteness, deafness, blindness, leprosy, baldness, lameness, and hunchback. In this way, *eji* also covers many kinds of physical disability besides leprosy.

When they mention *eji*, most medical narratives in late imperial vernacular fiction focus on leprosy, for physical disability does not have the same terrible symptoms and contagiousness. Leprosy badly disfigures the patient's appearance and is also easily transmitted to other persons. Moreover, it was difficult to cure at the time. According to *Suwen* 素問, leprosy is caused by invasion of wind-cold into the channels. "In leprosy, interaction of wind with *rongqi* (nutrient qi) produces heat, making the *qi* unclear and eventually causing damage to the bridge of the nose, distorted countenance, and ulceration." *Zhubing yuanhoulun* 諸病源候論 explains the cause of leprosy as a touch of evil wind or violation of taboo. The patient suffers severely from it. Chen Yan described the horrid appearance of the patient with leprosy in *Sanyin jiyi bingzheng fanglun* 三因極一病證方論: "Leprosy brings about great sores and torments. The sores run with pus. Patients' eyebrows and beard fall off, and they even lose fingers and toes. They feel great pain and itching. Their facial color seems dry and haggard. Their noses become flat and their eyes

[102] Wang Pinzhen, *Dadai liji jiegu* 大戴禮記解詁 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1983), 255.
[103] Ibid.

putrid. Their teeth are gnawed and lips open. There is no disease more severe than this. Among a hundred persons who suffer it there is not one who can survive." The patient's appearance is terrible enough to frighten his or her family members. In late imperial fictional medical narratives, the theme of leprosy's damage to marriages is common. For example, the tenth story of *Silent Operas* by Li Yu tells how Han Yiqing's wife's leprosy causes a deadly threat to their marriage.

> Miss Yang was originally an extremely beautiful girl when she married. Unfortunately, she suddenly got leprosy at the age of twenty. Her face, which had been like a flower or jade, immediately swelled up. A delightful lady became a sordid leper. Her husband was afraid to see her and therefore took a concubine, Miss Chen.[104]
>
> 楊氏嫁來時節，原是個絕標致的女子。只因到二十歲外，忽地染了瘋疾，如花似玉的面龐，忽然臃腫，一個美貌佳人，變做瘋皮癩子。丈夫看見，竟要害怕起來。只得另娶了一房，就是陳氏。

Although Han Yiqing does not divorce his wife, their marriage has a mere nominal existence. He is no longer close to her because of her dreadful symptoms, and promptly takes a concubine. Moreover, because there is every likelihood that Miss Yang cannot be cured, she is considered a dying person and loses her status. Miss Chen's family agrees to the marriage because they believe Yang will die in a short time so that Chen will be able to replace her.

It is significant that the sickness causes more than merely physical suffering for Miss Yang. More importantly, it completely changes her experience of her marriage and life. As a hopeless patient, she loses her husband's love and her expectations for the future. Thus, she sincerely treats Chen as her substitute, informing her that Han is a suspicious and stingy husband. He is easily angered when his wife takes some money and goods to her parents' home or speaks with her male cousin. Yang provides suggestions to Chen to avoid incensing Han. These words imply that Yang's sickness cuts off her experience of time: in her imagination, the future belongs to Han and Chen, but not to her. And so, she attempts to pass her self-expectation to Chen. But

[104] Li Yu 李漁, *Wushengxi* 無聲戲 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006), 166.

when her condition surprisingly takes a favorable turn, meaning that her life can continue, Chen poisons her food and accidentally cures her. Afterwards Chen designs a series of intrigues using the information Yang has given her about Han's suspicions and makes Han believe that Yangshi is stealing his goods and committing adultery with her male cousin. Thus, Han almost divorces Yang. In the story, Yang's marriage is hit by two crises, one caused by sickness and another by Chen's plotting. The plot is hatched based on Yang's last words when she was sick. The consequences of the two crises are the same: Han becomes estranged from his wife.

In this story, the leper wife's appearance is a key factor when her marriage suffers substantial damage from sickness. Once her face is disfigured by leprosy, Han is afraid to see her and takes a concubine. He even promises Chen that he will love her more than his wife even if Yang can recover by some chance. After Yang is unexpectedly cured, "Han finds his wife resumes her beauty, and naturally loves her as before."[105] "Naturally" (*ziran* 自然) indicates that Han changes his attitude towards his wife as a result of her beauty. At the end of the story, after Chen is infected by a mangy pig, "her once fine and milky skin became leathery and scaly. Han could not help crying out when he touched her."[106] His love of Chen changes based on her appearance as well. Worth noting is that Chen's retribution for her plot against Yang starts with her illness and continues with the loss of her husband's love. She repeats the steps of Yang's suffering. If this is a fitting punishment of her behavior, there is no doubt that Han should be partly responsible for this outcome, since the two crises in his marriage are to some degree due to his attitude toward his wife, his suspicion, and his stinginess. However, he can still have no qualms of conscience to appreciate Yang's beauty and abandon the disfigured Chen. He seems innocent in the author's design, suggesting that the way a sickness affects the patient's marriage is always mediated through gender and power dynamics.

[105] Ibid., 168.
[106] Ibid.

By contrast, when the patient with *eji* is a male, although his wife's parents sometimes hope they will divorce, it is common for the wife to insist on staying with the patient. An early story in Liu Xiang's 劉向 *Lienüzhuan* 烈女傳, from the Han Dynasty, records how a wife persists with her marriage after her husband contracts a repulsive illness.

> After she married a man of Cai, it was found that the husband had a repulsive illness. Her mother was going to arrange for her to remarry, but the lady said, "My husband's misfortune is my misfortune too. How could I leave him? The way of marriage for the woman is that once she is married, she does not break the marriage bond until death. My mind will not be changed even though he has the bad fortune to suffer from a repulsive illness." [107]
>
> 既嫁於蔡，而夫有惡疾。其母將改嫁之，女曰："夫之不幸，乃妾之不幸也，奈何去之？適人之道，壹與之醮，終身不改。不幸遇惡疾，不改其意。"

In this anecdote, the woman refuses to divorce the sick husband. Her reason is that a woman should serve only one man all her life even if the man falls ill or dies. In late imperial China, it was widely believed that the marriage relationship was formally established at the time of engagement. Thus, the principle that a woman should serve only one man was also applied to unmarried couples. In fictional medical narrative, after a man becomes ill, his fiancée often refuses to break off the engagement. That is, when a male patient suffers a repulsive illness, the threat of his marriage is completely different from the female patient's case: suggestions to divorce or break off the engagement often come from his wife's family or from the patient himself, while his spouse or fiancée attempts to maintain the marriage relationship. For instance, in the third story of *Badongtian* 八洞天, Mo Hao 莫豪 is engaged to Chao Qixiang 晁七襄 because they admire each other's literary talent. When Mo prepares for the marriage ceremony, his old oculopathy recurs, and he eventually loses his sight. Being afraid to ruin his fiancée's future, Mo advises her to break off their engagement. When Chao Qixiang's mother discusses the matter with her daughter, Chao refuses and marries Mo before long. At last Mo dreams of a

[107] Liu Xiang 劉向, *Gujin lienüzhuan pinglin* 古今烈女傳評林 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994), 124.

god who changes his eyes, and then he regains his sight. In this story, before being betrothed, Chao and Mo send their poems to each other through Chao's cousin. Being full of admiration of Chao's talent, Mo asks a matchmaker to go to Chao's house to make an offer of marriage. Chao thinks highly of Mo's poems and thus accepts his marriage proposal. The prologue calls attention to the talented man (*caizi* 才子) and talented woman (*cainü* 才女), emphasizing their love and marriage relationship are built based on their talents. "They loved each other just as bosom friends. Later the god showed himself and healed the sickness."[108] Their love eventually overcomes the disaster.

The ninth story in *Stories to Awaken the World* is another representative example of the story-type in which the male patient's wife refuses to divorce. In contrast with Chao Qixiang and Mo Hao, the unmarried couple in this story does not have any communication before their engagement by their parents at the age of nine. Duoshou 多壽 contracts leprosy at fifteen. "The handsome boy now looked like a toad. His skin was like that of an old turtle. His scratching fingers smelled of pus, and his sordid body gave off a foul stench."[109] According to *Zhubing yuanhoulun* 諸病源候論, the leper usually feels itchiness all over his body. The sickness becomes a disaster after ten years. Therefore, it should be healed as soon as possible. Unfortunately, Duoshou's condition does not improve for ten years. His fiancée Duofu's 多福 mother learns about Duoshou's repulsive illness and grumbles tearfully at home to her husband, complaining that the leper will ruin her daughter's life. Duoshou's father hears about Duofu's mother lashing out at the matchmaker and at her husband. He suggests returning the horoscope card to Duofu's family so her parents can select another son-in-law. However, Duofu declines to return the betrothal gifts, saying, "Have you ever seen any good woman taking betrothal gifts

[108] Biliange zhuren 筆煉閣主人, *Badongtian* 八洞天 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1985), 51.
[109] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Awaken the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 189.

from two families? Wealth, poverty, misery or happiness, are all predestined. I am a daughter-in-law of the Chen family while alive and will be a ghost of the Chen family after I die."[110] Duofu's strong reaction to the broken engagement cannot be explained by her love for Duoshou, given that she does not know Duoshou at all. She insists on the principle that a woman should be engaged to and marry only one man to preserve her chastity. After Duoshou sends her a poem expressing his wish to break the betrothal, she even attempts to commit suicide. She persists in marrying the patient and taking care of him. It seems that Duoshou's sickness is a challenge set by heaven to test her determination.

It is noteworthy that this story represents in detail the patient Duoshou's subjective experience, which constitutes the central plot of the medical narrative. Compared to the earlier classical tale from which this vernacular story was adapted, this story describes how Duoshou's life experience is affected by his illness. When he was a healthy person, he was extremely handsome and graceful. When Duofu's father first meets him, he is deeply impressed by his poise, his articulateness, his clear voice, and his correct observance of etiquette, so he agrees to engage his daughter to Duoshou. The story paints him as a model student, implying that he studies hard even through the Double Ninth Festival. If he had not contracted leprosy, he would be sure to pass the imperial examination and become a *jinshi*. However, the sickness not only disfigured his appearance, but also affected his psychology and his attitude towards life. Throughout his struggle with leprosy, Duoshou becomes fragile and desperate. His familiar life is destroyed, and there is little hope for his future. As he feels neither dead nor alive and is deeply depressed, he repeatedly expresses his despair. After receiving ineffective treatments for several years, he determines to untie the marriage bond because "no medicine has worked so far. It looks like I'll never get well. Let's not ruin their daughter's chances."[111] If Duofu had not

[110] Ibid., 193.
[111] Ibid., 194.

insisted on the engagement, he would certainly have given up his hope for married life. After marrying Duofu, he sleeps apart from his wife at night, thinking, "I am going to die any day now. The marriage won't last long. Why soil a virgin?"[112] That is, he considers himself a dying man always tortured by his anxiety over death and with no hopes for a long marriage life. After four years, he hears that a blind fortune teller has come to his town, and he goes to him to ask when he is going to die. To visit a fortune teller indicates that he feels it is difficult to fathom destiny after ten years of torment from leprosy. Unfortunately, the fortune teller tells him that his last ten-year period from fourteen to twenty-three was particularly unfortunate, but the next period from twenty-four to thirty-three will be even worse. Duoshou loses his last faint hope due to this judgment, and he attempts to commit suicide after going back home. On the one hand, he thinks his illness is desperate, and he is facing death at all times. On the other hand, as a severely sick husband, he feels guilty that his wife has cared for him for three years, since he has no way to reward her. He buys arsenic and takes it with wine, for he considers it the best way to free himself and his wife from the difficult life. Unexpectedly, consuming poison heals Duoshou's leprosy.

The miracle of Duoshou's recovery conveys the concept of predestination and the power of virtue. When Duofu's father goes to a temple of the city god for a divination, he draws a lot with the following verse: "Good fortune has not yet come; ill luck has dogged you now for years. The clouds will disperse to reveal the sun. Fortune and long life will unite by heaven's will."[113] Because *duofu* 多福 means fortune and *duoshou* 多壽 means long life in Chinese, this lot demonstrates their marriage is predestined by heaven. Therefore, although the fortune teller's words lead Duoshou to drink poison, the arsenic miraculously heals his leprosy.

> The poison in the wine had the quite unexpected effect of fighting poison with poison, as prescribed in medical books. Foul blood spurted out of the cracks in his skin. With the

[112] Ibid., 200.
[113] Ibid., 197.

detoxification of his body, the lesions on his skin gradually healed. When he was fully recuperated, all the scabs had fallen off and he was his old smooth-skinned self again.[114]

今日服了毒酒，不意中，正合了“以毒攻毒”這句醫書，皮膚內進出了許多惡血，毒氣泄盡，連癩瘡漸漸好了。比及將息平安，瘡痂脫盡，依舊頭光面滑，肌細膚榮。

The outcome echoes the lot which Duofu's father obtains in the temple. Moreover, Duoshou resumes his studies after recovery and becomes a *jinshi* at the age of thirty-four. The fortune teller predicted that he would die before this age. “Indeed, the mysteries of fate are not meant to be understood by ordinary people.” The only thing that can be confirmed is that it is Duofu and Duoshou's dedication to each other that turns death into life. It is significant that Duofu believes her husband's illness is her fate, and all the sufferings they face are predestined. She decides to submit to fate and perform her duty to serve her husband. That is, heaven sets the test of sickness, binds them together, and arranges for a happy ending. Although ordinary people cannot fathom their destiny, they are able to receive their reward after suffering as long as they conform to heaven's will and fulfill their obligations.

As mentioned above, “severe repulsive sickness” (*eji*) was a legal excuse used by men to divorce wives in late imperial China. In fictional medical narratives, however, sicknesses that cause damage to a marriage are not limited to *eji*. A common disease may also produce an unfortunate outcome, i.e., the destruction of a marriage. The thirty-third story of *Xingshiyan* 型世言 is a typical example. The story tells how an affectionate couple, Ruan Sheng 阮勝 and his wife Laoshi 勞氏, are separated because of sickness. Ruan Sheng is an industrious but cowardly farmer. Earnings from the farm are often not enough to support his mother, Wenshi 溫氏. Laoshi has exceptional skill at spinning cotton and weaving cloth. She also helps Ruan provide for his mother. Although leading a life of poverty, they do not complain to each other. Unfortunately, Ruan's mother, Wenshi falls ill during the busy farming season. Laoshi spends a great deal of

[114] Ibid., 203.

time taking care of her mother-in-law, thus neglecting her spinning and weaving. Moreover, Ruan is excessively worried about his mother's sickness as he toils at the farming work and after a while contracts an illness as well. As Laoshi does not have enough money to hire other farmers to till their land, a disastrous autumn harvest is expected. Although Ruan Sheng and Wenshi do not contract *eji* or fatal illness, their family loses its labor force, their land is left uncultivated, and they are later short of food and clothes. The story describes how Ruan's body becomes extremely emaciated under this circumstance: he is too weak to stand in wind and has to be on crutch at times. What's more, when several hoodlums urge him to sell his wife, he is almost persuaded.

> Ruan Sheng thought Bao Lei's idea was somehow reasonable. He told Laoshi: "Thanks to you, my mother and I survive. However, dying from sickness is the same as starving. It would be better if you marry another man. You will have enough food. Your betrothal presents can support my mother and me for at least half a year. We don't want to see this happen, but we have no choice." Laoshi said, "I would rather work hard to support you. Even if we three would die together, I don't want to remarry." After several days, lacking a livelihood, they only had two meals within two days. Wenshi told Laoshi: "My daughter-in-law, we'll die in several days if there is nothing to eat. You'd better follow your husband's advice to save us." Hearing Wenshi's words, Laoshi was silent with tears. Ruan Sheng asked a go-between to find a new husband for Laoshi.[115]
>
> 阮勝倒也想鮑雷說話有理，對著勞氏道："我娘兒兩個，虧你拾得這性命，但病死與餓殺總只一般，不若你另嫁一個，一來你得吃碗飽飯，我母子僅可支持半年，這也是不願見的事，也是無極奈何。"勞氏道："寧可我做生活供養你們，要死三個死，嫁是不嫁的。"過了兩日，實沒來路，兩日不上吃兩頓。只見溫氏道："媳婦，我想，我們病人再餓了兩日畢竟死了，不若你依了丈夫，救全我們兩個吧。"勞氏聽了，含淚不語。阮勝也就著媒婆尋人家。

At the outset, Ruan Sheng and Laoshi are affectionate towards each other. However, the disorder of Ruan and his mother's bodies leads to a decline in their living conditions, thus changing their understanding of the present situation. It is believed that they have only two choices: selling Laoshi or death. Therefore, Ruan Sheng's decision to divorce is inevitable. On the night before Laoshi's leaving, Ruan and his wife pour out their hearts to each other. Ruan tells Laoshi to

[115] Lu Renlong 陸人龍, *Xingshiyan* 型世言 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), 465.

serve her new husband well. Laoshi asks Ruan to take care of himself. "One said, 'I have to divorce. Don't accuse me of being a fickle husband.' One said, 'I understand that you have no choice. I hope you will live well.' They did not close their eyes at night."[116] A serious conflict between their deep affections and the breaking of their marriage is produced, which sets the frame for a major disaster. After Laoshi remarries, seven hoodlums who conspire together to plunder Laoshi's betrothal gifts sneak into Ruan's home and kill Ruan Sheng and his mother. On the third day, as Laoshi is worried about Ruan's family, her new husband, Yu Ying visits Ruan and is framed for murder by those hoodlums. Although the official is upright and honest, he still puts Yu Ying in prison, reasoning that when Yu entered Ruan's house through a back door he showed a criminal intent. In fact, Yu goes through the back door because he thinks the two patients are not able to open the front door for him.

In the final analysis the tragic events happen because of Ruan's and his mother's sickness. Ruan Sheng has to sell his wife to save his mother and himself, but instead of prolonging his life it accelerates his death. Yu Ying is innocent, but is framed for murder. At the end of the story, the murderers are killed by lightning and justice is manifested by a supernatural power. This outcome demonstrates that human beings' activities are ineffective in exonerating Yu from the suspicion of murder. Although the real murderers are killed by the heaven, Ruan and his mother lose their lives after all. In this sense, the tragedy of Ruan's family may force readers to question the patient's decision to divorce.

Aside from the extant marital relationship which can be damaged by sickness, the selection of spouse can also be affected by it. In *Hongloumeng*, Lin Daiyu's 林黛玉 sickness is a representative example. In the third chapter, Daiyu is found to have delicate health. Observing how frail she seems, the people in the Jia family ask her what medicine or treatment she has been receiving. She explains her sickness as below:

[116] Ibid., 467.

> I've been taking medicine ever since I was weaned. Many well-known doctors have examined me, but none of their prescriptions was any use. The year I was three, I remember being told, a scabby monk came to our house and wanted to take me away to be a nun. My parents wouldn't hear of it. The monk said, "If you can't bear to part with her she'll probably never get well. The only other remedy is to keep her from hearing weeping and from seeing any relatives apart from her father and mother. That's her only hope of having a quiet life." No one paid any attention, of course, to such crazy talk. Now I'm still taking ginseng pills.[117]
>
> 我自來是如此，從會吃飲食起便吃藥，到今日未斷，請了多少名醫修方配藥，皆不見效。那一年我三歲時，聽得說來了一個癩頭和尚，說要化我去出家，我父母固是不從。他又說："既舍不得他，只怕他的病一生也不能好的了。若要好時，除非從此以後總不許見哭聲；除父母之外，凡有外姓親友之人，一概不見，方可平安了此一世。"

This introduction conveys a strong feeling of predestination. Daiyu's sickness cannot be healed by any medication in the mundane world. Since her parents refuse to send her to a Buddhist temple, she has to stay in the secular order with her sick body. Moreover, she enters the Jia Mansion and meets other relatives, including Baoyu, which was forbidden by the monk. Thus, her tragic destiny is inevitable. In *Hongloumeng*, although Daiyu and Baoyu 寶玉 deeply love each other, Daiyu's unhealthy condition remains the chief obstacle to their marriage. In Chapter 32, Daiyu overhears a conversation between Baoyu and his cousin, Xiangyun, in which Baoyu expresses how he cherishes his close relationship with Daiyu. She feels surprised and delighted but also distressed and grieved. It is worth noting that all sorts of feelings well up in her mind as she worries about her physical condition.

> She had recently been suffering from dizzy spells which the doctor had warned might end in consumption, as she was so weak and frail. Dear as she and Baoyu were to each other, she might not have long to live. And what use was their affinity if she were fated to die?[118]
>
> 況近日每覺神思恍惚，病已漸成，醫者更雲氣弱血虧，恐致勞怯之癥。你我雖為知己，但恐自不能久待。你縱為我知己，奈我薄命何！

Although she is also grieved that her parents had died early and that there is thus no one to propose the match for her, it does not necessarily mean it is impossible to be betrothed to Baoyu.

[117] Cao Xueqin, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), Vol 1, 67.
[118] Cao Xueqin, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), Vol 2, 893.

Nevertheless, the threat from her consumption is fatal. In Chinese narratives, the main functions of marriage are to offer sacrifices to ancestors, receive a helpmate and reproduce offspring. As a chronic patient, it is problematic if Daiyu is not able to assume those responsibilities. For example, spinning and weaving were regarded as obligations of a virtuous wife in ancient China. However, in Chapter 32, according to Xiren 襲人, Daiyu rarely does needlework because of her delicate health. "Even as it is, the old lady's afraid of her overtiring herself and the doctor has prescribed her a good rest. Who'd dream of troubling her with needlework? Last year it took her a whole year to finish one scented pouch. And this year I've not yet seen needle or thread in her hands."[119] By contrast, in Chapter 8, Baochai 寶釵 has recently recovered from an illness, and when Baoyu visits her, she finds her sewing. Chapter 45 shows that she sews every night by lamplight, not going to bed until the third watch. Health and devotion to needlework draw a clear distinction between Baochai and Daiyu.

Nonetheless, a rich official family such as the Jia Mansion has special servants who are responsible for needlework. Thus, their female family members do not have to spin and weave in person. Although it may not be a large issue if Daiyu's illness interferes with needlework, as a qualified daughter-in-law, showing filial respect for elders and managing family affairs are significant. Chapter 45 says that every day Baochai "paid two courtesy calls on the Lady Dowager and Lady Wang, and could not but keep them company for a while if they seemed so inclined."[120] By contrast, "Daiyu, who suffered from a bad cough around every spring and autumn solstice, had overtaxed her strength this year by going out more than usual, because of the Lady Dowager's good spirits, and had recently started coughing again worse than ever. She therefore stayed in her own rooms to rest."[121] When ill, it is evident that Daiyu is not able to pay

[119] Ibid., 889.
[120] Cao Xueqin, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), Vol 3, 1273.
[121] Ibid., 1275.

courtesy visits to Lady Dowager and Lady Wang, Baoyu's grandmother and mother. Moreover, it is mentioned that she even has a "lack of hospitality and courtesy."[122] Although all the characters understand how ill and hypersensitive she is and make allowances for her, Daiyu does not appear as considerate as Baochai in terms of filial piety due to her illness. It is easy to imagine that the elders would have a better impression of Baochai than of Daiyu.

As for the ability to manage family affairs, Daiyu is easily ignored because of her bodily condition. In Chapter 55, after Wang Xifeng 王熙鳳 has a miscarriage, she discusses all the potential females who can help manage the Jia family with Ping'er 平兒. When mentioning Daiyu, Xifeng only uses one sentence to evaluate her, emphasizing her fragile health: "One is a lovely paper lantern which a puff of wind would blow out."[123] Daiyu is not regarded as capable of the responsibility of managing family affairs. When Xifeng must give up running the household, Lady Wang entrusts domestic affairs to Li Wan 李紈 and Tanchun 探春 and enlists Baochai's help as well. They decide to settle the family affairs every morning in the Council Hall and return to their own quarters about noon. In the meantime, the author tells us that Daiyu is coughing again and taking medicine day after day. Through this sharp contrast between Daiyu and Baochai, the elders' preference when selecting Baoyu's spouse is obvious. In Chapter 90, when discussing how to arrange Baoyu's marriage, his grandmother says, "She (Daiyu) is so delicate. I doubt whether she's long for this world. The most suitable choice is Baochai."[124] Baoyu's mother Lady Wang soon agrees with her. Although Baoyu and Daiyu love each other, they are not able to marry because Daiyu's illness prevents her from being a qualified wife of the son in the Jia family in the elders' eyes. Afterwards, Daiyu is desperate after knowing Baochai will become Baoyu's wife. She dies of illness on the night when Baoyu and Baochai get married.

[122] Ibid.
[123] Ibid., 1605.
[124] Cao Xueqin, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), Vol 5, 2739.

Therefore, the tragedy of Baoyu and Daiyu's love story reveals how sickness affects the selection of spouse. Traditionally, it is believed that women's virtue plays an important role in marriage. Through the text of *Hongloumeng*, however, it is found that a female's body condition does impede the realization of the goals of marriage, thus showing the tension between the responsibility of marriage and true love of human beings. In this sense it questions the family ethics and social order which may destroy affection.

3. Transformation of Family Power

An exemplary model of family responsibility in ancient China is that the male is in charge of affairs outside the family and the female is responsible for domestic affairs. To perform family rites and harmonize relationships, the female's role in managing family affairs and maintaining morality is a key factor. According to Dong Kai's *Zhouyi zhuanyi fulu* 周易傳義附錄, "the way of family relies on the female's rightness. If the female has moral rightness, the way of family is right…If the female has moral rightness, it is known that the male also has moral rightness."[125] Therefore, as long as the female who is responsible for the household performs her role properly, the order of family power works well.

In a traditional Chinese family, where many generations live together and share property, the patriarch's wife serves as the manager of the household. She is responsible for all the servants, cooking, needlework, finance, marriage and funeral ceremony, and social intercourse with female members of other families. Thus the patriarch's wife holds the power to manage family affairs. When she gets ill and has to find a replacement, the family power is transferred. In fictional medical narratives, the sickness that causes the transfer of power is a metaphor of chaos and disorder. In this sense the patient's sick body symbolizes the decline of a family, and in some specific situations, the political crisis in a country.

[125] Dong Kai 董楷, *Zhouyi zhuanyi fulu* 周易傳義附錄, Vol.10. Wenyuange sikuquanshuben 文淵閣四庫全書本.

In two novels that focus on family life, *Linlanxiang* and *Hongloumeng*, how a sickness causes power transformation and the breakdown of family order is fully represented. In Chapter 15 of *Linlanxiang* 林蘭香, Geng Lang 耿朗 has a wife, Yunping 雲屏, and four concubines in total, and after he gets married, his mother enlists Yunping and one of Geng's concubines, Mengqing 夢卿, to manage the household. Mengqing assists Yunping to decide the distribution of land revenue and establish domestic disciplines. They are talented and organized, and everything is arranged in perfect order. Unfortunately, in Chapter 31, Yunping contracts an illness and takes to her bed. A note of discord also creeps into Geng Lang's and Mengqing's relationship. So Geng Lang privately gives account books and keys to his fifth concubine, Caiyun 彩雲, when Mengqing is arranging how to collect rent of the land that year. Yunping feels it is unfair to Mengqing, so she invites Mengqing to discuss it.

> Yunping sat leaning on a pillow and said to Mengqing, "These troubles arise from my illness. It brings embarrassment to you." Mengqing said, "Since it is our household, among our five people, who cannot manage it? In addition, anyone can temporarily replace us. Why should I be embarrassed? Even after you recover, it would be well if you ask Caiyun to assist." Yunping gave her a knowing nod.[126]

> 雲屏倚枕而坐，因向夢卿道："緣我一時臥病，遂生出這些事體，教妹妹面上大不好看。"夢卿道："既是家事，五個人誰不當承管？況且暫替，人人都可，有甚不好看處？就是大娘病好，亦不妨教五娘幫助。"雲屏點頭會意。

Mengqing does not care that her power is taken. She is disappointed because of Geng Lang's behavior after Yunping gets ill. When hearing Caiyun is checking old accounts, she provides the checked and detailed old account books on her own initiative. However, Caiyun abuses her power and performs immoderately in meting out reward and punishments, and everyone complains about her. "Both internal and external household were suspicious of her."[127] Disorder in family affairs produces disastrous effects. As mentioned above, in family narratives, the female's moral rightness determines the male's. That Caiyun is not able to manage the

[126] *Linlanxiang* 林蘭香 (Liaoning: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1985), 241.
[127] Ibid.

household in a right way will have effects upon Geng Lang's virtue. In the next chapter, Geng Lang follows Caiyun's suggestion and parts ways with his beneficial friends. He stays at home and leads a loose life with Caiyun. He indulges in playing, singing, wine and feasting all through the night. At last he is confined to his bed with a serious cold due to excessive wine and sensual pleasures. Geng's sickness is superficially caused by wine, women, and coldness, but it is a metaphor for disorder in internal family and deterioration of human relations. The origin of this effect is Yunping's sickness and the transformation of family power. From Yunping's sickness to Geng Lang's sickness, what is demonstrated is how power relationships are reconstructed and how this reconstruction affects both domestic relations and relations with the wider world.

This metaphoric meaning of sickness and transformation of family power are expressed even more fully and clearly in *Hongloumeng* through Xifeng's health conditions. In Chapters 13 and 55, the novel describes how a woman who is in charge of the household contracts an illness and how it leads to the transformation of power relationships. In the Chapter 13, after Qin Keqing's 可卿 death, Youshi 尤氏 is ill in bed and unable to arrange anything. Because Youshi's husband Jia Zhen is afraid that the Jia family will be laughed at if any breach of etiquette occurs at a time when many noble families will be paying visits, he invites Xifeng to take charge of Keqing's funeral ceremony. At the time, Xifeng has just begun managing the Rong Mansion instead of Lady Wang. She is happy to display her administrative ability. "Although she ran the household competently, as she had never been entrusted with grand affairs like weddings or funerals, she was afraid others were not yet fully convinced of her efficiency, and she was longing for a chance like this."[128] The power transformation caused by Youshi's sickness provides Xifeng an opportunity to organize the household. She recognizes the defects of customs in the Ning Mansion. She formulates a set of strict rules to rectify these drawbacks. For

[128] Cao Xueqin, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), Vol 1, 348–349.

instance, she specifies every servant's duties and clearly informs them of the punishments if they make mistakes. These rules bring an end to the disorder, negligence, and pilfering of the past. As Keqing's funeral ceremony approaches, all the kinds of issues keep her too busy to eat or have a moment's rest. Xifeng enjoys her busy and proud career and is in high spirits. "She worked so hard day and night and handled everything so well that not one of the household, high or low, but was impressed."[129] The narrative dwells on Xifeng's talent and ambition. It is significant that Youshi's sickness causes her absence and creates Xifeng's success. This transformation of power strengthens Xifeng's central position in household management. As she undertakes an effective reform in the exercise of family affairs, the Jia family achieves its peak prosperity.

Unfortunately, Xifeng contracts a serious sickness in Chapter 55, changing her own and the family's destiny. She has a miscarriage soon after the New Year. Two or three doctors observe her every day. Overestimating her own strength, she still maps out plans for the household. But this aggravates her illness.

> Xifeng had a delicate constitution, however, and as a girl had never looked after her health. In her passion to shine she had overtaxed her strength, with the result that her miscarriage left her very weak. A month after it she was still losing blood. Although she kept this a secret, everyone could see from her pallor and loss of weight that she was not taking proper care of herself. [130]
>
> 誰知鳳姐稟賦氣血不足，兼年幼不知保養，平生爭強鬥智，心力更虧，故雖系小月，竟著實虧虛下來，一月之後，覆添了下紅之癥。他雖不肯說出來，眾人看他面目黃瘦，便知失於調養。

As mentioned in Chapter 6, Lady Wang "does not handle much business any more but leaves everything to the second master's wife (Xifeng)."[131] Although Xifeng is Lady Xing's daughter-in-law, she actually assists Lady Wang in assuming the household responsibilities. Her miscarriage and loss of blood mark the end of her management in the Rong Mansion. The power

[129] Ibid., 371.
[130] Cao Xueqin, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), Vol 3, 1579.
[131] Ibid., Vol. 1, 175.

to order the household is transferred to Li Wan, Tanchun, and Baochai. It is at this moment that internal conflicts in the Jia family break out and an atmosphere of decline prevails in the novel. For instance, servants gather together to gamble, chefs fight for power and profit to organize the kitchen, and Concubine Zhao and the actresses openly scuffle. Lady Wang's rose-flavored juice and Yingchun's 迎春 hairpin are stolen. Although Tanchun exerts a lot of effort to reform the management and overcome the major drawbacks in the household, it is difficult to prevent the Jia family from beginning its decline.

It is significant that Xifeng's sickness deteriorates as the Jia family is gradually driven into an impasse. In Chapter 71, Xifeng and her mother-in-law Lady Xing fight. When Lady Xing makes Xifeng lose face in public, Xifeng cries and has a relapse into illness. "Since her period last month, she's been having fluxions off and on non-stop."[132] Soon afterwards, a sachet with erotic embroidery is found in the Grand View Garden. Lady Xing sends it to Lady Wang, thus challenging Lady Wang's power to manage the household. At last, the ransacking of Grand View Garden signals the intensification of the struggle between Lady Xing and Lady Wang. They represent the first and second sons of the Rong Mansion respectively and embody the aggravation of internecine conflicts. As pointed out by Tanchun, "Big families like ours can't be destroyed in one fell swoop from outside. In the words of the old say, 'A centipede even when dead won't fall to the ground.' We must start killing each other first before our family can be completely destroyed."[133] The tragic decline of the Jia family is doomed. It is worth noting that after Xifeng loses a good deal of blood on the night of searching almost all the people's houses in Grand View Garden, she is too weak even to get up the next day. The sharp contrast between the narratives in Chapter 13 and after Chapter 55, shows that Xifeng's state of health is an index of the rise and fall of the family. When Xifeng manages the Rong and Ning Mansions as a

[132] Ibid., Vol.4, 2165.
[133] Ibid., Vol. 4. 2241.

healthy and vigorous daughter-in-law, the household runs in order and goes through a prosperous period. When she has to transfer the power of managing the household to others as a patient, the crisis of "all like game-cocks fighting to finish each other off"[134] arises in the family. The Jia Mansion is fast falling into decay like a dying patient.

Compared with the power transfer which happens in noble families above, when sickness occurs in an emperor's palace, it not only affects the patient's power and human relationships, but also leads to the reorganization of state power, because of the constructional correspondence between family and country in imperial China. For example, *Fantang yanyi quanzhuan* 反唐演義全傳 tells how when Emperor Taizong is sick, the crown prince has illicit intercourse with his concubine, Wu Meiniang. The crown prince becomes Emperor Gaozong after Taizong's death. Although Wu Meiniang is sent to a temple according to the rules of the imperial house, Gaozong takes her back and even elevates her to the position of empress consort. Gaozong contracts an eye disease later, so Wu replaces him to deal with political affairs.

> Because Emperor Gaozong had an eye disease, every time he held court, Wushi sat next to him with a curtain in the front and managed governmental administrations. At the time, people named it "two sages reigning the state." Thus Wushi's nephews such as Wu Chengsi, Wu Sansi and so on, all occupied important positions and ran amuck the court and the commonalty. State affairs were all decided by Wushi. Emperor Gaozong only submissively listened to her.[135]
>
> 因高宗病目，每坐朝，武氏坐於側，垂簾禦政，時人號為二聖臨朝。於是武氏之侄武承嗣、武三思等，俱居顯職，橫行朝野，政事悉決於武氏，高宗惟拱手聽之而已。

Emperor Taizong's and Gaozong's sicknesses are metaphors for political disorder. Gaozong commits incest by the chance of his father's sickness, violating ethical principles. After succeeding to the throne, he entrusts state affairs to Wushi, reversing the order of yin and yang and, in Confucian terms, upsetting propriety and righteousness. Wushi replaces the Tang

[134] Ibid., 2261
[135] *Fantang yanyi quanzhuan* 反唐演義全傳(Jilin: Shidai wenyi chubanshe, 2002), 18.

Dynasty with Zhou after Gaozong's death. Gaozong's sickness eventually causes the overthrow of his political power.

The fifth story of *Xihu erji* 西湖二集 tells of Emperor Shaoxi's 紹熙 (1147–1200) mental illness. "Emperor Shaoxi contracted a mental illness. His mind wandered, he lost control over his language, and it seemed like insanity."[136] Based on his symptoms, it is a kind of madness, which is caused by depression, lack of qi and blood, and dissatisfaction of his will. According to the description of "madness" in *Zhengzhi yaojue* 癥治要訣, "madness causes a wandering mind and being subject to changing moods. Patients usually lose control over their use of language, rambling in their statements. Sometimes they are mentally deranged. It has similarities with insanity, but is not as serious as insanity." When Emperor Shaoxi is mentally ill, his father who abdicated in favor of him grants a medication to Emperor Shaoxi, but his empress consort Li Fengniang 李鳳娘 believes a base person's slanderous claim that it is a poison. She prevents Emperor Shaoxi from visiting his father. "Emperor Shaoxi was naturally a henpecked husband. Hearing the consort's words, he took them to be true and forgot filial piety. He had not been to his father's Chonghua Palace since that time, as he did not consider him to be a father."[137] As a result, Emperor Shaoxi's mental troubles develop in full-blown insanity, a concrete manifestation of the overturning of family ethics. As the story points out, "Later his mental illness took a turn for the better, while his conscience returned. He wished to go to Chonghua palace to visit his father. However, Empress Li flatly refused."[138] It is worth noting that the author deliberately counterposes the sickness of heart to conscience, which is to say, contracting mental illness means the forfeit of conscience. It leads to activities that are not in accordance with filial piety. Since the relationship between father and son occupies a central position in the

[136] Zhou Qingyuan 周清源, *Xihu erji* 西湖二集(Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1989), 79.
[137] Zhou Qingyuan 周清源, *Xihu erji* 西湖二集(Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1989), 80.
[138] Ibid., 82.

Confucian value system, besides family ethics, it is also closely related to political order in the country, for filial piety can be extended to loyalty to the emperor. It is said that how the subject serves the emperor is similar to how the son serves his father, and it is easy to find a loyal subject in the family of a dutiful son. Therefore, many Chinese emperors specially show their filial piety in governing the country. However, Li Fengniang deprives Emperor Shaoxi of his power when he becomes ill, and convinces him to be unfilial to his father.[139] At last Emperor Shaoxi becomes estranged from his father. Because of the crisis in the emperor's family ethics, his political power rapidly declines.

As Emperor Shaoxi's mental illness gradually worsens, Li Fengniang's actions to take his power becomes increasingly fierce. She kills Emperor Shaoxi's concubines and maids whom Shaoxi loves, and attempts to hold political power over the country. "Emperor Shaoxi's mental illness worsened day by day. He was not able to go to court. Most of the political affairs were decided by Empress Li."[140] Moreover, Emperor Shaoxi's father also falls ill because he is too sad about the emperor who keeps at a distance from him. After his death, Emperor Shaoxi refuses to take care of the funeral rites at the instigation of Empress Li. Both as a son and a succeeding emperor, it is extremely important for Shaoxi to host his father's funeral. The further deterioration of his sickness symbolizes the violation of ritual propriety. "One day when he was holding court, he fell on the ground and sank into a faint. All the ministers in the court were unsatisfied. The chief minister fled with an excuse of sickness because the emperor did not perform his father's funeral ritual."[141] Emperor Shaoxi's sickness causes the transfer of political power. The chaotic family ethics affect state affairs, ultimately leading to political upheaval. The chief minister's clan and Han Tuozhou unite to stage a court coup with Emperor Shaoxi's mother's support. They make another prince an emperor and abandon Emperor Shaoxi, so the

[139] There is a historical basis to this. See Keith McMahon's *Celestial Women: Imperial Wives and Concubines in China from Song to Qing* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020), 27–28.
[140] Ibid.
[141] Ibid., 84.

prosperous era before Shaoxi's sickness comes to end. This is to say, the disorder of the emperor's mental conditional causes that of political situation in the country. More sadly, Emperor Shaoxi is so trapped in the illusions produced by his mental illness that he does not know anything about his abdication. "Emperor Shaoxi was stupefied and muddled. He knew nothing (about the coup). During his morbidity, he sang and cried, laughed and cursed. As a result, he was called the 'mad emperor' secretly in his palace."[142] As he loses the ability to control his actions and his mind, he loses his political power. His life is completely destroyed by the illness and by the construction of a world of insanity that is separated from other persons and the reality.

4. The Rewriting of Family Relationships

In fictional representations of family relationships, maintaining stable family relationships occupies a central position. Based on blood ties and the patriarchal system, the structure, network and cultural concepts of a clan remain highly stable and are transmitted to the next generation in traditional Chinese family ethics. Thus, family ties and moral principles are deeply significant. As formulated in *The Classic of Rites*, the ideal model of family ethics is "kindness on the part of the father and filial duty on that of the son; gentleness on the part of the elder brother and obedience on that of the younger; righteousness on the part of the husband and submission on that of the wife; kindness on the part of elders and deference on that of juniors." However, as mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, the identity of patient implies that he or she deviates from normal social relations. When a family member falls ill, he or she is exiled to the margin of the network of family relations. The disorder of his or her body and the change of the patient's sense of space often result in the rewriting of the patient's family relationships. Since the parent-

[142] Ibid.

child ties and in-law ties are crucial relationships in the traditional Chinese patriarchal system, they are also the focus of many fictional medical narratives.

Filial piety is not only a moral principle specifying the child's responsibility for parents, but is also presented as the foundation of all the human relationships in imperial Chinese society and as the basis of political ethics and educational system. Thus, a great many fictional medical narratives which refer to the rewriting of family relationships pay special attention to filial piety, whether as practiced or as violated. According to Confucius, "the service which a filial son does to his parents is as follows: In his general conduct to them, he manifests the utmost reverence. In his nourishing of them, his endeavor is to give them the utmost pleasure. When they are ill, he feels the greatest anxiety."[143] It is a filial son's duty to take care of sick parents. Otherwise, abandoning sick parents indicates damage to family ethics and the decline of morality. In fictional medical narrative, descriptions of unfilial conduct are usually accompanied by retribution. For example, in the sixth story of *Badongtian* 八洞天, Shi Jiazhen 石佳貞 suffers from a mental illness. Transformed from a decent scholar into a wandering lunatic, Shi's daily life is completely destroyed. He even wears ragged clothes to take porridge which the local government provides for drought relief, elbowing his way into the crowd and exclaiming, "let me have the porridge." [144] At the time, Shi is not able to understand the consequences of his behavior and loses his inherent dignity. It is mental illness that leads to Shi's loss of the ability to communicate with other people. He is exiled to the margin of the social network, which rewrites his family relationships. His adoptive son Yan Ao 晏敖 detests his illness and tries to keep his distance from him. His adoptive relationship with Yan is thus broken. Although the adopted son would normally be expected to assume the duty of supporting his foster parents, when the magistrate discovers the situation and plans to rescind Yan Ao's *xiucai* 秀才 degree, Yan Ao

[143] Hu Pingsheng 胡平生, *Xiaojing yizhu* 孝經譯註(Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1996), 25.
[144] Biliange zhuren 筆煉閣主人, *Badongtian* 八洞天 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1985), 107.

offers the excuse that he already renounced the adoptive relationship with Shi. Due to mental illness, Shi is not capable of clarifying the truth. The Yan clan also submitted a petition to plead for Yan Ao because of Shi's mental illness. Moreover, after Shi died of his illness, Yan Ao does not take care of the funeral rites or offer sacrifice, signifying that the family ethics are totally abandoned. The author of the story comments, "you see how Yan Ao abandoned the ancestors. It makes no sense that he should have a good son. He will absolutely have an unworthy son to show the retribution."[145] Sure enough, Yan Ao's prodigal son, Qilang is addicted to gambling. All of Yan Ao's fortune was squandered by him. After Yan eventually died of illness in a temple, Qilang, went to steal the coffin to sell. Just as Shi Jiazhen's death opened the way to Yan Ao's unfilial conduct, Yan Ao's own death due to illness breaks his parent-child relationship with Qilang. Both failures of family ethics demonstrate how sickness rewrites the parent-child relationship and show the outcome of violations of filial piety. Filial piety not only refers to a family member's morality, but also involves the legacy of a clan. The process of sickness realizes the retribution of violation of filial piety, displaying how a failed father set examples for his son in practice. In this sense, the experience of sickness at home does not only belong to the patient himself, but also functions in a particular cultural situation and social network.

The relationships with in-laws are more complicated, for parents-in-law and children-in-law are connected by marital relations rather than blood ties. For example, a son-in-law living in the home of his wife's parents is an alternative form of marriage. A husband may choose to live in the home of his wife's parents because of financial difficulty. According to the patriarchal system of the Ming and Qing dynasties, a son-in-law living in the home of his wife's parents does not have the right to inherit the wife's family property alone. He had to share the property with other lawful heirs. This rule readily produces conflicts between this kind of son-in-law and the wife's parents. Especially when sickness arises, the family relationship becomes more fragile

[145] Ibid., 108.

and complicated. In the sixth story of *Erke xingshi hengyan* 二刻醒世恆言, Long Heng and his wife entrust their possessions to their son-in-law, Sun Zilian 孫自連, because their son has become an official in another town and they plan to go and live with him. Unfortunately, Sun gambles away almost all the fortune. Then he collects the Long family's debt and stores it under the bed. When Long Heng's 龍恆 son needs money, Long Heng and his wife go back home to retrieve their possessions. He is extremely angry after hearing that Sun has gambled away his money. At the time, Sun and his wife are very sick and confined to bed, and their family relationships have deteriorated.

> Being very sad...Long Heng wanted to complain and even scold Sun Zilian severely for his actions. However, all he could do was to keep silent when seeing the couple of Sun was so sick that they were exhausted and on the verge of death... After several days, Sun and his wife's conditions steadily deteriorated. They were lethargic and barely conscious and unable to get up. Long Heng and his wife missed their son so much that each day felt like a year. Furthermore, having to look after the two patients, day after day they decocted medication and gave water to them, and became more and more anxious and resentful. [146]
>
> 龍員外苦痛起來，哭啼啼將前情訴了一遍，便要埋怨孫自連幾句，思量大大发作一場。又見他夫妻都病得懨懨待斃，只得又住了口……過了數日，自連夫妻越病得沈重了，昏昏沈沈，起床不得。龍員外和杜氏記掛兒子，度日如年。又看著兩個病人，日日倒要煎湯送水，心內愈焦愈恨。

Long Heng has many complaints against Sun, but has to suppress his rage because of his daughter and son-in-law's sickness. Moreover, the patients need to be attended to everyday, increasing the conflict between the two couples. When Long Heng finds the silver stored under the bed, he digs it out to give to his son. Sun's and his wife's reaction is described as below,

> From his bedroom, Sun Zilian heard his parents-in-law in the next room quarreling and complaining. Then they were moving things and speaking happily in a low voice... Zilian wanted to struggle to get up, but his head was dizzy and his vision was blurred. He was not able to stand steadily. His wife Longshi suffered chill and fever simultaneously and could hardly breathe. It took all of her effort to utter a single "don't move."[147]

[146] Xinyuan zhuren 心遠主人, *Erke xingshihengyan* 二刻醒世恆言(Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1990), 145.
[147] Ibid., 146.

孫自連在房中，聽得間壁房里，老兩口兒打罵一會，抱怨一會，又搬弄了一會，卻又歡歡喜喜的低聲說了一會。自連有心，卻又掙紮不起……自連欲掙紮走起，奈何頭暈眼花，扶身不定。龍氏身上寒熱交攻，氣息難提，只說得一聲："不要動！"

The functional disorder of the patients' bodies completely changes their sense of space. They are not able to go through some daily routine, such as getting up and walking. Thus, their movements and actions are strictly limited to bed. As pointed out by Tooms, "the primitive spatiality of the body has been disturbed. The body no longer correctly interprets itself and the world around it. In this event the physiognomy of the world has changed."[148] The wall between Sun's and Long's rooms separates them into two spaces. Sun and his wife lose the ability to communicate with others in another space through a door or window, which were easy for them when in health. This condition reveals how sickness alienates the patients from their familiar space and how the patients are frustrated in daily activities. The change in Sun and his wife's physical conditions transforms their subjectivity. At last, when Sun Zilian's wife dies of sickness, the relationship between Sun and his in-laws is absolutely broken. Sun plots to murder them in revenge for his wife's death right after his recovery. It is not difficult to find that sickness plays a key role through the process of deterioration of their family relationships. The functional disorder of body eventually causes disorder in family ethics.

The relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is another complicated kind of relationship with in-laws in a family. In Confucian concepts of family ethics, the basic rule of the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is "(sons') wives should serve their parents-in-law as they served their own."[149] However, because the establishment of this relationship is not based on blood ties or emotion, the conflict between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is especially common. There is a great amount of late imperial vernacular fiction

[148] S. Kay Toombs, *The Meaning of Illness: A phenomenological Account of the Different Perspectives of Physician and Patient* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 63–64.
[149] Yang Tianyu 楊天宇, *Liji yizhu* 禮記譯註(Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2004), 330.

that describes how a fatal incompatibility occurs between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. In these tales, a mother-in-law's sickness is an important context in which her relationship with the daughter-in-law is rewritten.

In late imperial fictional medical narratives, a mother-in-law is always in the dominant position, because her daughter-in-law is required to submit to her absolutely. Nevertheless, when she is sick, the balance of power can be transformed dramatically. For example, the thirteenth story in *Paianjingqi* 拍案驚奇 tells the story of the family Zhao. Madam Zhao's relationship with her daughter-in-law, Yinshi, is not bad at the beginning. However, when Madam Zhao falls seriously ill, the family relationship is completely rewritten.

> Madam Zhao was not able to get up due to pyro-phlegmatic syndrome. She had to entrust the family affairs to her daughter-in-law Yinshi, who accepted. At first, she looked after her parents-in-law carefully. However, after several months she did not provide them tea and meals…Madam Zhao had experienced a rich life, and now she became poor. Never mind outsiders, even her own daughter-in-law gave her a cold shoulder. She reflected on the past and thus became indignant. Her vision blurring with rage, she felt faint and was unable to drink and eat. Her daughter-in-law did not go to her bed to look in on her, nor did she nurse her body with soup, only giving her several bowls of yellow rice for her three daily meals. After half a month, her sickness worsened and she died. [150]
>
> 趙老娘因害痰火病，起不得床，一发把這家事托與那媳婦掌管。殷氏承當了，供養公婆初時也尚像樣，漸漸半年三個月，要茶不茶，要飯不飯。……趙媽媽也是受用過來的，今日窮了，休說是外人，嫡親兒媳也受他這般冷淡。回頭自思，怎得不惱？一氣氣得頭昏眼花，飲食多絕了。兒媳兩個也不到床前去看視一番，也不將些湯水調養病人，每日三餐，只是這幾碗黃齏，好不苦惱！挨了半月，痰喘大发，嗚呼哀哉，伏惟尚饗了。

In this account, Madam Zhao is exiled to the margin of the family network because of sickness. Especially when she lies in bed, relying on other people's care, she has to look up to the caregiver, while the caregiver looks down at her. The posture of their bodies symbolizes an unequal relationship. Thus, the caregiver, Yinshi, became dominant in their relationship. Zhao's sickness and Yinshi's indifferent attitude towards the patient upend the in-law relationship, directly leading to the patient's death. The total overthrow of family ethics causes a series of

[150] Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, *Erpai* 二拍 (Hubei: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1996),118–119.

tragedies. Madam Zhao's husband Zhao Liulao 趙六老 spends almost all his assets to bury Madam Zhao. He even has to enter his son's bedroom secretly at midnight to find some property. His son mistakes him for a thief and kills him. In the end, the son is put to death.

It is worth noting that this story was adapted from a classical tale, which does not include the first half of the story about Madam Zhao's illness and death; instead, it just shows the father sneaking into the son's bedroom to find some property and being killed by his son. The vernacular tale describes the cause of this family tragedy by creating a context in which the relationship between the mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is rewritten through the process of sickness. It associates the deterioration of an in-law's relationship with a broken parent-child relationship. As the sickness destroys the patient's body and her relationship with her daughter-in-law, the parent-child bond is also severed. The wall between the father's and the son's bedrooms separates the family space, which symbolizes a clear emotional and economic boundary between the two generations. When Zhao Liulao digs a hole in the wall and steals into the son's bedroom, it indicates he invades another space which does not belong to him. This abnormal invasion is caused by a financial crisis, which is brought about by Madam Zhao's sickness and death. Therefore, Madam Zhao's sickness plays a key role in this family tragedy, indicating how the disorder of the body organism spreads into the disorder of family relationships and ethics.

The third story of *Xingshiyan* 型世言 is another example in which the mother-in-law's sickness leads to the intensification of conflicts with the daughter-in-law. However, the son's different choice shows another direction of this kind of story. In this story, Zhangzhu 掌珠 does not get along well with her mother-in-law Shengshi 盛氏 while her husband Zhou Yulun 周于倫 is away in a distant town on business. Although they are able to tolerate their conflicts at the beginning, after Shengshi gets sick, Zhangzhu does not take care of her, which antagonizes

Shengshi. So Shengshi regularly picks quarrels with her daughter-in-law. They eventually develop a deep enmity. After Zhou Yulun returns home, he obeys his mother and blames his wife, even threatening Zhangzhu that if she does not serve his mother well, he will abandon her. Unfortunately, this further aggravates the family conflicts. After Zhou goes away on business again, Zhangzhu secretly sells her mother-in-law to an old wifeless man. In the end, Zhou discovers the truth and sells his wife to that man and brings his mother back home. It is worth noting that Zhou's choice is widely praised in his hometown. He marries another beautiful wife and becomes an official.

In the two stories above, both mothers'-in-law sickness causes a broken relationship with their daughters-in-law, while the outcomes are different because of the sons' choices. Madam Zhao's son follows his wife's lead and cuts off the bonds between two generations, leading to the family tragedy; Zhou Yulun sells his wife to get his mother back and attains a good reputation. It seems that the different directions of the two stories reveal the authors' value judgment: when the relationship between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law is broken, the son is regarded as dutiful only if he acts as Zhou Yulun does. This choice shows his filial piety and upholds Confucian moral principles. However, at the end of the story of Zhou, Zhangzhu is subjected to all kinds of suffering and dies after one year. Then Zhou Yulun refuses the proposal that the local magistrate commend him as a model "a filial son," offering the excuse that "I am not a righteous husband." His actions indicate that he feels guilty about Zhangzhu's death in the privacy of his own thoughts, but he cannot tell anyone because of traditional Confucian values. Therefore, a textual crack has been produced: on the one hand, the story speaks highly of his actions as a model of filial piety. On the other hand, the text also expresses a doubt and self-examination about his non-righteousness to his wife. Regretfully, this kind of doubt and self-examination remains in the shadow of a widespread praise of Zhou's filial piety and is not given enough space to be fully expressed.

The seventh story of *Xingshi Qiyan* 醒世奇言 continues the consideration of how a filial son should perform when his mother and wife's in-law relationship is worsened. The doubt and rethinking of a conventional filial son's actions are developed in depth. In this story, Huangshi 黃氏 is an aggressive and termagant woman. She is rough in her treatment of her first daughter-in-law, Shun'er 順兒, whose disposition is gentle and obedient. When Shun'er's husband Chengda 成大 is sick, Huangshi picks on her harshly.

> One day, when Chengda caught a cold and had a fever, Huangshi found that Shun'er wore make-up to pay respects to her. She said Shun'er was always heavily made up to seduce her husband and that was why her husband was sick. Now she was still seductive and fascinating. Did she want to urge her husband's death and marry another man? Huangshi did not stop reviling her… On the second day, Shun'er wore ordinary clothes. Huangshi saw her but became even annoyed, saying Shun'er was deliberately at odds with her, beating her breast and crying, and knocking her head on the wall. Shun'er had no idea what Huangshi meant. Chengda was extremely filial. He pulled his wife's hair and beat her wildly until Huangshi ceased to be angry. [151]
>
> 一日，正值成大感了些風邪，发了個把寒熱，黃氏見順兒妝扮了來問信，道他平日間，只管濃妝艷抹了去迷弄丈夫，害得丈夫生病，如今還是這般打扮得妖妖嬈嬈的，可不是要催丈夫死了卻再嫁人？便罵個不住。 順兒見婆婆這般動氣，到了明日便頭也不敢梳，簪珥也不敢插，穿了件隨常衣服去問安。 黃氏見了越发懊惱，道和自己鬥氣，便拍著胸脯大哭。又把頭向壁上撞去怨命，慌得順兒沒了主意。那成大是極孝順的，便把妻子揪住頭发痛打一頓。黃氏方才息了些怒。

It is clear that Huangshi tortures her daughter-in-law intentionally on the pretext of her son Chengda's sickness. Chengda has no definite views of his own and is always servile to his mother. Because Huangshi is dissatisfied with Shun'er, Chengda separates with his wife and eventually divorces her. After Huangshi's second son Cheng'er 成二 gets married, his wife, Ligu 戾姑, is disobedient to Huangshi, and even rides roughshod over her. Ligu commands Huangshi to do all the housework. If Huangshi gets up late, Ligu does not offer meals to her. Weak from physical and psychological suffering, Huangshi falls ill.

> Huangshi fell sick with toil and grievance. At the beginning, she was able to get out of bed on the arm of Chengda. After several days her condition got worse and worse.

[151] Shoupuweng 守樸翁, *Xingshiqiyan* 醒世奇言(Beijing: Beijing yanshan chubanshe, 1992), 138.

> She felt her body was as heavy as Mount Tai. Chengda could not support her with his hands, so she asked servant girls to assist her. However, Ligu ordered those servant girls to leave before they arrived at Huangshi's bed. Huangshi had to defecate and urinate in her bed.[152]
>
> 過了幾時，黃氏因身子積勞，更兼心頭郁結，不覺生起病來。起先成大攙了，還勉強下得床。再後病勢日增，身子如泰山一般的重，成大一個那里扶得住。去叫那丫鬟們相幫伏待，才走得到，戾姑便來喚了去。黃氏只得尿屙都撒在床上。

Huangshi is confined to bed because of sickness, which indicates her body's gestural display is completely changed by her sickness. According to Toombs, "to be able to 'stand on one's own two feet' is of more than figurative significance. Verticality is directly related to autonomy."[153] Because of the loss of the upright posture, Huangshi's independency and autonomy are severely affected. She is not able to get up by herself, having to rely on the caregivers. She has to defecate and urinate in bed, which indicates that she loses the ability to control her body, and thus she is helpless and humiliated. In the relationship between Huangshi and Shun'er, the former holds her head high, while the latter bows her head and submits; in the relationship between Huangshi and Ligu, the former is laid up with illness, while the latter is unbearably arrogant. Their body postures symbolize their position and power in family relationships.

Huangshi's sickness causes the transformation of her family status and offers a chance to rewrite her relationship with Shun'er. Although Shun'er has been abandoned by her husband, she secretly cooks for Huangshi after hearing about Huangshi's condition. When Huangshi is healthy, no matter how carefully Shun'er attends on her, she is still abhorrent to Shun'er. However, when her daily life and dignity are completely destroyed by sickness, because Shun'er attempts to save her, she begins to feel guilty and brings Shun'er back home. Therefore, in addition to damage,

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[152] Ibid., 147.

[153] S. Kay Toombs, *The Meaning of Illness: A phenomenological Account of the Different Perspectives of Physician and Patient* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1992), 65.

Huangshi's sickness is a metaphor of salvation as well: it helps Huangshi realize her fault and repair her relationship with Shun'er, and get rid of Ligu's maltreatment at last.

In the description of the family relationships between Huangshi and her two daughter-in-laws, this story seems to continue the doubt and examination which are not fully developed in Zhou Yulun's story. When Shun'er submits to Huangshi, Huangshi becomes more and more arrogant and tyrannical. Her son, Chengda always obeys her and treats his wife badly. Thus, Huangshi is able to instigate Chengda to divorce Shun'er. In other words, a harsh mother-in-law's violence reaches an extreme with the support of a filial son. In contrast, when Huangshi meets an overbearing daughter-in-law, her attitude becomes mild because she is afraid of Ligu's fierce temper, which means Ligu's impertinence squelches Huangshi's arrogance. When Ligu maltreats Huangshi, two filial sons, both Chengda and Cheng'er are unable to stop the termagant daughter-in-law. Chengda always follow the principles of filial piety, but produces a tragedy: he abandons a filial daughter-in-law and puts his mother in a hard situation. Moreover, he is not capable of saving his mother from the torture of a shrew, and thus he has to turn to his abandoned wife for help. It is admitted that Chengda is a filial son, but he encounters an ethical dilemma when dealing with the two modes of relationships between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. In view of this, in Zhou Yulun's story, the filial son gains a good reputation just because his mother is not as harsh as Huangshi. In this sense, Huangshi's story reaches a considerable depth when discussing a filial son's action to deal with his mother and his wife's relationship.

Huangshi's story shows that sickness does not only bring out damage or destruction but may also help improve family relationships. This sort of plot is not uncommon. The second story of *Badongtian* 八洞天 also represents positive consequences of sickness at home. Compared to Huangshi's story, the author pays more attention to the influence of sickness on the patient's psychology, and how it helps the patient to view family relationships from a new perspective. In

the story, Zhangsun Chen 長孫陳 remarries Ganshi 甘氏 after his wife dies in the An Lushan Rebellion. His son Shengge 勝哥 misses his own mother so much that he falls ill, being unable to pay a formal visit to Ganshi during their wedding ceremony. Ganshi is angry because she does not understand Shengge's grief. After Zhangsun Chen fails to find his wife's corpse, Shengge feels much more painful and cannot bring himself to show respect to Ganshi, who comes to dislike him intensely. After five years, Ganshi's mother dies suddenly from an acute disease, which anguishes Ganshi so deeply that she falls ill and has to stay in bed. Through her experience of sickness, Ganshi fully realizes how great Shengge's sadness was after his mother's death. She is filled with remorse over resenting Shengge.

> Ganshi lay in bed and examined herself repeatedly, "I usually complain about Shengge because he cried for his mother. Who can imagine that today it is my turn? My mother died from sickness and has corpse and coffin. She had a funeral ceremony and can receive our sacrifices, but I am still grieved. How much worse when his mother died a violent death? Her corpse cannot be found and she did not have a coffin. How could he not feel genuine sorrow?"…Then she spoke to Zhangsun Chen in tears, "I blamed Shengge unjustly. Now I miss him. Please call him to see me."[154]
>
> 甘氏病臥在床，反覆自思："吾向嗔怪勝哥哭母，誰想今日輪到自身。吾母親抱病而亡有屍有棺，開喪受吊，我尚痛心；何況他母死於非命，屍棺都沒有，如何教他不要哀痛！"……便含淚對長孫陳道："我當初錯怪了勝哥，如今我想他，可速喚來見我。"

The experience of sickness not only leaves time and space for Ganshi to reflect on her actions in the past, more importantly, it separates her from her daily life. It forces her to enter the new world of the patient, in which she is able to share Shengge's experience as a patient five years before. In this world, she truly understands Shengge's sadness and grief. Therefore, an emotional communication, which cannot be established in healthy state, now is fully built up in the patient's world. As a result, their stepmother-child relationship is rewritten by sickness. The family ethics is restored.

[154] Biliange zhuren 筆煉閣主人, *Badongtian* 八洞天 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1985), 38.

It is not hard to see that in most vernacular stories about sickness at home the patients are female. In constructing an idealized family system and relations, Confucian ritual principles stressed family members' roles and responsibilities, and especially the moral responsibilities of women. *The Classic of Rites* 禮記 introduces the most important virtues a wife should possess: "In ancient times, for three months before the marriage of a young lady…she was taught the virtue, the speech, the carriage, and the work of a wife" 是以古者婦人先嫁三月……教以婦德、婦言、婦容、婦功. These are moral prescriptions that imply a disciplining of women's bodies in the family setting. However, in vernacular tales the importance of the wife's body to the integrity and well-being of the family is typically shown not through instances of moral failings, but through narratives of illness. Since producing offspring is a wife's most important responsibility in the patriarchal system, infertility is a medical condition that may significantly rewrite family relations.

Starting from *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經, professional medical texts devote a great deal of attention to medical explanations and interventions in infertility. The chapter "Discussion on Osseous Orifices" (*gukonglun* 骨空論), in the "Suwen" 素問 section, traces women's infertility to disorders in the Du Channel (*dumai*, 督脈) and suggests acupuncture treatments at the Qugu 曲骨 or Yinjiao 陰交 point, depending upon the degree of severity. In *Shengji zonglu* 聖濟總錄, compiled and edited by imperial physicians during Zhenghe 政和 period (1111–1118) of the Song Dynasty, women's infertility is caused by a deficiency of *qi* in the kidneys (*shenqi* 腎氣). In *Jiyin gangmu* 濟陰綱目, composed in the Ming Dynasty, infertile women usually suffer from excess air (*qi* 氣) and depression (*yu* 鬱). Excess air causes fire (*huo* 火), while increased depression causes blockages of the blood. Their channels are thus obstructed, they contract many illnesses, and their ability to bear children is obstructed. In the Qing Dynasty, Zhang Lu 張璐

pointed out in his *Zhangshi yitong* 張氏醫通 that the causes of infertility were excessive dampness and blocked air (*qi* 氣), which keep the sperm from reaching the uterus. Medical treatments for infertility focused on regulating menstruation, invigorating the kidneys, and warming the uterus.

It is worth noting that premodern Chinese fiction rarely referred to these medical resources in plots involving women's infertility. Instead, in classical tales, religious discourses were more frequently cited in treatments of infertile women. For example, *Mingxiangji* 冥祥記 includes an anecdote in which a lay Buddhist, Bian Yuezhi 卞悅之 has reached the the age of fifty without bearing a son. His wife takes a concubine for him, but she too fails to bear a son. Bian Yuezhi vows to recite the *Bodhisattva Sutra* (*guanyinjing* 觀音經) a thousand times. Just as he nears completion of this project, his concubine gets pregnant, giving birth to a son soon afterwards. Although infertility is a kind of sickness, characters in fiction prefer to seek help through their faith and worship. Most of them bear a son at the end of their stories, not because of effective medical intervention but because of piety or beneficence. In fiction, infertility appears to be a moral ailment.

In vernacular fiction, the religious miracle in treating "not bearing a son"(*wuzi* 无子) is usually inserted in a story as an interlude to show the character's piety and exhort others to goodness. For example, in the twenty-fifth tale in *Tales to Caution the World*, a scholar, Shi Ji 施濟, who is always eager to do the right thing, is forty years old and still without a son. His wife urges him to take a concubine, but he refuses and begins to intone the "White-Robed Bodhisattva Sutra" (*Baiyi Guanyin jing* 白衣觀音經), make copies of it and freely give out alms. He also vows to donate three hundred taels of silver to renovate a temple when his son is born. After one year, his wife finds herself pregnant and a son is born. This plot, only an episode in Shi Ji's life

story, functions to characterize Shi Ji as a faithful man and his wife as a virtuous woman. In the thirty-ninth chapter of *Hongloumeng*, Granny Liu tells a story at a Jia family banquet about how a woman of over ninety years of age fasted and prayed to Buddha every day until one night the Bodhisattva appeared to her in a dream. "You were fated to have no descendants," she said, "But I've told the Jade Emperor how devout you are, and he's going to give you a grandson." This woman had only one son and one grandson, but the grandson died at the age of seventeen or eighteen. After this dream, another grandson is born to the family.[155] In these tales, the image of the infertile woman is somehow vague or even absent. The author's focus is her husband or mother-in-law's response to the threat of having no offspring. They are representatives of the patriarchal system, and it is their piety or good deeds, not the woman's fertility, that determine whether the family will have male descendants or not. Further, it seems that a family without offspring is doomed. The only way to change fate is to pray, worship, or recite the sutra faithfully. In this sense, bearing a son is a matter of or a reward from supernatural powers rather than an exercise of physical abilities. Moreover, the preface of the fifth chapter in *Tales to Caution the World* is a tragic story of how an infertile but devout woman bears two sons and how the family is then destroyed by her malicious husband. A rich but stingy man, Jin Zhong still has no son, although he is fifty years old. His wife, Ms. Shan, who was born on the same day as her husband, follows a vegetarian diet and is given to good deeds. She donates her own jewelry to Fushan Temple 福善庵 and then gives birth to two sons. After becoming a mother, she donates firewood and rice more frequently to the Fushan Temple, gradually arousing the anger of her husband, who determines to kill the monks in the Fushan Temple in order to save the money his wife donates. He gives the monks four flat cakes laced with arsenic. That day, as Jin's two sons are playing at the temple after class, a monk invites them to eat the cakes. Each boy eats two

[155] Cao Xueqin, *A Dream of Red Mansions*, trans. Yang Xianyi, Dai Naidie (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1999), Vol 2, 1095–1097.

cakes, and then they die. When she learns that it was Jin Zhong who put the arsenic in the cakes, Ms. Shan hangs herself in her room. Jin Zhong then falls ill and dies within seven days. In this story, Jin Zhong's family tragedy is a retribution for his own deeds. However, Ms. Shan is kindhearted, devout and innocent. She has two sons because of her piety, but her goodness is counteracted by her husband's evil. The outcome for their children and their family is determined largely by the male's deeds rather than the female's and reflects a fertility that is not corporeal but moral.

Although "not bearing a son" (*wuzi* 无子) is listed as one of seven situations in which a husband can legally divorce his wife, it is rare in classical or vernacular fiction for a husband to abandon his wife on the basis of childlessness. For example, Cai Yong's 蔡邕 *Qincao* 琴操 records how a piece of zither music, "Song of the Parting Cranes" ("Biehecao" 别鶴操), was composed. Muzi 牧子 still has no son after five years of marriage, and his father and elder brother ask him to remarry. Hearing this news, his wife stays awake through the night, singing sadly. Then Muzi plays the zither and sings, "Grieving over my eternal separation from my love, I sigh for the parting cranes to express my emotions."[156] Ultimately, they remain together, but he also does not seek medical treatment for his infertile wife; the infertility explains why the song itself was produced, but the couple do not seek medical help, and they remain childless. In vernacular tales too it is uncommon for infertile women to seek medical treatment. Common solutions to the problem are to adopt a young nephew of the husband or to take a concubine. Because either a nephew or concubine more or less challenges the wife's status, there is much attention to the wife's attitude towards the new family member. It is worth noting that the situation of a woman who does not have a son is similar to that of one who is infertile, for a daughter does not have the right of inheritance by the Ming period. The thirty-eighth story in

[156] Cai Yong's 蔡邕 *Qincao* 琴操 (Taipei: Yiwen, 1967).

Pai'an jingqi 拍案驚奇 is a typical example. In its preface, the author discusses the degree of intimacy in different relatives. He sighs because many women prefer their daughters to their husbands' nephews or concubines' sons, but don't know a son-in-law is not as intimate as a nephew, while a nephew is not as intimate as a son, no matter who the son's biological mother might be. In this story, a rich man, Liu Congshan 劉從善, and his wife, Ms. Li, do not have a son. Their only daughter, Yinjie 引姐, marries Zhang Lang 張郎, who proposes this marriage because he hopes to inherit the Liu Family property. Liu Congshan intends to leave his legacy to his brother's son, Yinsun 引孫, who came to live with Liu Congshan when he was orphaned. Ms. Li, meanwhile, prefers her daughter and son-in-law and considers Yinsun a thorn in her side. Yinsun is forced to leave the Liu family and live alone. Moreover, Liu has a relationship with a maid, Xiaomei 小梅, who gets pregnant. Because Ms. Li is partial to Zhang Lang and Zhang Lang wants to scheme against Xiaomei, Yinjie suggests that Xiaomei hide out at a relative's house and then tells her parents and husband that Xiaomei has run away from home.

On Tomb Sweeping Day, sometime after he has taken charge of Liu family affairs, Zhang Lang goes, keys in hand, to offer sacrifice at the Zhang family tombs. Yinsun is out at the same time offering sacrifice at the graves of the Liu Family. Liu Congshan makes use of this opportunity to convince his wife that his nephew and not Zhang Lang is the successor to the Liu family. He tells Ms. Li that they will have to be buried on barren land because they have no offspring. When Ms. Li says their daughter and son-in-law are their offspring, Liu asks Ms. Li, "What is our daughter's surname?" She answers, "Our daughter's surname is Liu." "What about our son-in-law?" "His surname is Zhang." "Then after our daughter's death, will she be buried in the graveyard of the Liu Family or the Zhang Family?" "She will be buried in the graveyard of the Zhang Family." With that, Ms. Li sadly realizes why her husband is asking these questions. Liu says, "So they are not offspring in our Liu Family." Then they encounter Yinsun, who has

come to visit the graves again. Ms. Li asks Yinsun to move in with them. When Zhang Lang and Yinjie arrive late, Liu Congshan and Ms. Li ask why they have visited the graves of the Zhang Family first. Zhang Lang explains, “I am a son of the Zhang Family.” “And Yinjie?” “She is a daughter-in-law of the Zhang Family.” Hearing this, Ms. Li snatches the keys from her daughter. She says, “Now that you are the son and daughter-in-law of the Zhang Family, why should you be in charge of the affairs in our Liu Family?” She gives the keys to Yinsun. “From now on the son of the Liu Family is in charge of affairs.”

The story unfolds on the basis of Ms. Li’s views about the degree of intimacy among different family relations. When she chooses her daughter and son-in-law over her husband’s nephew, Yinsun has to move out and Liu Congshan has to entrust his family affairs and keys to Zhang Lang. When she realizes that only males can inherit the surname and property in a family, Yinsun earns the right to be in charge of the keys. At last, Yinjie reveals the secret that Xiaomei gave birth to a son three years ago. Liu Congshan greatly appreciates his daughter and divides his property in three equal parts, one for his son, one for his daughter, and one for his nephew.

Although this story reasserts males’ right of inheritance, it does not simply negate female family members’ importance. Instead, Liu Congshan comments on Yinjie’s protection of his son, “It turns out our daughter is also close to us. Her surname is Liu, so she protects our Liu Family but does not obey her husband in scheming against her younger brother.” If the words he uses to convince his wife to accept his nephew accord with the principles of the patriarchal system, he realizes the importance of the blood ties between them and Yinjie at the end. That Yinjie is able to inherit one third of her father’s property affirms the actual status of female family members.

Because a wife’s infertility is not simply a matter of her own physical condition but, more importantly, helps determine who will inherit the surname and the property of the family, vernacular stories address the failure to bear a male heir not by detailing medical interventions, but by focusing on the process of determining a heir. As taking a concubine is more convenient

than adopting a nephew as a way to secure a male heir, some stories depict an exemplary wife who helps her husband take a concubine in order to bear a son, while other stories focus on a jealous wife who refuses to take a concubine for her husband. The sixteenth story in *Xingshiyan* 型世言 is of the first type. This story concerns the families of two brothers. The elder brother, Xiao Teng 蕭騰, has a wife, Ms. Yin 陰, and a son, Xiao Shijian 蕭世建. The younger brother, Xiao Lu 蕭露, and his wife, Ms. Wu, have been married for several years without having any children. Ms. Wu persuades Xiao Lu to take a concubine, but Xiao Lu at first refuses, thinking that Ms. Wu is still young and might be able to have a child later. He is also afraid that a concubine would not get along well with Ms. Wu. However, Ms. Wu asks a matchmaker to find a beautiful concubine for her husband. Hearing this, Ms. Wu's younger sister visits her and attempts to convince her not to take a concubine for her husband, or at least not to select a beautiful one. From her younger sister's perspective, men are usually fond of the new and tired of the old. If Ms. Wu selects a young and beautiful concubine for her husband, her husband may grow close to the concubine and estrange himself from his wife. Once the concubine has a son, they will inherit Xiao Lu's property. "Even if you have a son in the future, you will have to divide a half to them," she argues. But Ms. Wu does not follow her suggestion. She takes a concubine, Ms. Li, for her husband, and arranges a room for her with furniture and decorations just like her own. Her younger sister comes again to persuade her to set up some rules for the concubine and her husband. For example, she proposes that Xiao be allowed to go to Ms. Li's room just once or twice a month. Ms. Wu also rejects this suggestion, and she does not mind when Xiao Lu sometimes spends more time alone with the concubine. After half a year, Ms. Li is pregnant, and Ms. Wu takes excellent care of her as she gives birth to a son. Ms. Wu's younger sister then suggests that she sell Ms. Li so that the son will regard Ms. Wu as his true mother. Ms. Wu again refuses and treats Ms. Li and her son very well. After Xiao Lu dies of illness, Ms. Wu

and Ms. Li both live in widowhood and raise the son together. There is a similar case in Xiao Teng's family. His wife Ms. Yin is sickly, so Xiao Teng takes a concubine, Ms. Chen. Although Ms. Chen does not have a child, she also refuses to remarry after Xiao Teng and Ms. Yin die from illness and instead raises Ms. Yin's and Xiao Teng's son as her own child. Both Xiao Teng's and Xiao Lu's sons pass the civil service examination, and the three widows' chastity is recognized by the government.

In this story, there is no villain or malefactor to drive the plot. The only discordant interlude is Ms. Wu's younger sister's words, which show how a jealous woman would deal with the same situation. However, Ms. Wu, infertile though she may be, is a perfect wife and mother. She is characterized as a kind, unenvious, and generous model. Ms. Li's chastity is a complement to Ms. Wu's character. It is worth noting that Ms. Wu's younger sister also provides several examples of family tragedy caused by taking a concubine. "I heard that Mr. Zhu's wife is dutiful and submissive. After she agreed to take a concubine for her husband, her husband preferred the concubine to her, and in the end she hanged herself. Another man, Mr. Dang, lives with his concubine and doesn't go home. He is even not responsible for the living expenses of his wife at home." These examples, though they are only mentioned in passing, imply that Ms. Wu's younger sister's words are not groundless. It is conceivable that if Ms. Wu takes an immoral concubine, or if her husband is unfaithful, her family life may be tragic. However, all the figures in this story fulfill their responsibilities to their families and are rewarded by their sons' achievements in the end. No one thinks of seeking medical interventions for Ms. Wu's infertility; the problem is addressed and solved through her morality.

By contrast, some stories depict a jealous wife who is infertile but puts up all sorts of obstacles to taking a concubine. In the Ming novel, *Cuhulu* 醋葫蘆, Cheng Gui 成圭 and his wife, Ms. Du 都, are childless after more than ten years of their marriage. Ms. Du will not allow

Cheng Gui to take a concubine. Many of Cheng Gui's friends attempt to change Ms. Du's mind but fail. A friend suggests that Cheng Gui tell his wife that he is so disappointed at not having a son that he wants to become a monk. When he insists on shaving his head, Ms. Du has to agree to take a concubine for him. However, she selects a stone maiden (*shinü* 石女), Ms. Xiong 熊, a woman with a hypoplastic vagina. Cheng Gui is very frustrated on the wedding night but seemingly has no options. After three days, Ms. Xiong's father sends a servant maid, Cuitai 翠苔, to attend Ms. Xiong. When Ms. Du discovers that Cheng Gui is having a secret relationship with Cuitai, she beats Cuitai cruelly. When Cuitai goes into a coma, Ms. Du, thinking she is dead, asks a servant to discard Cuitai's body in a river. But the servant discovers that Cuitai is not dead and brings Cuitai to the home of Cheng Gui's friend, Zhou Zhi. Zhou Zhi and his wife ask a doctor to treat Cuitai, and then inform Cheng Gui once she has recovered. Cheng Gui visits Cuitai several times at Zhou Zhi's home, and Cuitai conceives a child.

As Ms. Xiong is unable to have sex with Cheng Gui, Ms. Du treats her very well. She worries about the future of the Cheng family and believes that her disability during this lifetime is retribution for her sins in earlier lives. She therefore decides to become a nun. After several months, she learns in a dream that in her previous life she was an arhat, that is, an enlightened disciple of Gautama Buddha, and she has descended to the world because her mind was on worldly pleasures. Fearing that she would be seduced by these pleasures and forget her original identity, Gautama Buddha gave her an incomplete body. She dies after becoming aware of her karma. But before returning to the supernatural realm (or "Western Heaven," *xi tian* 西天), she visits the underworld and discovers that Cheng Gui and Ms. Du are fated to have no surviving descendants. Although Cuitai will give birth to a son, he will die young. In order to repay them for their kindness, Ms. Xiong is reincarnated into Cuitai's uterus and becomes her son. Meanwhile, Ms. Du sees a ghost on the spot where she beat Cuitai and then falls ill. Her soul

takes a journey to the underword and the "sinew of jealousy" (*dujin* 妒筋) is removed from her, causing her jealousy to be healed. She takes Cuitai and her son back into the home. Cuitai's son passes the civil service examination and has two sons, and then he becomes a monk and goes back to the Western Heaven after achieving nirvana.

In this story, Ms. Du does not seek or receive any medical interventions for her infertility. The focus is instead on her jealousy. That is to say, as in other cases of infertile women in vernacular stories, a solution to having no son is to take a concubine. Because Ms. Du refuses to take a concubine and then, when forced, intentionally selects a stone maiden, the ailment requires healing jealousy. In a bit of satire, when her husband attempts to use a boiled oriole (*canggeng* 鴰鶊) to heal her jealousy, citing evidence from the *Classic of Mountains and Seas (Shanhaijing* 山海經*)*, he succeeds only in irritating Ms. Du. She punishes Cheng Gui by making him kneel for a long period. The story implies that secular prescriptions are useless in treating a woman's jealousy. The only effective intervention must come from supernatural power. The punishments Ms. Du suffers during her journey to the underworld are described vividly, and she is even taught a sutra of being afraid of a wife (*papojing* 怕婆經), later bringing this sutra to the world to educate jealous women. Through the characterization of jealous wives like Ms. Du and several other model wives in *Xingshiyan*, Ming-Qing vernacular fiction emphasizes how crucial a role a wife plays in transmitting a family's honor and property. Infertility is not an obstacle to being an exemplary wife, but jealousy is, accordingly, jealousy is medicalized in these narratives, while infertility can be solved through treatment of the wife's morality.

The figure of Ms. Xiong also deserves special attention. There are a few Ming and Qing medical discussions of the phenomenon of the stone maiden. In *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目, women with this disability are categorized among the five kinds of women with genital abnormalities (*wubunü* 五不女). According to Chu Cheng 褚澄, "if the blood comes first and

surrounds the sperm, a male child is created. If the sperm comes first and surrounds the blood, a female child is created. However, if *yin* and *yang* both arrive equally, a body which is neither male nor female will be born. If the sperm and blood are separated, that is a harbinger of an aberration." In *Cuhulu*, a stone maiden is also referred to as *shinü* 實女 or "filled" or "solid" woman, for her vagina is not penetrable. *Cuhulu* also explains the cause of a stone maiden in general. If a couple has sex at an ill-omened time, and if the husband's sperm is weak and the wife's blood is cold, a child that was originally male in the uterus can become a stone maiden. In the case of Ms. Xiong, however, the genital abnormality is a blessing from Gautama Buddha. As she writes before she dies, "I had a mistaken thought in those years, and was already recorded in the samsara register. I am lucky to have been blessed by Gautama Buddha and to be born neither male nor female. If I had had a beautiful appearance, I would almost have lost the way to the Western Heaven." Therefore, if she did not have a disability, she might well have sunk into worldly pleasure and been unable to go back to the Western Heaven. In this sense, it is her incomplete body that leads to her complete enlightenment. Her sexual disability protects her from being seduced by a sexual relationship. And the fact that Ms. Du treats her kindly in her disability motivates Ms. Xiong to be reincarnated as Cheng Gui's son.

Like Ms. Du's infertility, Ms. Xiong's disability does not have to be healed. Although infertility and vaginismus are sicknesses, their existence is de-medicalized in the story. According to Andrew Schonebaum, the stone woman appears as an object of ridicule or as a female clown in many fictional works.[157] On the other hand, this disorder can be viewed as the sign of a secret relationship with supernatural powers. Ms. Xiong's disability is a sign that she is not an ordinary woman. Her real identity is more distinguished and difficult for common people to recognize. Since patients are unable to experience sexual pleasure and are therefore isolated in

[157] Andrew Schonebaum, *Novel Medicine: Healing, Literature, and Popular Knowledge in Early Modern China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington press, 2015), 138.

a family, they may be associated with Buddhist nuns, who take vows of celibacy. As there was no treatment for this disability in premodern Chinese medical books, it could be represented as the mysterious result of supernatural arrangements.

In the ninth story of Li Yu's *Silent Operas* (*Wushengxi* 無聲戲), "A Daughter Is Transformed into a Son through the Bodhisattva's Ingenuity," the body of a stone maiden becomes the site for an experiment in the efficacy of religious power. A wealthy salt-worker, Shi Daqing 施達卿, is still without an heir at the age of nearly sixty years old. Having heard at age forty that the Bodhisattva Cuidi 准提菩薩 is wonderfully receptive to prayers, he has prayed fruitlessly for a son for twenty years. On his sixtieth birthday, he sadly prays before a mirror with Cuidi's image. That night he dreams that he is crying piteously when he suddenly discovers a bodhisattva sitting in the middle of the mirror. The bodhisattva tells him that he is predestined to have no son and that, because of his avarice and ill-treatment of the poor, the only way to redeem himself and be rewarded with a son is to sacrifice to charity by giving away seventy or eighty percent of all his property. Daqing follows the bodhisattva's instructions, distributing his property to the poor and donating to build roads, bridges or temples. After he has reduced his wealth by twenty percent, one of his concubines gets pregnant. Daqing then hesitates and stops distributing his property because he wants to save up money for the child. After his concubine delivers a baby, Daqing is very surprised to find that the baby is a stone maiden. He cries before the Cuidi mirror and this time learns in his dream that the bodhisattva has broken the promise because he has broken his own: "How could you begrudge your lifeless wealth in exchange for a living treasure?"[158] The only way for him to redeem himself is to keep his original promise and sacrifice his wealth to charity. Even after Daqing reduces his wealth by half, none of his concubines are pregnant, and Daqing begins to doubt. But one day he discovers that the male

[158] Li Yu, *Silent Operas*, trans. Patrick Hanan (Hong Kong: the Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990), 154.

organ has protruded to fully half its length on the baby's body, while the female organ has gradually disappeared. Daqing realizes that the change has been brought about by the Bodhisattva Cuidi's spiritual power:

> I imagine that at the child's birth she left both alternatives open so as to test the sincerity of my devotion to charity. It was entirely up to her whether the child developed into a male, a female, or a neuter. Now that she sees that I have given away half my wealth, she consoles me with half of what I asked for. If I'm right in my assumption, she won't stop here. The trouble is that even this half cannot be taken for granted. If I were to stop my charity again, what has been extended might well be retracted again.[159]
>
> 想當初降生的時節，他原做個兩可的道理，試我好善之心誠與不誠。男也由得他，女也由得他，不男不女也由得他。如今見我的家私捨去一半，所以也拿一半來安慰我。這等看來，將來還不止於此。只是這一半也還是拿不穩的。我若照以前中止了善心，焉知伸得出來的縮不進去？

In the end, the boy's penis lengthens and his testicles descend once Daqing has given away seventy or eighty percent of his property, exactly as the bodhisattva promised.

Like *Cuhulu*, this story invokes supernatural powers to explain the phenomenon of the stone maiden. But here the body of the child serves as a test of the sincerity of his father's devotion to charity. The transformation of his body corresponds to the extent of Daqing's giving. The disability of the stone maiden is also de-medicalized, just as in the case of Ms. Xiong case in *Cuhulu*. The internal logic of these two stories is similar, since in *Cuhulu* sex is regarded as a sin that may cause Ms. Xiong to forget her identity as a disciple of Gautama Buddha, and in Li Yu's story Daqing's avarice and ill-treatment of the poor are sins to be redeemed through displays of religious devotion. Lust and money are both sinful. Ms. Xiong's salvation depends upon her disability, which keeps her from sexually pleasure. The salvation of Daqing's family depends upon his child's transformation from stone maiden to male. The key step is related not to any medical process, but to Daqing's generous distribution of his property. Li Yu's comment at the end of the story is noteworthy: "There is a general incompatibility between being rich and having

[159] Ibid., 156.

sons."[160] Thus rich people without sons should consider giving away some of their property to make way for a son. Wealth, wine, lust, and anger are regarded as four evils in premodern Chinese fiction, but "A closer examination tells us that because there are those who find no enjoyment in wine and those who easily contain their *qi* 氣, money and lust are the greater evils."[161] *Cuhulu* and "A Daughter Is Transformed into a Son" emphasize the dangers of wealth and lust through their representations of two stone maidens' bodies. Ms. Xiong's sexual disability protects her integral identity as an arhat. The body of Daqing's child tests Daqing's charity.

Premodern Chinese medical books do not mention any treatment for vaginismus, and the stories discussed above invoke supernatural powers. Some Ming-Qing stories do mention a special treatment for vaginismus through sex. For example, in the eighth story in Li Yu's *Shi'er lou* 十二樓, "The Building of Ten Marriages" ("Shijin lou" 十巹樓), the young scholar Yao Jian 姚戩 marries Ms. Tu 屠, the most beautiful woman in his hometown of Wenzhou 溫州. However, he discovers on their wedding night that his wife is a stone maiden, and his parents decide to return this woman to her family. Over the course of three years Yao Jian marries nine times in total, but most of his wives die within several months. His uncle, Guo Conggu 郭從古, believes that Yao Jian will have to marry ten times because of the name of the building he lives. Finding an extremely beautiful woman in Hangzhou, he brings her back to Wenzhou. This woman turns out to be the stone maiden Ms. Tu, who has been resold many times after being abandoned by Yao's family. Guo Conggu has never seen her in Wenzhou and did not recognize her as Yao Jian's first wife. Frustrated at his failure in marriage, Yao Jian resigns himself to his fate. As Ms. Tu has fallen in love with Yao but has no way to fulfill her sexual desire, she

[160] Ibid., 158.
[161] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2005), 159.

develops a "riding horse carbuncle" (*qimayong* 騎馬癰) in her vagina, which swells and festers, discharging pus and blood. When Yao Jian attempts to have intercourse with her, she unexpectedly has an orgasm after severe pain. They repeatedly have sex through the carbuncle, and Ms. Tu's vagina gradually becomes more easily penetrable. According to Li Yu, Ms. Tu's vagina has been hidden in her body. As it has festered, the carbuncle has become like a seal that can be removed to reveal vagina. Li Yu regards this outcome as more valuable to the couple than a more normal sexual relationship. This explanation manifests a novel imagination of the female body. As a stone woman is unable to have a sexual relationship, a sexual relationship offers a cure.

Another story about healing a stone woman is found in Xia Jingqu's 夏靜渠 *Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言, a long novel written during the Qianlong 乾隆 period (1736–1796) of the Qing dynasty. Its protagonist, Wen Suchen 文素臣, heals a stone maiden, Yu'er 玉兒, by warming her cold body with his body of pure *yang* (*chunyangzhiti* 純陽之體). In this story, Yu'er's mother gave birth to her after being raped by a horse-faced spirit in a dream. Her disability is explained as a body of pure *yin* (*chunyin* 純陰): her body is not only cold all the time, like a stone, but also has no secondary sexual characteristics. Her breasts are even smaller than Wen Suchen's own. When Yu'er gets close to Wen Suchen, she feels his body is hot, while Wen feels her body is cold. Her body gradually becomes warm after she sleeps in the same bed as Wen Suchen. Wen also massages her body wherever it is cold. After ten days, Yu'er's pelvis becomes swollen, not painful, but itchy. When she scratches it, the skin suddenly falls away and her vagina is revealed. She also begins to menstruate. When she takes a bath, she finds that her breasts have become as full as two fermented buns. This process is a metaphor of the restoration of the balance of *yin* and *yang*. The story describes the process as "warming her pure *yin* with his body of pure *yang*

and thus being able to split open a desert waste" 以純陰之體暖其純陽，即可劈破天荒.[162] In Li Yu's "The Building of Ten Marriages," the sexual healing process of the stone woman is also called "bearing extreme pain, the stone woman's desert waste is split open" 忍奇痛石女破天荒.[163] Because of her impenetrable vagina, she is said to have "been given a body with its chaos unopened" 賦形不開混沌者. As "chaos" (*hundun* 混沌) usually refers to the primeval state of the universe before Pangu 盤古 split up the sky and the earth in Chinese mythology, "opening" this chaos symbolizes the healing of a stone woman, that is, the process to create a real woman. The return to balance of *yin* and *yang* signifies the restoration of harmony between nature and the human being. As pointed out by Andrew Schonebaum, because Yu'er is a Miao stone maiden, this is a civilizing project on Wen Suchen's part. To heal Yu-er's disability is figuratively to domesticate the chaotic Miao people and transform chaos into civility.[164] Since Xia Jingqu's motivation in composing this novel was to make suggestions to the emperor, as the title shows,[165] Wen Suchen's experiences in the novel represent his ideal strategies and plans to manage state affairs. Thus, the healing of the stone maiden also symbolizes the way to restore perfect political order in a state.

In conclusion, Ming-Qing vernacular fiction paid special attention to the ordinary lives of common people. As the family home is the single most important space in which people spend their daily lives, a great number of fictional medical narratives focused on sickness at home. In these works, the patient often experiences the transformation of family power and family

[162] Xia Jingqu 夏靜渠, *Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言 (Changchun: Jilin wenshi chubanshe, 1994), 1520.
[163] Li Yu, *Shi'er lou* 十二樓(Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 185.
[164] Andrew Schonebaum, *Novel Medicine: Healing, Literature, and Popular Knowledge in Early Modern China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington press, 2015), 139.
[165] The title, Yesou puyan 野叟曝言, comes from *Liezi* 列子, which tells of a poor farmer who basks in the sun to warm himself during the winter. He considers it a good way to keep warm and wants to tell the emperor in order to receive a reward. The allusion "a countryman suggests exposure to the sun" (yeren xianpu 野人獻曝) is used as a modest characterization of one's own shallow but sincere words.

relationships. An idealized Confucian vision of the family emphasized ritual roles and obligations, presenting an ethical framework in which morality received more attention than the body. By contrast, fictional representations of patients' experience of illness at home reassert the importance of the body. In some cases, a female family member's bodily condition not only plays a key role in her own marriage, but also reaches beyond domestic affairs and affects the outside world, which is controlled by male family members. Therefore, the body may be mute and unrecognized in certain normative views, but it finds a way in vernacular stories to make itself heard through the experience of illness, revealing flaws in the ideally integrated Confucian family/social structure.

On the other hand, the stories signal unambiguously that women's physical conditions can be addressed and solved through moral interventions, especially in cases of infertility. Although professional medical texts include explanations and prescriptions for infertility, it is very rare in vernacular stories that an infertile woman or her family members seek medical interventions. Instead, a common solution is to adopt a young nephew of the husband or to take a concubine, thus rewriting family relations. Stories of this kind have presented as exemplary wives who help their husbands take a concubine in order to bear a son, and even some jealous wives who do not allow their husbands to get close to any other women, in order to convince readers of the importance of having an heir to pass on the honor and property of a family. These stories do not see the wife's power as being challenged as the husband takes a concubine or adopts a nephew, but instead affirm her authority in managing family affairs, including the selection of an heir. This pattern conveys that infertility is not an obstacle to being an exemplary wife, while jealousy is. Therefore, infertility is de-medicalized, while jealousy is medicalized in fictional medical narratives. The stories may draw extraordinary attention to illness and to the role of illness in women's lives and family lives, but they maintain the tension between medical and moral perspectives on the body's health.

Since every person has his or her proper role and responsibilities in the family, the disorder of the patient's body often influences the whole family system and brings about disorder in family ethics and relationships. From the perspective of traditional Chinese medicine, the human body is a whole organism situated within a larger framework of natural forces and society. Fictional medical narratives centered on the theme of "sickness at home" did not focus solely on how the individual person's life was destroyed by sickness, but also paid attention to how the family system and ethics were disrupted. As an altered condition of the body, sickness not only causes physical suffering but also destroys and remakes the patient's identity and interpersonal relations, revealing how the unhealthy state of a body can bring about disorder in the whole family system and in social ethics. In this way, the effort to heal a patient's body always symbolizes an attempt to restore order in a family or society. Moreover, after a patient loses his or her family identity and is sent to a temple, he or she usually tries to reconstruct the family identity and return home. Whether the patient is able to retrieve his or her family identity successfully determines a happy or tragic outcome for the patient's life and the story. Patients are seemingly universally nostalgic for their state of health and integration with family. This nostalgic mood will reappear frequently in the next chapter, on fictional medical narratives involving sickness on the road.

Chapter 3 Sickness on the Road: A Journey of Dangers Everywhere

Generally speaking, the family environment implies a familiar, stable, and comfortable daily space. After leaving home and setting forth on a journey, a traveler has to face various unpredictable, exotic, and dangerous situations. In late imperial vernacular fiction, the experiences of sick travelers were represented frequently. For a patient on the road, many factors in the journey can cause sickness, including bad weather, rugged environments, and unexpected tempests.

According to Li Mengyun's study on travelling stories in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, travel is a departure from the space of normal life and exposure to the experience of an unfamiliar space.[166] As noted in Chapter 2, a patient's world is filled with danger and threats. His or her gestural display, self-consciousness, and sense of space and time may be destroyed by sickness. The patient's family identity, everyday experience and family relationships are damaged or reconstructed. In this sense, the experience of sickness represents a departure from normal life as well. As a result, when two kinds of "departure," travelling and sickness, appear simultaneously, the patient usually undergoes dramatic changes of social identity and extreme hardship on the road, and may also experience the crisis of an alien romance.

1. Dramatic Changes of Social Identity

The last chapter examined how the patient's family identity is lost and reconstructed through the experience of sickness. It is not hard to find instances in which the mode of the

[166] Li Mengyun 李萌昀, *Lüxing gushi: Kongjian jingyan yu wenxue biaoda* 旅行故事：空間經驗與文學表達, Ph.D. dissertation, Peking University, 2010.

patient's family identity transformation is somehow stable because the sickness happens in family space, which is relatively static and secure. Sickness on the road is more complicated. As travelling implies a variable and unfamiliar space and social relations with strangers, filled with unpredictable and treacherous factors, the crisis of a sick traveler's social identity is more dramatic and sometimes even strains credulity. Some late imperial authors fully developed the considerable potential of this theme, referring to gender transformation and madness in their fictional medical narratives.

The thirty-seventh story in Lu Renlong's 陸人龍 *Xingshiyan* 型世言 tells how a male villager, Li Liangyu 李良雨, who lives in the town of Zhen'an 鎮安, Shanxi 陝西 province during the Longqing 隆慶 period(1567–1572) in the reign of the Muzong 穆宗 emperor of the Ming Dynasty, becomes female because of sickness when he goes to the town of Heyang 郃陽 for business. This story was adapted from a historical event, although the location, Li Liangyu's career, and the cause of his gender transformation were different in the initial accounts and Lu's fictional version. At the time, Li Liangyu's gender transformation had created a sensation throughout the court and the common people, leaving different narratives in various historical records and literary genres. Based on other scholars' research on these narratives, we will focus on how the sickness redefines Li Liangyu's identity through the unfamiliar space, and how the author uses the two factors of sickness and space in the historical records to represent the process of Li's gender transformation.[167]

According to Charlotte Furth's and Li Mengyun's studies on the primary source of Li's gender transformation, after the transformation happened, the Regional Inspector in Shanxi province, Song Xun 宋纁(1522–1591) immediately wrote a report to Muzong emperor. The

[167] Li Mengyun, "Xingbie bianluan yu wenxue shuxie 性別變亂與文學書寫," Yunnan daxue xuebao 雲南大學學報, Vol. 10, No. 5, 2011. Charlotte Furth, Androgynous Males and Deficient Females: Biology and Gender Boundaries in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century China, Late Imperial China, Vol.9, No.2, December 1988.

records in Li Xu's 李詡(1506–1593) *Jiezhai laoren manbi* 戒庵老人漫筆 and Li Shizhen's 李時珍(1518–1593) *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目 were both copies or excerpts from Song Xun's report. Careful comparison of the two records with the thirty-seventh story in *Xingshiyan* shows that although he kept some details, such as Li Liangyu's hometown, his relationship to Li Liangyun 李良雲, and the name of Li's spouse after the gender transformation, the author of *Xingshiyan* revised the historical event in four major respects: First, in *Jiean laoren manbi* and *Bencao gangmu*, Li Liangyu is unemployed and lives in his hometown as he transforms into a female. However, in *Xingshiyan*, Li is a farmer and goes to Heyang town for business. His gender transformation happens in Heyang. Second, both *Jiean laoren manbi* and *Bencao gangmu* mention that Li Liangyu had a wife but divorced her before the gender transformation. In *Xingshiyan*, Li Liangyu and his wife had a good relationship. They once had a daughter, but the daughter died early because of sickness. Third, according to the record of *Jiezhai laoren manbi*, Li transforms into a female at the age of 44, while in *Xingshiyan* Li is a handsome young man at the age of 22. Fourth, in *Jiezhai laoren manbi*, the gender transformation is caused by an abscess in the small intestine. In *Bencao gangmu*, the sickness is abdominal pain, while in *Xingshiyan*, Li falls ill with syphilis.

In these four major revisions, the first two are related to travelling, and latter two are related to Li's sickness. In *Xingshiyan*, Li leaves his hometown for business, and his sickness and gender transformation take place in another town, a space distant from his hometown. And his relationship with his wife is good. These situations suggest the difficulty his family would have in accepting his gender transformation, for his wife does not believe Li transforms into a female when the news spreads to his hometown. Moreover, Li Liangyu's handsome appearance facilitates his gender transformation, for he looks like a beautiful woman when he wears female clothing.

In Lu Renlong's vernacular story, sickness plays a key role throughout his journey and separation from familiar space. First, the illness is closely related to Li's physical transformation. Lu may have revised the sickness type from the small intestinal abscess or abdominal pain to syphilis perhaps because syphilis was common in the Late Ming period, because of its implicit connection with dissolute tendencies in society, and because of its rapid spread. Nevertheless, its more considerable significance is to reveal that the departure from home space provides Li an opportunity to be free from the restraints of marital morality. A common plot element in late imperial vernacular stories features a scholar or merchant lingering around a brothel in a distant city. Li Liangyu is a farmer without any travelling experience. He has the courage to go to another town for business because his companion, Lü Da 吕達, is an experienced merchant. The author intentionally emphasizes Lü is always on the road: "he enjoyed staying in whorehouses and therefore did not have a home."[168] Obviously, the "road" implies a lifestyle different from that of the family space. As for Li Liangyu, Lü Da symbolizes a strange temptation in his journey. He takes Li to the whorehouse once after they arrive in the town of Heyang. Li Liangyu stays there for a long time, and then "he felt the whole body experience chill and fever simultaneously. Two big malignant boils appeared on his lower belly and legs… Within half a month, scrofula (*luo* 瘰) grew on his body. His whole body was infected by syphilis."[169] To heal the syphilis, Li Liangyu takes some cold medication and antidote, but he takes them too early, and he also uses mercury powder by mistake. "His penis became a worm-eaten stem, turning putrid bit by bit."[170] As his condition continued to deteriorate, "not only the worm-eaten stem, his scrotum was also putrid…its root was damaged as well."[171] During this process, all of Li Liangyu's male sex characteristics disappear. Here the author inserts an episode in which Li

[168] Lu Renlong 陸人龍, *Xingshiyan* 型世言 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), 513.
[169] Ibid., 514.
[170] Ibid.
[171] Ibid.

visits the netherworld in a dream, is sentenced to become a woman, and becomes Lü Da's wife. The dream attributes Li's gender transformation to the predestination, addressing the problem through common people's way of thinking. After waking up, Li's genitalia change into those of a female. His sex transformation is physically completed.

Second, the combination of sickness and unfamiliar space during the journey sets the stage for Li Liangyu's psychological transformation and new gender role. Because of the sickness on the road and the lack of care from any family member, it is Lü Da who looks after Li. He neglects his own business and uses his own money to take care of Li. Li deeply appreciates Lü's help. Moreover, because Lü applies medication to Li's boils, he has a chance to observe Li's body. After Li's beard falls off, he looks like a beautiful woman. He becomes very shy in Lü Da's presence and begins to keep physical distance from him. But his shame awakens Lü Da's curiosity. One day, Lü touches Li's genitalia abruptly and feels that they resemble those of a woman, so he tries to have sex with Li. However, Li refuses him and covers his crotch with his hands. His action confirms Lü's guess that he is a female now. After several days, Lü Da gets Li Liangyu drunk and finds that he has biologically transformed into a woman. Lü forces Li to have sexual relations with him. This is a key step in the process of Li's psychological change. Li agrees to make love with Lü Da, which means he psychologically accepts the new gender. This process reveals that the sickness and travelling experience have remade Li's relationship with Lü Da and brought about Li's psychological transformation.

After this biological transformation, Li Liangyu adopts a female wardrobe with Lü's help, thus assuming a female gender role. It is worth noting that space remains deeply significant when Li Liangyu changes his dress. He refuses to go back to his hometown because he is ashamed to face his family and friends as a female. When Lü Da suggests opening a restaurant in Heyang, Li declines this advice as well, for "people in this place also know I am a man. Isn't it ridiculous for

me suddenly to be wearing women's clothes? We'd better go to another town."[172] Li rejects living in his hometown and Heyang, because both are now daily spaces where people are familiar with his gender as a male and his family relations. They must therefore find another "unfamiliar space" to accommodate Li's new gender and his new relationship with Lü Da. They leave Heyang and arrive at the town of Hu 鄠, where they rent a house to open a restaurant. Li wears female clothing. "He sat at the front desk and looked like a beautiful woman."[173]

Finally, even as Li's new identity is being questioned by the clan and investigated by the country, the sickness and travelling still function significantly. As Li and Lü try their best to find another "unfamiliar space" where they can lead their new lives as a couple, it is imaginable that they can leave Heyang and move secretly to the town of Hu. Li Liangyu's brother Li Liangyun 李良雲 and wife Hanshi have received a letter informing them that Li Liangyu is seriously ill, and they may quite possibly believe that Li Liangyu has died of sickness in Heyang. Even if Li Liangyun goes to Heyang to find his brother, it will be difficult to find Li Liangyu and Lü Da living in the town of Hu. Unfortunately, Li's and Lü's seemingly perfect plan is ruined by the doctor who has been invited to heal Li's syphilis.

> One day they were carrying on business in the restaurant when they saw a doctor with a medication box on his back and an iron ring (with a bell). He rang the bell and came to their restaurant for a meal, then stared at Li Liangyu. Liangyu knew he was Doctor Xi, who had treated his syphilis. Li lowered his head. Unexpectedly, Lü Da came in from outside, and they actually recognized each other. The doctor went back to Heyang and considered this event to be an extraordinary affair, saying, "Several days ago the guest Lü who asked me to treat a case of syphilis opened a restaurant in the town of Hu. There stands a woman, who was the man with syphilis. It is too strange." The news got around that Lü Da and Li Liangyu were both in the town of Hu.[174]
>
> 一日正在店里做生意，見一個醫生，背了一個草藥箱，手內拿著鐵圈，一路搖到他店里買飯，把李良雨不轉睛的看。良雨倒認得他，是曾醫便毒過的習太醫，把頭低了。不期呂達在外邊走來，兩個竟認得。這郎中回到郃陽，去把這件事做個奇聞，道："前日在這里叫我醫便毒的呂客人在鄠縣開了酒飯店，那店里立一個

[172] Ibid., 518.
[173] Ibid.
[174] Ibid.

婦人，卻是這個生便毒的男人，這也可怪。”三三兩兩播揚開去，道呂達與李良雨都在鄠縣。

Generally speaking, it would be difficult to find Li and Lü in Hu, for they have not established a wide social network there. Their acquaintances in their hometown and Heyang are not likely to go to the town of Hu without any reason. However, the doctor is an exception. Doctor Xi would know Li, since he had treated his syphilis. According to the passage above, he has a medication box and rings an iron bell, implying that he is an itinerant physician wandering about all corners of the country. It is possible for him to encounter Li and Lü in a distant town. Therefore, the news of Li's gender transformation spreads in Heyang. When Li Liangyu's younger brother, Li Liangyun 李良雲, goes to Heyang to find his older brother and hears the news, he meets the transformed Li Liangyu in Hu but does not believe that she is his erstwhile brother. He asks her to go back home but she refuses. Li Liangyun informs Li Liangyu's wife Hanshi of what he has seen and heard, but she does not accept that her husband has become a woman. She imagines three possibilities: first, that Li Liangyu has died of syphilis; second, that Li married another wife; and third, that Lü Da murdered Li Liangyu for his money. Her guesses are inextricably bound to space, for these possibilities could be realized only when Li Liangyu is sick on the road. If Li's gender transformation is completed in his hometown, as noted in the historical records, his clan's intervention would happen in a different way. After careful consideration, Li Liangyun and Hanshi file a law suit against Lü Da. Through the identification and bodily examination of Li, the magistrate admits Li's sex transformation, and the marriage is approved by the state.

Examination of Lu Renlong's account of Li Liangyu's experience of sickness and the construction of his new gender in the vernacular short story shows that Lu Renlong adapted the historical anecdote in representing Li's illness and transformation. The combination of sickness and travelling functions significantly in the framing of Li's gender transformation. In this story,

the representation of sickness focuses on the patient's subjective experience and life story as well as the role of social forces. As for Li Liangyu, the syphilis is caused by his self-indulgence, and the gender transformation destroys his identity, family relations, and social role. In other words, it terminates his life and world as a male. To construct a new gender and identity, he has to adjust to a new relationship with males and accept a female's gender role, family responsibility, and lifestyle. It is worth noting that the gender transformation brings about a strong feeling of shame, which precludes him from going back to his hometown. It indicates that he is fearful of facing his past family identity and social relations. After accepting his new relationship with Lü Da, he is still afraid that his old family members cannot understand and accept this relationship. He therefore chooses to escape from any familiar space and stay in a distant town. The change of space implies a disruption of time, which means he is willing to draw a demarcation line with his old identity and history and start a new life as a female. However, the local government forces him to go back to his hometown, bringing about another identity crisis. His experience as a female in the town of Hu and the de facto marriage with Lü Da are doubted and challenged by his clan and the state. Even if his new identity and marriage are approved by the government, he has to redefine the family relations. It turns out to be crucial that a daughter Li Liangyu and his wife had died young, because this eliminates the ethical issues raised by having a transgendered father. He becomes Li Liangyun's elder sister instead of elder brother. His wife Hanshi marries another man and treats Li as a sister. At this point, the whole process of Li Liangyu's gender transformation is completed, both physiologically and psychologically, and has the government's approval.

For sick travelers who are experiencing an identity crisis, whether to go home or not is an endless question, for a way homeward and a journey onward usually symbolize two different directions for the patient's life. Li Liangyu's refusal to go back home indicates he rejects his old identity and social relations voluntarily. Some other sick travelers eagerly hope to go back home

but fail. For example, in *Jingshi yinyangmeng* 警世陰陽夢 and *Taowu xianping* 梼杌閑評, Wei Jinzhong's 魏進忠 experience of sickness on the road represents his nostalgia and failure to go back home. Wei Jinzhong is an alias of Wei Zhongxian 魏忠賢, the most powerful and notorious eunuch during the Late Ming Dynasty. A great number of vernacular stories about the court intrigues of the Ming Dynasty depicted his life experience.[175] When describing the change of his identity from an ordinary man to a eunuch, some fictional narratives pay special attention to how he falls ill, loses his genitalia, and has to break off his family ties. In the sixth chapter of *Jingshi yinyangmeng* 警世陰陽夢, Wei Jinzhong is stranded in Zhuo Zhou 涿州 and spends his time in the company of prostitutes. He contracts venereal disease and has a severely infected sore. "The sore spread to his whole body, dripping with pus and blood. His penis gradually became putrid."[176] This experience is similar to Li Liangyu's. However, when he is discriminated against by the people in Zhuo Zhou, he sets out on his return journey.

> Thinking he had wife and son at home, he swallowed his shame and went back to see what would happen. Leaving Zhuo Zhou five to six *li* behind him, he lowered his head, bore the pain, and dragged his feet forward step by step. He was only too anxious to arrive home and see his wife and son.[177]
>
> （魏進忠）便想著有妻有子在家，且皮著臉，回去看怎麼。便離了涿州五六里地面，低著頭忍著疼，望前逐步兒捱，巴不能到家見著妻子面。

Wei Jinzhong is disliked and shunned by his acquaintances in the distant town. At this moment, when he is expelled into the unfamiliar space of the road, his family represents a stable and familiar space where his wound can be healed. Unfortunately, he meets a kinsman, who tells him his wife has remarried and has had their son adopted by a relative.

> When Jinzhong had heard [what the kinsman said], he stamped his feet and beat his breast, then fell to the ground in a bitter rage…After a while, Jinzhong struggled to his

[175] See Keith McMahon, "The Potent Eunuch: The Story of Wei Zhongxian," in Journal of Chinese Literature and Culture, 1:1–2, November 2014. 1–28. Paul Vierthaler, "Quasi-histories and Public Knowledge: A Social History of Late Ming and Early Qing Unofficial Historical Narratives," PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2014, chapter 1.
[176] Changan daoren guoqing 長安道人國清, *Jingshi yinyangmeng* 警世陰陽夢 (Liaoning: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1985), 32.
[177] Ibid., 30.

feet, crying to the sky, “Today I no longer have any home to return to. I have to go back to the temple of Mount Tai in Zhuo Zhou, beg for food somehow, and preserve this dog-like life to make other plans.” He bore the pain of the sore and returned to the temple.[178]

進忠聽說，便跳腳捶胸，氣倒在地上……一會兒進忠才自己一個爬將起來，對天大哭道：“俺今日無家可歸了！”且轉到涿州泰山神祠里，多少討些吃，煉這狗命再處。忍著瘡疼，重新複到山門里來。

Wei Jinzhong’s psychological change is vividly painted in these anecdotes: Sickness on the road arouses his nostalgia, but both his wife and son now belong to others, implying that he has lost his home forever. Through the experience of the sequence of being on the road, returning home, losing home, and returning to the new town, Wei becomes a permanent traveler. When he meets some overbearing eunuchs on the road, he reflects that he has lost both his genitalia and his family, and he attempts to join the eunuchs. These overbearing eunuchs represent the temptation of a new lifestyle. His male identity has been destroyed by sickness. He puts away his nostalgia for family and the old way of life and enters the imperial palace. From then on, Wei’s world undergoes a tremendous change. He brings disaster to the imperial regime when his power comes to rival that of the Xizong 熹宗 emperor. Eventually, he is exiled by the Chongzhen 崇禎 emperor and hangs himself during the journey.

Taowu xianping 梼杌閑評 is another novel about Wei Jinzhong’s life. It ties Wei’s degeneration even more closely to the loss of his hometown. In *Taowu xianping*, in contrast to *Jingshi yinyangmeng*, Wei Jinzhong is a fine young man. He is a stalwart and heroic figure and saves a beauty, Fu Ruyu 傅如玉, on the road. Then they get married. “The couple was inseparable whether at home or abroad. They loved each other very much.”[179] Although Wei has led a wandering life in the marketplace, after he marries Fu Ruyu, he enjoys a warm and stable family life. Fu Ruyu’s family can be considered his familiar daily space. However, when he

[178] Ibid., 31.
[179] *Taowu xianping* 梼杌閑評 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), 103.

leaves home to do business and find his mother, he gets trapped in a woeful predicament: he is tricked out of his capital by a prostitute when he goes to a brothel. Then all of his money is stolen when he stays in a hostel in Zhuo Zhou. He is desperate and seriously ill.

> Hardly noticing that several weeks had passed, he suffered from a serious disease. He felt very hot from head to toe and his whole body ached…After half a month, his body grew malignant sores. He did not have food and had to pawn his bedding. After several days, his sores were running, dripping pus and blood. The innkeeper took care of him at first, but when he saw his condition, he left the hostel and disappeared with his wife.[180]
>
> 不覺過了十數日，釀出一場大病來，渾身发熱，遍體酸疼，筋都縮起來難伸，日夜叫喊。有半個月，忽发出一身惡瘡來，沒得吃，只得把被當出錢來盤攪。過了幾日，瘡總破了，膿血淋漓。店家先還伏事他，後來見他這般光景，夫妻們撇下屋來不知去向。

Judging from the symptoms, Wei Jinzhong was likely suffering from the illness known as pestilent lesions (癘風 *lifeng*). The entry for *lifeng* in the sixth volume of *Zhangshi yitong* 張氏醫通 reads, "The patient finds food and drink without flavor, feels giddy and dazzled and aches all over, and his legs are numb too. He is thirsty and sweating. His breath is short and body is hot…There are sores on his body. If he scratches them, the pus starts running."[181] Wei Jinzhong's body is destroyed by this severe illness and he finds himself in a difficult position. Being short of food and clothing, he has to join a group of beggars in the Mount Tai Temple. However, his sores hurt him when he squeezes into the crowd, so he begs only a little money every day. It is worth noting that the novel describes how Wei indulges in nostalgia as he lives by begging.

> (Jinzhong) thought, "I am in this predicament because I did not follow good advice. My wife once tried to persuade me to live in prosperity and contentment, but I did not listen to her and insisted on going traveling. Now I have spent a thousand pieces of gold and ended up leading a wandering life. I am ashamed to face her when I go back." He tossed and turned and found it hard to fall asleep…He dreamed that he went back home. Ruyu welcomed him and the couple was very happy. Jinzhong paid his respects to his mother-in-law. Ruyu said, "I gave birth to a son after you left." She asked the wet nurse to bring the child in. He looked as if he were made of white powder or carved out of jade.

[180] Ibid., 168.
[181] Zhang Lu 張璐, Zhangshi yitong 張氏醫通 (Beijing: Zhongguo zhongyiyao chubanshe, 1995), 135.

> Jinzhong held him happily. They played for a while and the wet nurse took the child away. The couple went to bed. They loved each other very much and poured out their feelings of separation. When they were sentimentally attached, Jinzhong heard a cock crow and woke up. He was still alone.[182]
>
> （進忠）想道：“這也是我不聽好人之言，至有今日。當日妻子原勸我安居樂業，我不聽他，要出來，如今將千金資本都費盡了，只落得一身落泊，要回去有何面目見他。”翻來覆去，睡不安枕……夢到家中，如玉接著，夫妻歡樂。拜見過丈母。如玉道：“你去後我生了個兒子。”叫乳母抱來看時，如粉妝玉琢的一般。進忠抱著甚是歡喜。頑耍一會。乳母抱去。二人上床就寢，百般恩愛，共訴離情。正自綢繆，忽聽得一聲雞唱驚醒，依舊是孤衾獨抱，昏沈了一會。

In contrast with *Jingshi yinyangmeng*, *Taowu xianping* represents Wei Jinzhong's nostalgia in more detail. Because of the predicament caused by illness, he regrets leaving home and traveling to an unfamiliar town. His dream reflects his strong attachment to family life. If he succeeds in returning to his family, he will live in prosperity and contentment with his family members, as his wife hoped. However, when he decides to return home, he is robbed of his clothes by other beggars. Then as he travels he is bitten on the penis by a dog. His nostalgia and family ties are thus broken up. He gives up going home and goes instead to the capital, finally becoming the most powerful eunuch in the court.

When Wei goes from being an ordinary traveler to being an influential eunuch and the minister of the Eastern Depot, his sickness, the loss of his penis, and the process of breaking off his nostalgia play important roles. When he saved Fu Ruyu, he was praised as righteous and heroic, a masculine ideal. However, after he became a eunuch, "his beard and eyebrows fell out."[183] He began to disrupt the affairs of state and plot against loyal ministers. As Fu Ruyu's family indicates a warm, stable and familiar home space for Wei, the end of Wei's feelings of nostalgia represents the severing of his spiritual connection with Fu Ruyu and the beginning of his degeneration. The loss of his genitalia also symbolizes his spiritual castration. Instead of

[182] *Taowu xianping* 梼杌閑評 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005), 165–167.
[183] Changan daoren guoqing 長安道人國清, *Jingshi yinyangmeng* 警世陰陽夢 (Liaoning: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1985), 38.

embodying a sense of justice, he flatters the emperor for power and profit, takes bribes, and breaks the law. Therefore, the transformation of Wei Jinzhong's identity implies strong political criticism and a metaphor of moral degeneration. As troubles caused by eunuchs are a prominent feature of Late Ming political life, *Taowu xianping* and *Jingshi yinyangmeng* criticize those notorious eunuchs through Wei Jinzhong's illness, which causes the loss of his male gender role.

In the story of Li Liangyu's gender transformation discussed above, the author also combines the transformation from a male into a female with a critique of political conditions in the Ming Dynasty. The story starts with a poem, the first two lines of which read:

> When the whole world runs after feminine charm, 舉世趨柔媚,
> Who can show me a true man? [184] 憑誰問丈夫？

"Feminine charm" symbolizes a loss of masculine character and implies a critique of the eunuchs who mislead the emperor in court. In the preface to the story, the author wrote,

> In my dynasty, a group of eunuchs, Wang Zhen, Wang Zhi, Liu Qin and Feng Bao, who are neither male nor female, disrupted the political affairs…This is what the ancient people meant when they said, "the whole court is filled with concubines and women." Thus heaven shows catastrophic signs to people. Li Liangyu's story took place during the Longqing era. [185]
>
> 我朝自這乾閹奴王振、汪直、劉勤與馮保，不雄不雌的，在那邊亂政。因有這小人磕頭掇腳，搽脂畫粉，去奏承著他。昔人道的舉朝皆妾婦也。上天以災異示人。此隆慶年間有李良雨一事。

It is clear that the critique of society and political reality implied in Li Liangyu's gender transformation is similar to Wei Jinzhong's. In pre-modern Chinese literary works, interpreting sex transformation as a political metaphor first appears in the works of Gan Bao 干寶 during the Sixth Dynasty. In early China, the understanding of sexual difference was not only based on the biological construction, but also prescribed a division of gender roles and ethical standards in society. In *zhiguai* 志怪 tales, transgendered and androgynous characters embody the traditional

[184] Lu Renlong 陸人龍, *Xingshiyan* 型世言 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), 511.
[185] Ibid., 512.

Chinese concept of sexual difference through both biological construction and cultural discourse. Gan Bao attributed sex transformation to abnormal ethers (*qi*) or to disorder of *yin* and *yang*, and enlarged the understanding of sex transformation in earlier medical texts by creating a political reading. His *zhiguai* tales exploit the metaphorical significance of the body. Gender transformation is seen as a metaphor of disaster and political crisis in the country. *Zhiguai* tales exploit the symbol of body by tying the aberrant body to social chaos. For example, Gan Bao's *Yaoguai Lun* 妖怪論 in *Sou Shen ji* 搜神記 emphasizes that the sky dominates the activities of *yin*, *yang* and *wuxing* 五行. The Way of the Sky functions according to social behaviors, and the activities of air therefore have a close relationship with human affairs.[186] In the records of disasters and abnormal phenomena, Gan Bao expresses his fear of the blurring of boundaries between male and female, which symbolizes the breakdown of social order. *Yuzhang nanzi* 豫章男子 tells of a male who became a female, married, and had a son in the Eastern Han Dynasty. Chen Feng 陳鳳 commented that *yang* changing into *yin* was an omen of national subjugation. Subsequently, emperor Ai 哀 and Ping 平 died and Wang Mang 王莽 usurped the throne.[187] *Jian'an renyao* 建安人妖 also recounts the story of a male who transformed into female. Zhou Qun 周群 told the emperor that this transformation indicated the old dynasty would be replaced by a new one.[188] In fact, after eighteen years, emperor Xian 獻 was forced to abdicate. Thus the fall of the state is associated with the appearance of the aberrant body through the metaphorical significations of the body. The portrayal of an aberrant body expresses the author's anxiety about the political order of the country.

[186] Ganbao 干寶, *Soushenji* 搜神記 (Liaoning: Liaoning jiaoyu chubanshe, 1997), 36.
[187] Ibid., 45.
[188] Ibid., 50.

In the Ming Dynasty, the authors of *Xingshiyan*, *Taowu xianping* and *Jingshi yinyangmeng* inherited Gan Bao's political reading of sex transformation. The change of Li Liangyu and Wei Jinzhong's gender identity implies a biting satire of the clique of eunuchs at the time. Moreover, compared with the succinct narrative in *zhiguai* tales about sex transformation, the vernacular story tells of the detailed process of sex transformation. For example, the author of *Xingshiyan* relates not only how Li Liangyu is infected by syphilis and how his physical condition is transformed, but also how Li Liangyu feels and reacts to his sickness, how he accepts his new gender, and how Li Liangyu's wife, brother, and the government respond to his transformation. The authors of *Taowu xianping* and *Jingshi yinyangmeng* describe Wei Jinzhong's great nostalgia when he is ill, his attempt to return home, and how the loss of his genitalia forces him to remain on the road without turning back. The development from *zhiguai* tales to vernacular stories in the Ming Dynasty allows greater scope for representation of the patient's subjective experience.

Gender transformation is not the only bodily metamorphosis sickness on the road can cause in late imperial vernacular fiction. The sixth story of *Zuixingshi* 醉醒石 tells of a person from Longxi 隴西, Li Wei 李微, who transforms into a tiger in Rufeng 汝墳 due to mania (*kuangji* 狂疾). A number of early Chinese classical tales feature a human being transformed into a tiger because of retribution, sickness, heavenly punishment, and so on. "Xue Daoxun" 薛道恂, a tale from the Six Dynasties collection *Qixieji* 齊諧記, is a representative example of a person transformed into a tiger due to sickness. Xue Daoxun "fell ill with *shixingbing* 時行病. Not long afterward, he became mad and no medication could heal him. When he was crazy, he walked especially quickly. Suddenly there was no trace of him. Then he transformed into a tiger."[189] According to *Zhubing yuanhoulun* 諸病源候論, "As for *shixingbing*, the patient feels cold when

[189] *Taiping yulan* 太平御覽, volume 888.

it should be warm in spring. The patient feels chilly when it should be hot in summer. The patient feels hot when it should be cool in autumn. The patient feels warm when it should be cold in winter. It has the kind of air when it is not the time." "When a person contracts it, he takes off his clothes and walks abroad, ascends a height and sings…Because his body is filled with heat, he takes off his clothes and walks; the *yang* air is prevalent, so he talks nonsense and curses others, even including his relatives. He feels extremely hot in his whole body, so he talks wildly and suffers visual and auditory hallucinations."[190] Thus Xue Daoxun's body metamorphosis is caused by the disorder of air and excessive heat. He transforms into a tiger without any trace. At the end of the tale, he comes back home and transforms into a human being again. Although his bodily metamorphosis does not happen on the road, he leaves home after transforming into a tiger, while he returns home after resuming his human form. The spaces of "home" and "road" symbolize the different worlds of human beings and beasts. They cannot cross the boundary between the two worlds.

Li Wei's story in *Zuixingshi* shares the theme of body metamorphosis due to madness in "Xue Daoxun," but it describes the whole process of Li's transformation into a tiger and his emotion and psychology. It is adapted from the tale "Li Zheng" 李徵 in *Xuanshizhi* 宣室志 from *Taiping guangji* 太平廣記. The author kept the basic storyline but added a great deal of detail about Li's experience. In the vernacular story, the protagonist's name is changed from Li Zheng to Li Wei. He is an arrogant man and given to fits of rage. He usually acts with undue confidence in his talent and looks down upon others. However, he fails ten times in the civil service examination, so he always reviles the examiners. Although he succeeds on the eleventh try, he is appointed only as a county magistrate in Shangqiu 商丘 because his ranking in the civil service examination is low. Li Wei is not satisfied with his low official position and feels

[190] Chao Yuanfang 巢元方, *Chaoshi zhubing yuanhoulun* 巢氏諸病源候總論, Yingyin wenyuange sikuquanshu 景印文淵閣四庫全書, volume 734 (Taiwan: Taiwan shangwu yinshuguan, 1983).

unhappy working with colleagues he despises. “He became more overbearing. He slighted and insulted his colleagues in every possible way. None of his fellow officials could tolerate him.”[191] Since it is hard for other people to work with Li due to his impropriety, he has to go back home after his term of office has expired. Li’s character does not adjust to common principles in the human world. Thus, he leaves society and stays at home, a private and familiar space. Unfortunately, he has to leave home after one year to look for financial support because his family is out of funds. However, this is the point of no return. When he recalls the experiences of his political career, his discontent and indignation are roused again, and he eventually develops mania (*kuangji* 狂疾) in Rufen. “He raged, roared and jumped like a wolf or tiger…After nearly ten days, he jumped more violently. He wore his hair loose and took off his clothes.”[192] Then he leaves the inn and goes to a mountain at night. “He put his two hands on the ground to walk. At the time he felt somehow clear in his heart and saw that fur was growing on his arms. He went to the side of a stream and observed himself in the water. He had transformed into a piebald tiger.”[193]

Lingshu 靈樞 explains mania (*kuang* 狂) as follows:

> When mania begins to occur, the patient feels sad at first, frequently forgetful, irascible and often fearful, usually because of excessive anxiety and hunger… When mania begins to attack, the patient sleeps little and does not feel hungry. He is proud of himself, personally feels that he is intelligent and noble, and swears at others day and night.[194]
>
> 狂始生，先自悲也，喜忘、苦怒、善恐者得之憂飢……狂始發，少臥不飢，自高賢也，自辯智也，自尊貴也，善罵詈，日夜不休。

Zhangshi yitong 張氏醫通 cites the *Lingshu* passage and elaborates: the manic patient is “ravage, furious, and violent, just as if possessed by a demon. He behaves unscrupulously and does not avoid water or fire. He swears at others no matter whether they are his relatives or

[191] Donglu gukuangsheng 東魯古狂生, *Zuixingshi* 醉醒石 (Henan: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985), 70.
[192] Ibid., 71.
[193] Ibid., 72.
[194] Li Zhaoguo trans., *Yellow Emperor’s Cannon of Medicine, Spiritual Pivot* (Xi’an: Shijie tushu chuban gongsi, 2008), 369.

not."[195] What happens to Li Wei in Rufen accords with the description of mania, and his arrogant words and deeds when cursing the examiners because of his failure in the examination and insulting his colleagues in his official career also show many of the symptoms of mania. Especially relevant is that Li Wei recounts that in his youth he had illicit intercourse with a widow. The widow's family discovered their relationship and attempted to prevent them from meeting each other, arousing Li Wei's resentment. "He set fire to their house and let the wind fuel it. All the persons in the (widow's) family were killed in the fire."[196] When he could not obtain a recommendation for a higher position after his initial term expired, he "often remembered those high officials who were illiterate and those authorities who did not promote him. He was obsessed by the thought of gobbling them up. This idea sowed the root of his future transformation into an alien kind."[197] Therefore, Li Wei's extreme violence, rage, indignation, and delirium, all brought about by his mania, cause a departure from rationality. As pointed out by Foucault, "The secret danger of an animality that lies in wait and, all at once, undoes reason in violence and truth in the madman's frenzy."[198] In this sense, Li Wei's bodily metamorphosis may be a concrete literary image of his wild fancy and delusion. Moreover, the tale indirectly represents the treatment and ostracizing of madness by human society. According to Foucault, "Madness discloses a secret of animality which is its own truth, and in which, in some way, it is reabsorbed…In the reduction to animality, madness finds both its truth and its cure; when the madman has become a beast, this presence of the animal in man, a presence which constituted the scandal of madness, is eliminated: not that the animal is silenced, but man himself is abolished."[199] Therefore, Li Wei is left on the road forever after his transformation into a tiger.

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[195] Zhang Lu 張璐, Zhangshi yitong 張氏醫通 (Beijing: Zhongguo zhongyiyao chubanshe, 1995), 144.
[196] Donglu gukuangsheng 東魯古狂生, *Zuixingshi* 醉醒石 (Henan: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985), 78.
[197] Ibid., 70.
[198] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: A Division of Random House, 1973), 77.
[199] Ibid., 75–76.

He can no longer return to family and human society. The story is filled with metaphors of madness and space.

It is worth noting that the story describes the change of Li Wei's psychology to adjust to a tiger's life as well. After his bodily metamorphosis, he meets his old friend, Li Yan 李儼, and talks at length about his life. According to Li Wei's narrative, he makes a great effort to stand upright but fails. He feels extremely sad over the transformation of his identity. At the beginning, he attempts to avoid eating other animals, for he thinks this may be helpful in recovering his human form. Not long after, though, hunger drives him to eat deer and rabbits. Then he tells how he hesitates to eat a woman because he is afraid that eating human beings will add to his sin. Nevertheless, he loses the control over himself at last and eats her. From that time on he desires to eat people. No matter if the victim is poor, rich, old or young, he begins to prey on human beings without a feeling of guilt. During this process, his normal human feelings and reason are gradually lost. When he meets Li Yan, as his self-consciousness still exists, he tells Li Yan his experience in detail and asks Li Yan to support his wife and son and collect his writings to hand down to later generations. At last, Li Wei indicates that as the load weighing on his mind is taken off, he is afraid he will soon lose the last vestiges of human nature and reason. Therefore, he asks Li Yan to choose another route when going back to avoid meeting him again. "From now on, I will not have any care about the human world. I am afraid I will lose my human nature. Without any knowledge and intellect, if I devour you with my teeth when you pass this way again, it will arouse the mirth of other scholars."[200] This statement demonstrates that Li Wei is aware that it is impossible for him to return to the human world. It is noteworthy that Li Wei tells Li Yan to inform his wife and son that he is dead instead of telling them that he has transformed into a tiger. This implies that Li Wei's bodily metamorphosis, caused by mania, alienates him from human reason and civilization. Since Li Wei's madness is located "in an area of unforeseeable freedom

[200] Donglu gukuangsheng 東魯古狂生, *Zuixingshi* 醉醒石 (Henan: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985), 78.

where frenzy is unchained,"[201] the only treatment or solution is to shut him off from human society. As a human being, Li Wei is already dead. As Li Wei is not accepted by human society because of his arrogance, paranoia, violence, and insanity, he transforms into a beast on the road and is exiled to mountain forests. An endless wandering journey replaces an isolation at home. At the end of the story, Li Yan follows Li Wei's advice and returns by a detour. He does not know where the tiger goes and how it lives. Li Wei has joined the world of beasts, and his sickness has annihilated forever his human body, emotions, and intellect.

2. The Crisis of Marriage and Romance on the Road

The last chapter discussed how sickness at home affects a patient's marriage in vernacular fiction. Generally speaking, when a marital relation is established in a person's hometown, his or her parents or a matchmaker should be familiar with the other family. For a romantic love which happens in a person's hometown, his or her lover usually lives nearby. That is to say, their love or marital relationship develops in a familiar, daily space. By contrast, when fictional medical narratives have a traveler marry or fall in love with someone on the road, their love or marriage always implies a potential crisis, because when a male traveler begins an intimate association with a girl who he meets on the road or in an unfamiliar town, they usually fall in love with each other by chance or at first sight. Before developing the romantic love, they do not know their identification, family background, and history. In late imperial vernacular fiction, a traveler's romantic love and marriage on the road usually indicates three kinds of dangers. The first kind of danger is that, as in many *zhiguai* 志怪, the girl may be a ghost or fox spirit. Second, when the vernacular story does not include a *zhiguai*-style narrative, the traveler's marital relationship

[201] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: A Division of Random House, 1973), 76.

with the woman in a distant place may be a trap or fraud, because the local customs are strange to him. Third, although the traveler and a woman from a strange town love each other and get married, their marital relation may be threatened or destroyed by dangerous elements in the unfamiliar space. In these vernacular stories, as either a cause or an effect, sickness usually plays a key role in these crises of romance and marriage on the road.

For the first kind of danger, there is a common pattern in *zhiguai* tales starting from the Six Dynasties, which is inherited in late imperial vernacular stories: a male traveler falls in love with a beautiful, mysterious, and strange woman. After they enjoy a romantic relationship for some time, the man falls ill and eventually discovers that the lady is a ghost or fox spirit. The story of "Li Yin" in Sun Guangxian's 孫光憲 *Beimeng suoyan* 北夢瑣言 is a representative example.[202] It recounts how a scholar with a *jinshi* 進士 degree, Li Yin 李茵, picks up a red leaf floating down a royal stream. He finds a poem written on the leaf. After the Huang Chao Rebellion, Li flees to Sichuan and meets a maid from the court, Yun Fangzi 雲芳子. She sees the red leaf and tells Li that the poem was written by her. However, Yun Fangzi is recognized by a eunuch in Mianzhu 綿竹 and is forced to leave Li Yin. Li misses her very much. To his surprise, Yun Fangzi visits him at night and tells him that she has bribed the eunuch and is now permitted to go with Li Yin. After several years, Li Yin suffers from a serious illness. A Daoist discerns an evil air (*xieqi* 邪氣) on his face. Then Yun Fangzi tells Li that she is a ghost. To avoid bringing disaster upon Li, she leaves. This story is an imitation of "a poem written on a red leaf" in Fan Shu 范摅's *Yunxi youyi* 雲溪友議, in which a poet, Lu Wo 盧渥, by chance picked up a red leaf with a poem written on it by a maid in the imperial palace. He eventually marries this maid. However, Sun Guangxian changes the predestined marriage and the end of reunion in the original tale into the love between a ghost and a human whose story ends in a separation. It is Li

[202] Sun Guangxian, *Beimeng suoyan* (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991), 62–63.

Yin's sickness that forces them to part from each other. Before leaving, Yun Fangzi points out that human beings and ghosts should take different paths (*renguishutu* 人鬼殊途). There is a clear boundary between the realms of humans and ghosts. Li Yin's sickness represents a grave admonition against crossing the boundary.

In Li Yin's story, he does not pay with his life for the relationship with a ghost, for Yun Fangzi leaves on her own initiative to protect Li Yin. In other words, if they do not separate, Li Yin's life will be threatened. Another example may illustrate this outcome. The fourteenth story in *Xihu erji* 西湖二集 tells how a scholar, whose surname is Wu, is bewitched by a female ghost. Wu visits West Lake and finds a lodging near the Qiantang 錢塘 Gate. At night, a beautiful strange girl knocks at his door and they have sexual intercourse. After several months, Wu "becomes wan and sallow with his spirit quenched. His words and deeds lose reason. He seems to have been bewitched by a ghost."[203] Because a strong attachment between them makes it difficult for them to part, Wu dies of the disease in the end. In the context of Chinese traditional medicine, some special diseases, for instance, *guixiehou* 鬼邪候, are believed to be caused by communication between the patient and a ghost or demon. When a male traveler meets a strange woman on the road unexpectedly, it is hard for him to know the woman's background and identification. Thus, the danger of having sexual relations with an alien kind and falling ill is common in fictional medical narratives.

The tale, "A Lady in the West Lake" ("Xihu nüzi 西湖女子"), in the sixth volume of *zhijia* 支甲 in *Yijianzhi* 夷堅志 creates a pattern for treating sickness due to relations with an alien kind. This tale tells of a scholar from Jiangxi 江西 who travels to the West Lake on the way to his post. He falls in love at first sight with a girl from an ordinary family he encounters on the road. Unfortunately, the girl's parents do not agree to their engagement because the scholar's

[203] Zhou Qingyuan 周清源, *Xihu erji* 西湖二集(Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1989), 240.

hometown is too far away. After five years, the scholar goes to the capital and passes the girl's home but fails to find her. Later, he meets the girl unexpectedly on the road. They have sexual intercourse. However, when the scholar plans to take the girl back to his hometown, the girl refuses and tells the truth: in fact, she is a ghost, because the girl whom the scholar met five years ago already died. She also tells the scholar that he will fall ill with profuse diarrhea, for he is deeply infected by yin air (*yinqi* 陰氣). Only the medication *pingweisan* 平胃散 can heal him. After their separation, the scholar does indeed suffer from acute diarrhea, as the female ghost predicted. He follows the ghost's advice and recovers.[204] In contrast with the previous *zhiguai* tales in which the female of an alien kind can do nothing for her lover's sickness, the ghost plays dual roles here as both the cause and the healer of sickness.

The twenty-ninth story in Ling Mengchu's 凌濛初 *Erke paian jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 includes this tale in its preface. Ling Mengchu adds a similar story in the main body of the story, strengthening the female fox spirit's ability and emphasizing the function of sickness. In this story, a merchant from Zhejiang 浙江, Jiang Rixiu 蔣日休 goes to Hanyang 漢陽 for business. While staying in an inn he falls in love with the innkeeper's daughter, Miss Ma. However, he is worried that the innkeeper will not betroth his daughter to a merchant from a distant town, and thinks of her in amorous meditation, forgetting whether it is day or night. Thus, a fox spirit transforms her appearance to resemble Miss Ma's, assuming her name to communicate with Jiang. After several weeks, Jiang falls ill. He becomes emaciated and has a sallow complexion. He is delirious and talks incoherently. Then Jiang's friend helps him discover the fox spirit's true form. Before leaving Jiang, the fox gives him three bunches of grass. Following the fox spirit's instruction, Jiang boils the first bunch of grass and bathes in the water, thereafter recovering. Then he drops the second bunch in the front of Miss Ma's home. After several days Miss Ma

[204] Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧 ed. *Sanyan liangpai ziliao* 三言兩拍資料(Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 851–852.

contracts leprosy. No doctor is able to heal her. Her father has to announce that he will betroth his daughter to anyone who can heal her. Jiang provides the third bunch of grass. He boils it and asks Miss Ma to bathe with it. As expected, Miss Ma is cured and marries Jiang at last.

In this story, Jiang Rixiu's sickness does not only serve as a destructive outcome for his relationship with an alien kind, but also as a chance to fulfill his desire to marry Miss Ma. The fox spirit plays a more active role than before in helping to bring about Jiang and Ma's marriage. It is worth noting that her way to force Miss Ma's father to accept a stranger from a distant place as his son-in-law is to create another sickness, Miss Ma's leprosy. Because all the doctors failed to cure Miss Ma, her father is afraid she may die of leprosy. This predicament caused by sickness provides Jiang Rixiu an opportunity to use the third bunch of grass to heal his beloved. At the end of the story, even Miss Ma does not consider her sickness to be a disaster; Instead, she sincerely believes that it is the heavens that create her sickness to realize the predestined marriage.

This pattern is also adopted in the thirty-eighth story of *Xingshiyan* 型世言, in which the male protagonist is a traveler from afar, while the female protagonist is the innkeeper's daughter. Their identification indicates that the factor of unfamiliar space plays a key role in the relationship between the male traveler and the fox spirit. It is too hard for Jiang Rixiu to confirm a strange girl's identification in an unfamiliar place, and he therefore believes the fox spirit is Miss Ma. Their romance causes his sickness. In this type of story, the romantic love on the road usually happens between a male traveler and a female ghost or fox spirit. It represents a way to fulfill the traveler's desire. In the meantime, the traveler usually falls ill because of the fox depleting him of vital energy. The sickness caused by the relationship with an alien kind resonates with the traveler's anxiety and nervousness on the road. That is to say, sickness is an image of the traveler's disturbed mind. As a result, the romantic love between a male traveler and a female ghost or fox spirit is doomed to be transient. The traveler's recovery and the

establishment of his marriage with a human lover symbolize an end of his journey. He eventually returns to a normal family life. “From then on, the idea of returning to his native home never occurred to Jiang. Feeling like fish in water, Jiang and Yunrong (Miss Ma) lived together to a ripe old age in conjugal felicity in Ma’s house.”[205] The strange place serves as the traveler’s hometown at last. The unfamiliar space transforms into a familiar one. Only in this way is the traveler able to obtain a permanently safe and warm destination.

For the second kind of danger, even if the female whom the male traveler meets on the road is not an alien kind, the traveler may be cheated by her or her family because the traveler is not familiar with the local customs and the female’s family background. The last chapter mentioned the story in which Chen Duoshou takes arsenic and his leprosy is cured. In fact, there was in late imperial times a mysterious custom in Guangdong 廣東 for curing leprosy. It is called “transferring leprosy” (*guolai* 過癩). For example, Wang Jian’s 王楗 Qiudeng conghua 秋燈叢話 describes this custom, “In the East Guangdong, there are many women who contract leprosy. They have to have sexual relations with males to transfer the poison to males. Then the woman is healed.”[206] According to Qu Dajun’s 屈大均 Guangdong xinyu 廣東新語, “The male’s leprosy may not transfer to the female, while the female’s leprosy may transfer to the male. Once transferring, the leprosy is gone. The female does not contract leprosy at all.”[207] Because of the terrifying leprosy and the quaint custom, these women have to seduce men to have sexual relationships. It is worth noting that the men whom they choose as victims are always travelers from afar. There are a great many tales regarding how they choose male travelers. For example, Xuan Ding’s 宣鼎 Yeyu qiudenglu 夜雨秋燈錄 says, “Here is the frontier of the West Guangdong, which produces beautiful girls, but all of them have a strange

[205] Ling Mengchu, *Erke paian jingqi*, trans. Li Ziliang (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2008), 1405.
[206] Wang Jian 王楗, *Qiudeng conghua* 秋燈叢話 (Shandong: Huanghe chubanshe, 1990), 185.
[207] Qu Dajun 屈大均, *Guangdong xinyu* 廣東新語, vol. 1 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1985), 245.

disease. When a girl is fifteen years old, her rich family uses a thousand pieces of gold to seduce a traveler from a distant place. Only after the girl's poison is transferred (to the traveler) does her family find a real spouse for her and betroth her to him."[208] Cheng Wan's 程畹 Qian'an manbi 潛庵漫筆 says, "'transferring leprosy' is popular in the frontier of Guangdong. Once the girl [with leprosy] is fifteen years old, [her family] always betroths her to a traveler from afar by deception. As long as the girl sleeps with the male, her leprosy can be transferred to him. He will definitely die before long. Then the girl will be healed and marry. Otherwise, there will be no one in her hometown who proposes a marriage for her."[209]

According to these descriptions, it is impossible for a woman with leprosy in Guangdong to marry a local person, because all the natives are familiar with her disease. Her only chance of recovery is to have sexual intercourse with a man from a distant place. There are many tales about this group of women in the Qing Dynasty. In these tales, the male traveler is seduced to live in the girl's family with or without a marriage ceremony. Then there are two possibilities in general: first, the girl refuses to transfer her leprosy to the traveler. She tells him the truth and asks him to leave as soon as possible. After the girl's disease deteriorates, she is abandoned by her family. When wandering on the road, she meets the male traveler again. Then her leprosy is healed with snake wine (*shejiu* 蛇酒) and she marries him. *Mafengnü Qiu Liyu* 麻風女邱麗玉 is a representative example. Second, the girl has a sexual relationship with the traveler and successfully transfers her leprosy to him. The traveler is infected and sent back to his hometown. However, the girl insists on leaving together with him, or she is sent to his hometown before long as well because she preserves her chastity after the traveler leaves. A famous example is *Wushe yilai* 烏蛇已癩 in Wu Chichang's 吳熾昌 *Kechuang xianhua zhengxuji* 客窗閒話正續集. Although most of these types of stories emphasize the girl's chastity, they convey an important

[208] Xuan Ding 宣鼎, Yeyu qiudenglu 夜雨秋燈錄 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1987), 131.
[209] Cheng Wan 程畹, *Qian'an manbi* 潛庵漫筆(Shanghai: Shanghai shenbaoguan 上海申報館, 1875).

message: no matter whether the action of "transferring leprosy" happens, the traveler must go back to his hometown either to escape from this custom or to wait for his death after having been infected. This implies that only his hometown is a safe place or his real destination. Especially when the girl or the traveler is healed eventually, their real marital relationship is established after the traveler returns home. Since the past journey represents danger and crisis, they are able to live a happy life only in the traveler's hometown. All such stories rely on a fundamental belief that a woman is a potential drain upon the man, or possibly constitutes a danger to him, especially if she belongs in some way to the world of the strange. As the social convention is for the woman to marry into the man's family, this may be the main rationale that explains what a safe place is.

In late imperial vernacular stories, another trap of marriage is to use a seductive woman to ensnare a man. Similar to "transferring leprosy," male travelers are the target of this sex-trap as well. For example, the fourteenth story in *Erke paian jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 tells of Wu Yue 吳約, an official from Dao Zhou 道州, who goes to the capital to take examinations in the ministry of official personnel affairs. These examinations will determine whether he can be promoted. Unfortunately, he is cheated by a woman and a group of ruffians in Lin'an 臨安. Wu falls in love with a woman, Lady Zhao, whose house is opposite his lodging. Lady Zhao's servant tells Wu that her husband has gone to another town to call on his relatives. Wu Yue finds a chance to visit Lady Zhao. When Lady Zhao's husband comes back and finds Wu Yue in bed with her, he threatens Wu that he will report their adultery to the local government. Wu has to spend his entire fortune to bribe him. However, Wu finally finds that this is a trap designed to swindle money out of him. Lady Zhao's "husband" and "servant" are frauds who have hired a prostitute to cheat Wu. Wu Yue has to return to his hometown because he is out of money to live in Lin'an. Losing the chance to be promoted and being regretful and depressed, Wu dies of a serious illness.

Wu's illness is an outcome of the sex-trap. His death represents a warning to male travelers who expect a romance on the road.

The third kind of danger is, even if the romantic love or marital relations between a male traveler and a girl from a strange place are genuine, their romance or marriage may still encounter a crisis because of a variety of unstable factors on the road. For example, in the twenty-third story of *Yushi mingyan* 喻世明言, a scholar from Yuezhou, Zhang Shunmei 張舜美 goes to Hangzhou to take the provincial examination. He stays in an inn and meets a girl, Liu Suxiang 劉素香. They fall in love with each other. Fearing that Liu's parents will prevent them from meeting again, they decide to elope together. Unfortunately, they are separated in a crowd and lose sight of each other at the north gate of the city. Zhang spends the whole night looking for Liu but fails. After daybreak comes, he finds Liu's embroidered shoe at new wharf.

> Someone in the crowd was saying, "I wonder why a girl would leave her family and drown herself here, leaving a shoe behind? At these words, Shunmei broke into a cold sweat. He returned to the city to make inquiries, only to hear rumors all over town that the daughter of the Liu family on Shiguaizi Lane had been kidnapped. In another version, she had drowned herself, and the constables had taken up the case. What with a restless night, an empty stomach, and grief over the woman's untimely death, Shunmei fell ill upon returning to his inn. Confined to his bed, he ran a high fever, with rushes of heat alternating with shivers of cold. His condition grew so grave that he found himself on the verge of death.[210]
>
> 眾人說："不知何人家女孩兒，為何事來，溺水而死，遺鞋在此？"舜美聽罷，驚得渾身冷汗。覆到城中探信，滿城人喧嚷，皆說十官子巷內劉家女兒，被人拐去，又說投水死了。隨處做公的緝訪。這舜美自因受了一晝夜辛苦，不曾吃些飯食，況又痛傷那女子死於非命，回至店中，一臥不起，寒熱交作，病勢沈重將危。

Because Zhang Shunmei and Liu Suxiang come from two distant places and love each other deeply, they plan to leave Liu's hometown in order to spare themselves the pain of separation. However, as a strange traveler, Zhang does not know the gate of Hangzhou is so crowded even at night, and they lose each other. That is to say, the distance between their hometowns forces them

[210] Feng Menglong, *Stories Old and New*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 425.

to elope, but unfamiliar space causes their separation. Zhang falls ill from the grief of losing his lover. Moreover, when other people, including Liu's parents, believe that Liu Suxiang drowned herself for no reason, Zhang does not dare to tell the truth that he met Liu secretly that night. He has a lingering sense of guilt, but cannot tell anyone. Therefore, his sickness represents an expression of his grief and guilt through his body. It also demonstrates the crisis of a romantic love on the road.

In other fictional medical narratives, a common case is that although a traveler marries a girl in a distant place, the factors of sickness and unfamiliar space may affect their family relations, or they have to part from each other. In the second story of *Badongtian* 八洞天, Zhangsun Chen 長孫陳 and his son, Shengge 勝哥 flee to Wu'an during the An Lushan Rebellion. Shengge's mother Xinshi 辛氏 drowns herself in a well when they are going to be captured by the army. At night, Zhangsun Chen and Shengge find lodging with the Gan family. Shengge falls ill because of extreme sadness. Zhangsun has to stay in the Gan family to look after him. The daughter in the Gan family, Xiu'e 秀娥, falls in love with Zhangsun. Although Zhangsun does not want to remarry soon, he has to promise the marriage for two reasons. First, his son is sick and they need to stay in the Gan home to wait for his recovery. Second, considering they just fled to a strange town, they need the Gan family's help to get a certification for passage, so they can go to Zhangsun's father-in-law for shelter. Both of his considerations are related to sickness and unfamiliar space. However, Shengge feels very sad for his father's new marriage and misses his mother very much, and his health deteriorates. Because he does not pay respect to his stepmother, Xiu'e, on time, he antagonizes Xiu'e. As the stepmother and stepson do not get along well with each other, Zhangsun has to entrust Shengge to the care of his friend. Therefore, the sickness on the road forces Zhangsun to remarry Xiu'e right after his wife's death, leading to the family dissension. Xiu'e dies young of illness after several years, which implies

the instability and fragility of marriage on the road. At the end of the story, Zhangsun finds that his first wife, Xinshi, is not actually dead. She was saved by her parents. Their reunion indicates that compared to the crisis of marriage on the road, the marital relation established in their hometown is more stable and reliable.

The thirty-second story in *Erke paian jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 describes a tragedy in which sickness on the road forces a couple to separate forever. In the story, an official from Suzhou, Zhu Jingxian 朱景先 is appointed director of the Department of Tea and Horses in Sichuan. His son Zhu Xun 朱遜 is betrothed to a Miss Fan 范 in Suzhou. After Zhu Xun follows his father to his office in Sichuan, he takes a concubine, Zhang Funiang 張福娘, there. One year later, Miss Fan's father sets off with his daughter for Sichuan to complete the marriage. Hearing that Zhu Xun has already taken a concubine, they ask the Zhu family to dispose of Zhang Funiang. Thus, Zhang Funiang has to go back to her parents' home. When Zhu Jingxian's term of office expires in the following year, he decides to leave Sichuan and go back to Suzhou. As Zhang Funiang is going to give birth to a baby, the Zhu family agree to bring her along with them. However, the plan has to be abandoned because of Zhu Xun's sickness.

> (Zhu Xun) contracted consumption, spitting blood and running fever at night. The doctor warned him of the danger of continued sexual indulgence. Jingxin said to his wife, "Our son is sick. We will have to let him and his wife sleep separately. If Zhang Funiang joins him now, that will add oil to the flames. I think we should leave Zhang Funiang here instead of taking her along with us."[211]
>
> （朱遜）早已染了癆怯之癥，吐血絲，发夜熱，醫家只戒少近女色。景先與夫人商量道："兒子已得了病，一個媳婦，還要勸他分床而宿。若張氏女子再娶將來，分明是油鍋內添上一把柴了。還只是立意回了他，不帶去罷。

Although Zhang Funiang insists on going to Suzhou, Zhu Xun's sickness causes their separation forever. In this tragedy of marriage, Zhu Xun takes a concubine before holding a formal marriage ceremony with Miss Fan because he is unable to curb his sexual desire, and

[211] Ling Mengchu, *Erke paian jingqi*, trans. Li Ziliang (Beijing: Gaodeng jiaoyu chubanshe, 2008), 1521.

he lives thousands of *li* away from his hometown. After getting married, his unrestrained indulgence in sex leads to consumption, which dashes Zhang Funiang's hope to go to Suzhou with the Zhu family. Zhu Xun and Zhang Funiang's marriage is established in Sichuan. It is similar to the way Zhu Xun's father serves as an official in Sichuan, indicating that the Zhu family just takes up a temporary residence there and they are bound ultimately to return to Suzhou. Even in Zhang Funiang's heart, Sichuan is only a short-term lodging.

> Forty days after the departure of the Zhu family, Zhang Funiang gave birth to a baby boy. To her mind, the boy would sooner or later go back to the Zhu family. For the present, she named him Ji'er, meaning living temporarily away from home, and she raised him in her home in Sichuan. With her son, she would rather live in poverty than remarry.[212]
>
> 朱家去得四十日後，生下一子。因道少不得要歸朱家，只當權寄在四川，小名喚做寄兒。福娘既生得有兒子，就甘貧守節，誓不嫁人。

Since Zhang refuses to remarry and has been waiting for the day when she can take her son and "return" to Suzhou, Sichuan is no longer her hometown in this sense. Although she eventually goes back to the Zhu family along with her son, it only happens after Zhu Xun's death of illness. By the time she is accepted by her husband's family, she has already lost her husband.

The twenty-second story in *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 uses the image of the boat to represent the unstable situation during a journey and symbolize the potential crisis of marriage on the road. In the story, Song Jin's 宋金 family lives off the rent from some inherited land. After his parents die of sickness, he becomes poor and has to sell the house and land, renting another house to live, "with nothing left but his bare hands."[213] After he is not able to afford the rent, he is expelled from the house by the landlord. This implies Song Jin has lost his home and has become a permanent traveler. He wanders to the Lord Guan Temple in Beixingguan and

[212] Ibid.
[213] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2005), 957.

meets his father's old friend, Liu Youcai 劉有才, by chance. Liu has a family shipping business. He has a large boat and transports goods to make profit. He takes Song to his boat and asks him to help run the shipping business. After two years, he engages his daughter, Yichun 宜春, to Song Jin and holds a marriage ceremony for them. It seems that their marital relations are stable, for Song Jin is the son of Liu Youcai's old friend, and there was a marriage proposal when Song's father was alive. However, the boat, where Liu's family lives, is a symbol of a shaky and wandering life. It represents the potential crisis in Song Jin's marriage. Sure enough, after Song Jin and Yichun's daughter dies of sickness, Song Jin falls ill because of extreme sadness. Afterwards their marriage encounters a crisis.

> Song Jin cried so bitterly over the loss of his beloved daughter that his excessive grief wore him down, and he fell victim to consumption. His temperature went down in the early morning but rose to a fever at night, and he ate and drank less and less. Soon, his bones stood out in his emaciated body, and his movements were slow and painstaking. In the beginning, Mr. and Mrs. Liu hoped for his recovery, and they engaged doctors and asked for divinations on his behalf. But as the illness dragged on for more than a year and got worse instead of better, with Song Jin looking more like a ghost than a human and unable to write or do arithmetic, the Liu couple began to see him as a thorn in their flesh. They could hardly wait for him to die, and yet he hung on to life. Overcome with regret, they busily blamed each other.[214]
>
> 宋金痛念愛女，哭泣過哀，七情所傷，遂得了個癆瘵之疾。朝涼暮熱，飲食漸減，看看骨露肉消，行遲走慢。劉翁劉嫗初時還指望他病好，替他迎醫問卜。延至一年之外，病勢有加無減，三分人，七分鬼。寫也寫不動，算也算不動。倒做了眼中之釘，巴不得他死了幹淨，卻又不死。兩個老人家懊悔不叠，互相抱怨起來。

Liu Youcai and his wife have counted on Song Jin to help them on the boat and support them in their old age. They therefore consider him a burden after he gets ill and is unable to work. In order to get rid of him, they take the boat to a deserted place on the pretext of picking up a shipment of goods from the north of the river. Liu Youcai asks Song Jin to go on shore and collect some firewood. "In Song Jin's absence, Liu punted the boat away with all his might and

[214] Ibid., 969.

turned it back the way it had come. Under full sail, the boat glided downstream."[215] The boat plays a key role in Liu's abandonment of his son-in-law. Because of the mobility of the boat, it can carry Song Jin to the deserted place and leave him immediately after he goes on shore. This implies although Song Jin already joined Liu's family, the family relation built onboard the boat is extremely unstable. He leads a wandering life after losing his original family. Moreover, after the boat leaves, he loses his marital family as well because of his illness.

It is worth noting that as a patient Song Jin has a deep sense of guilt because he is not able to work anymore. When Liu scolds him and commands him to chop firewood, "feeling ashamed, Song Jin took up an axe and dragged himself ashore."[216] It seems that losing labor capacity is a kind of sin. The patient is a sinner with profound fear and humility. Since from the perspective of his parents-in-law Song must be responsible for his sickness, the abandonment symbolizes an exile from the family. After realizing that he has lost the family of his wife, Song Jin feels stab of pain in his heart; "he broke into violent sobs, weeping until he choked and collapsed in a swoon."[217] However, in Song's opinion, "his abandonment of me during my critical illness is due to my own sorry fate."[218] He accepts that a patient should be disadvantaged and that the abandonment of a patient is somehow understandable. Fortunately, his marriage crisis is solved at the end because his wife, Yichun, insists on preserving her chastity although her parents force her to remarry. More importantly, Song Jin becomes a prosperous man after being healed by a monk. When he goes to Liu Youcai's boat with another name, wearing a brocade robe and a marten hat, Yichun finds he bears a strong resemblance to her husband. However, when she asks her father to sound him out, Liu Youcai's response is, "That miserable sick wretch has gone from this world, flesh and bones and all! Even if he did not die, he must be

[215] Ibid., 971.
[216] Ibid.
[217] Ibid.
[218] Ibid.

begging for food somewhere far away. How could he have come into such enormous wealth!"[219] It is seen that sickness signifies weakness and uselessness, while property represents strength and power. Therefore, Song Jin is abandoned by his parents-in-law as a patient, while his parents-in-law ask for forgiveness from him after he becomes rich. At the end of the story, Song Jin tells his parents-in-law that he has already acquired much land and property in Nanjing and asks them to give up their business on boat and follow him there. This signifies the end of their wandering life on boat. As the boat symbolizes various unstable factors during a journey, it is believed Song's marriage would be safe only on shore.

3. Dangers and Hardships During a Journey

For a traveler, sickness has a close relationship with danger and hardship during a journey. They interact as both cause and effect, creating many threats to the traveler's life: there are a great number of factors on the road that can potentially cause diseases. Once a traveler falls ill, he may encounter unpredictable difficulties and challenges. In late imperial vernacular fiction, how a traveler contracts an illness and how the illness affects his journey life are represented frequently.

As for the sick traveler's dangerous and desperate situation, the second chapter of *Yumu xingxinbian* 娛目醒心編 includes a prefatory lyric, *Yijianmei* 一剪梅, which has a vivid description:

> Far away from hometown because I live on nothing.
> My wife is distant; my son is distant.
> Mountains and rivers on the homeward journey, while I am seriously sick.
> I am not able to return either when alive or dead.[220]
> 謀生無計遠鄉閭，妻也睽違，子也睽違。山川迢递病支離，生不能歸，死不能歸。

[219] Ibid., 995.
[220] Caoting laoren 草亭老人, *Yumu xingxinbian* 娛目醒心編 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), 6.

In this lyric, the author heightened the sick traveler's extreme anxiety about the danger on the road and hopeless nostalgia by repeatedly emphasizing the great distance from his hometown. This implies that hardships during the journey, along with sickness, may lead to the traveler's tragic death in a strange land. When describing an exiled official's experience on the road, late imperial fictional medical narrative usually focuses on dangers and illness. For example, the fifth chapter of *Jinxiangting* 錦香亭 tells of a righteous official, Zhong Jingqi 鐘景期, who is exiled to Sichuan because he has exposed a high minister, Li Linfu's 李林甫 corruption. The author works hard to depict Zhong Jingqi's feelings about the arduous paths in Sichuan and his psychological state.

> Next to the Jianmen pass are steep walls and dangerous cliffs. In the middle there is a big stream. A plank road is built halfway up the mountain, narrow and high…The sun only shines at the time of si 巳 and wu 午 every day. During the rest of time there are only dense clouds and black miasma. They lodged in a stone cave without a house. When they ate, there were some monkeys who were not afraid of people watching them. At this point, Jingqi trembled with fear all throughout the day. Moreover, hot air from the mountain was threatening, so it was hard to walk. Finding his travel funds were not sufficient, he was anxious and fell ill.[221]
>
> 那劍門關外的旁邊是峭壁危崖，中間夾著大澗，山腰里築起棧道，又狹又高……一日只有巳午二時，有些日光照下，其余早晚間惟有陰霾黑瘴。住宿就在石洞中開張，並無屋宇。打尖時節，還有那些不怕人的猢猻在身旁看人吃飯。景期到了此際，終日戰戰兢兢，更兼山里熱氣逼將下來，甚是難行。且又盤纏看看缺少，心上又憂，不覺染成一病。

For the official who is exiled to a distant and deserted place, the perilous environment on the road, along with the feeling of being abandoned and devastated, can easily cause sickness. Thus, the sickness is an embodiment of the inner anxiety and suffering and may threaten the patient's life. In this story, Zhong Jingqi has to lodge in a temple to recuperate. He falls asleep quickly because he is ill and too tired on the road. However, a monk in the temple attempts to murder him for his money. He flees in panic and nearly dies. Through Zhong's experience, it can be seen

[221] Suan zhuren 素庵主人, *Jinxiangting* (Liaoning: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1984), 46–47.

how hardship on the road leads to sickness and how the sickness brings about a threat to life. Fortunately, Zhong survives all perils. Another story, the fourth chapter of *Hejin huiwenzhuan* 合錦回文傳, tells of Sang Qiu 桑求, who dies of an illness on the road. Similar to Zhong Jingqi, Sang Qiu refuses a bribe and is impeached in reprisal. He is exiled to Xiangzhou 襄州 and catches a serious cold in a boat. His sickness worsens when his boat just arrives at Xiangzhou. However, he is not able to assume office due to his unhealthy state. After several days, he dies on the boat. Moreover, after his corpse is put in a coffin, his family members are unable to bring the coffin back to his hometown because of the rebellion of Yang Shouliang 楊守亮. They have to borrow a room in a temple to deposit the coffin and lodge there. Sang Qiu is not able to return to his hometown either when alive or dead. His tragedy can be seen as the embodiment of the lyric above.

The twenty-second story in *Paian jingqi* 拍案驚奇 uses different space to represent the patient's experience. Guo Qilang 郭七郎 buys official papers from Guo Han 郭翰, a prefectural governor in Hengzhou 橫州 who then dies of sickness. He plans to bring his mother to Hengzhou to take the place of Guo Han. However, his home is destroyed in Wang Xianzhi's 王仙芝 rebellion. His mother has to lodge in a thatched cottage near a temple. Qilang comforts his mother, saying "we will enjoy lives in honor and splendor later."[222] They hire a boat to Hengzhou. Unfortunately, they encounter a stormy night while the boat is moored in Yongzhou 永州. The tree where they have tied the anchor line falls and breaks the boat into pieces. Qilang and his mother survive, but his mother contracts an illness. She is frightened by the accident at night. Unable to do anything but cry, she is bedridden. Although Qilang's mother loses her house in Wang Xianzhi's rebellion, she still lives in her hometown and does some needlework with two

[222] Ling Mengchu, *Erpai* (Hubei: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1996), 216.

maidservants to support her life. However, after leaving home, she is faced with an unexpected storm and falls into the water when the boat is shattered by the tree. This is the greatest shock she has ever had, thus she falls ill and loses all hope for the new life in Hengzhou. When Qilang attempts to comfort her, her answer is, "My son! Your mother's heart is broken. I am a dying person. Why do you say these words of peace? Even if you will be an official, I am not able to see."[223] The implication is that her sickness not only damages her body but also destroys her future life.

In this story, the familiar space of their hometown represents survival. Although they are confronted with a rebellion, their lives are preserved. Qilang's mother still feels happy when hearing the news that Qilang will become an official. In contrast, the unfamiliar space on the road represents danger and an unexpected threat to life. As the end of their trip, Hengzhou symbolizes a new life and salvation from all the misery and distress. As a result, Qilang believes that after assuming his post, he will be able to bring honor to his family. They will lead a rich and happy life. He repeatedly consoles his mother, "as long as we arrive at Hengzhou, everything will be better."[224] Unfortunately, a series of calamities on the road prevent them from continuing the journey. Hengzhou eventually becomes a destination that cannot be reached. After Qilang's mother dies of sickness, he is not able to assume the post because he has lost his official identification in the storm. He has to work on other people's boats. He therefore becomes a wanderer, rowing a boat back and forth on the river. He is homeless and doomed to stay on the road throughout his life.

Because the traveler usually encounters various unexpected dangers and can even risk his life on the road, a filial son who travels ten thousand *li* in search of his parents receives high praise in many vernacular stories. "Among all the people under the heaven, is there someone

[223] Ibid., 218.
[224] Ibid.

who is able to hike alone to the place which is ten thousand *li* far away and filled with miasma, unafraid of tigers, leopards, snakes, thieves, difficulties, hunger, coldness, and sickness, in search of his parents?"[225] Centered on filial piety, "traveling ten thousand *li* in search of his father" (*wanli xunqin* 萬里尋親) becomes a common theme in late imperial vernacular fiction. As an archetype of late imperial filial request narratives, Wang Yuan's 王原 story has attracted the attention of many scholars.[226] The twenty-seventh story in *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言 includes a variant of this narrative mode: A battalion commander of the imperial bodyguards, Li Xiong 李雄, goes to Shanxi 陝西 to put down a rebellion but dies in battle. His second wife, Miss Jiao 焦, plots against the life of his first wife's son, Li Chengzu 李承祖, because if Li Chengzu dies, her own son will be eligible to inherit Li Xiong's official title and property. Miss Jiao's brother Jiao Rong 焦榕 helps her propose a wicked plan:

> "There's no word about where my brother-in-law's remains are. Wait for two more months. When the weather turns bitterly cold, send a trusted servant to take Chengzu to Shanxi to look for the remains. That child has never experienced any hardships of traveling. He will fall ill in the changed environment and climate and drop dead on the road. Even if he survives the hardships of the journey and arrives at his destination, have the servant leave him there and quietly come back alone. So, without money, he won't be able to do anything. He'll die of either cold or hunger."[227]
>
> "妹夫陣亡，不知屍首下落。再捱兩月，等到嚴寒天氣，差一個心腹家人，同承祖到陝西尋覓妹夫骸骨。他是個孩子家，哪曾經途路風霜之苦、水土不服，自然中道病死。設或熬得到彼處，叮囑家人撇了他，暗地自回。那時身畔沒了盤纏。進退無門，不是凍死，定是餓死。"

[225] Caoting laoren 草亭老人, *Yumu xingxinbian* 娛目醒心編 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), 7.
[226] See Shang Wei, *Rulin waishi and Cultural Transformation in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2003), 54–55. Maria Franca Sibau, *Reading for the Moral: Exemplarity and the Confucian Moral Imagination in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Short Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 33–46. Liu Yongqiang 劉勇強, "Lishi yu wenben de gongshenghudong: yi shuizei zhanqixing he wanlixunqinxing weizhongxin," 歷史與文本的共生互動——以"水賊占妻（女）"型和"萬里尋親"型為中心, Wenxue yichan 文學遺產, 2000(3), 85–99.
[227] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Awaken the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 619.

In this plan, the filial journey, which was first instituted as a category eligible for imperial reward in the early Ming and was glorified to the end of the dynasty,[228] becomes a means to murder a filial son. Using the excuse of filial requests, Miss Jiao forces Li Chengzu to go on a dangerous expedition in search of his father's bones, saying "If you can bring the remains home, it will be an act of filial love on your part…If you don't find father's remains, don't come back to see me."[229] It is worth noting that this expression of the finial son's motivation and pledge is always said by himself in traditional exemplary vernacular stories of "traveling ten thousand of li in search of the father." For example, in Wang Shiyuan's 王士元 story in *Yumu xingxinbian*, he said, "even if my father is not able to return alive, could it be said that his bones cannot be brought back either?"[230] "No matter if I die or survive this time, I will definitely find my father's remains."[231] However, Miss Jiao uses a similar tone, manifesting filial piety to conceal her true malicious intention. As she expected, Li Chengzu falls ill on the road.

> The bitterly cold wind of midwinter pierced his skin like arrows. The snow accumulated on the ground to a depth of three or four feet and pack animals walked as if through piles of cotton. Having grown up in easy circumstances, Li Chengzu, not yet ten years old, was ill prepared for such misery. Shivering uncontrollably as he rode on the back of the pack animal, he tumbled into the snow from time to time. After more than ten days on the road, traveling by day and resting by night, he ate less and less and fell ill.[232]
>
> 此時正是隆冬天氣，朔風如箭，地上積雪有三四尺高。往來生口，恰如在棉花堆里行走。那李承祖不上十歲的孩子，況且從幼嬌養，何曾受這般苦楚！在生口背上把不住的寒顫，常常望著雪窩里攛將下來。在路曉行夜宿，約走了十數日，李承祖漸漸飲食減少，生起病來。

During the trip in search of his father's remains, Li Chengzu is afflicted by bad weather and sickness. Compared to exemplary sons on filial journeys, these hardships are not tests of his filial conduct by heaven, but the results of his stepmother's intrigues and plots. As his

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[228] Maria Franca Sibau, *Reading for the Moral: Exemplarity and the Confucian Moral Imagination in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Short Fiction* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2018), 28.
[229] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Awaken the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 620.
[230] Caoting laoren 草亭老人, *Yumu xingxinbian* 娛目醒心編(Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), 8.
[231] Ibid., 9.
[232] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Awaken the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 621.

filial journey is a family scheme to murder him, it shows how a vicious stepmother violates family ethics and rites instead of how a filial son practices them. In this sense, a textual tension between this story and traditional narratives of "traveling ten thousand of *li* in search of his father" is produced.

The subversion of traditional narratives regarding filial requests is further manifested in Li Chengzu's final destiny. He is abandoned by the servant when ill. Then he is saved by an old woman and recovers. He fortunately finds his father's remains with a monk's help and returns. Unfortunately, although he survives a serious illness, he is not able to escape from his stepmother's murderous plans. On the night of his arrival home, he is poisoned to death by Miss Jiao. "When asked, Miss Jiao replied that the boy had fallen ill on the road and had died as soon as he had gotten home."[233] Sickness on the road serves both for the plot on Li Chengzu's life and for an excuse for his unusual death. The narrator comments, "How sad it is that Li Chengzu survived the hardships of the journey to the battlefield only to perish in his own home!"[234] Therefore, the story suggests that all the perils and diseases on the road are not as bad as a vicious stepmother. Compared to a fatal filial journey, an immoral family is even more dangerous. In the story of the filial journey in *Yumu xingxingbian*, a representative narrative mode is "his father's bones return home after the son overcomes all the dangers and hardships, both heaven and humans assist him."[235] When Li Chengzu discovers his father's bones with the help of a monk, the narrator recites a poem in testimony:

> He went through thick and thin to find his father's bones;
> He covered a thousand *li*, sick and alone;
> The old woman and the monk lent him helping hands;
> Heaven does not let down a filial son."[236]

[233] Ibid., 632.
[234] Ibid.
[235] Caoting laoren 草亭老人, *Yumu xingxinbian* 娛目醒心編 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1988), 6.
[236] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Awaken the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 628.

欲收父骨走風塵，千里孤窮一病身。
老嫗周旋僧作伴，皇天不負孝心人。

Ironically, this testimony is undermined in the narrative itself when Li Chengzu dies at the hand of his stepmother at home. It seems that a sinister human heart is more powerful than Heaven's blessing.

In addition to leading to a traveler's death, it is common in fictional medical narratives to have sickness on the road cause and intensify hardships in a strange land. Generally speaking, there are three kinds of hardships that the traveler may undergo on the road because of sickness: family separation, economic distress, and interruption of official career. For family separation, *Feihuayong* 飛花詠 is a representative example. In the story, a scholar from Songjiang 松江, Changquan 昌全, is forced to garrison the frontiers with his wife, Miss Du, because his ancestors were members of a hereditary military household. From the pre-Qin period onward, many poems regarding frontier life describe the desolation of the border area and the soldiers' sadness and nostalgia. This genre of frontier poetry, according to Tian Xiaofei, "embodies an attempt on the part of the southern elite to imagine a space 'out there'—distant and inaccessible in both spatial and temporal terms, functioning as a cultural other to the construction of the southern identity."[237] In the vernacular story, the author depicts the unfamiliar scene from a southern person's perspective, thus heightening her psychological discomfort.

> At first, they crossed flat ground, but now they arrived at a mound. They saw only stones here and there, high and low. The porter pushed the carriage, bumping along the road. Miss Du sat in the carriage. She already felt dizzy and her sight was dim. At this moment, she was nervous and shuddered with fear. Moreover, yellow sand blew on their faces."[238]

[237] Kang-I Sun Chang and Stephen Oven ed. *The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 267.
[238] *Feihuayong* (Liaoning: Chunfeng wenyi chubanhe, 1983), 17.

先前還是泥土平地，今忽到了一派高崗之處。只見山石縱橫，一高一低。車夫將那車子一磴一磴地推著。杜氏坐在車上，已是頭暈眼花，這一會膽搖心蕩起來。又見黃沙滿面的撲來。

This description focuses on difficulties and hazards on the road toward the northern frontier. Traveling from the beautiful *jiangnan* 江南 region to bleak and desolate northern borders, it is very hard for them to accustom themselves to the distant land. Moreover, garrisoning the frontier indicates that they are not able to return for the rest of their lives. They are extremely sad to bid farewell to their hometown forever, and have experienced wind and frost on the road. After several days both of them fall ill.

(Changquan) sat on the bed, recalling the hardships of the journey. He told Miss Du, "We have suffered from serious illness and have luckily survived. However, I think we are still far from the frontier. If we cannot endure the hardships on the road, I don't know what the outcome will be. We are forced to leave home. Perhaps it is predestined. But our poor child is innocent and ignorant. Why does he suffer hardships with us? I am heartbroken."[239]

（昌全）坐在床上想起許多苦楚，因對杜氏說道："你我這場大病，幸得不死，然想一想，此去邊庭甚遠，倘到前途勞勞苦苦禁當不起，尚不知做何結局。但你我受此流離，或是前劫命里所該，說不得要受了。只可憐孩兒，他孩提無知，怎也隨我如此受苦，甚覺心痛。"

Before Changquan sets out with his family, his friend once suggests that he leave his only son to his relatives. However, the couple is loath to part with their son, and they bring him with them after all. However, the hardships on the road and the suffering of sickness are unexpected. The experience of illness completely changes their mind: in the past, they believed the whole family could provide one another company and comfort in the strange place. When they fall ill on the road, they think, "The way ahead is far. After we arrive at the frontier, he will be abandoned in the desolate town once we pass away. Although he is alive, it is similar to death. It would better to leave him in his hometown in central plains, so

[239] Ibid., 20.

that his future would still be promising."[240] Based on the suffering from sickness, they believe that different spaces, the frontier and the central plains, represent the possibility of life and death. Even if they may not take their personal safety into consideration, they will not bring their only son into a perilous situation. After wrestling with the question for several days, they decide to have their son adopted by a friend. That is to say, their sickness on the road causes family separation.

The twentieth story in *Jingshi tongyan* demonstrates how sickness on the road creates economic distress. It tells of Qingnu 慶奴, a woman who has married and divorced twice. She marries again, this time as concubine to an official, but cannot bear her husband's treatment of her. She elopes with a certain Zhang Bin 張彬 to Zhenjiang 鎮江. Unfortunately, Zhang Bin falls ill and is bedridden at an inn. They use up all their money to treat his illness. In order to make money to go back to Qingnu's parents, she has to sing in different wine shops of Zhenjiang. Then she happens to meet Zhou San 周三, one of her ex-husbands, in a wine shop. "Qingnu and Zhou San felt so attached to each other that Qingnu, who used to take care of Zhang Bin, buying medicine and cooking porridge for him, abandoned her duties and spent all her time with Zhou San. With his meals few and far between, and the two flirting openly in his presence, Zhang Bin went from bad to worse. One short breath, and he died."[241] However, after Qingnu and Zhou San live as husband and wife, Zhou San falls ill. Seemingly it is a recurrence of Zhang Bin's sickness. Their money and clothing are exhausted. Right after Zhang Bin's death, Zhou San asks Qingnu not to go out to sing any more. Nevertheless, Qingnu has to sing in wine shops to make a living after Zhou San is confined to bed. It is worth noting that Zhou San's psychology has changed due to his sickness. Although he has to give his consent for Qingnu's work, he recalls Zhang

[240] Ibid.
[241] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2005), 315.

Bin's experience and doubts Qingnu's chastity. When she brings back nothing, he bursts out in curses, "You must have used the money to help out some man who struck your fancy!"[242] Although Zhang Bin is Zhou San's love rival, Zhou begins to have empathy with Zhang Bin when entering the patient's world. In his opinion, since Qingnu had illicit intercourse with him when Zhang was sick, she may betray him when he is sick too. This understanding is established only when he is able to share a patient's feelings with Zhang Bin.

The third story in *Kuatianhong* 跨天虹 is also about the emotional understanding which is achieved through the experience of illness, but between husband and wife. In the story, Lu Yousheng 陸友生 dislikes his wife, Daqiao 大喬, because she is ugly. He runs away from home and goes to the provincial capital. However, he fails in the civil examination and contracts an illness on the road. "He had run about during the journey and suffered from wind and frost. Thus, he fell ill. He had to stay at an inn to recuperate and invited a doctor to treat him. Unexpectedly, his sickness deteriorated day by day and became nearly fatal. He had not a penny in his purse."[243] In the midst of this severe financial pressure, Lu's servant sells himself to the family of a local official, Chen Yan 陳衍. After Lu gets better, he also goes to Chen Yan's family to teach Chen's son. The Chen family betroths their foster daughter to Lu. To Lu's surprise, she is his ugly wife, Daqiao, who was adopted by the Chen family after her parents' death. Lu's experience of sickness on the road not only causes his economic distress, forcing him to become a private tutor in the Chen family, but also changes Lu's expectation for his marriage. At first, he wanted a beautiful wife. Through the torment of sickness on the road, his career transforms from a civil examination candidate to a private tutor, indicating that he cannot achieve his goal of an official career. Based on this frustration, he establishes empathy with Daqiao, who has

[242] Ibid., 316.
[243] Jiulin doushan xuezhe 鷲林斗山學者, *Kuatianhong* 跨天虹, Mingqing xijian xiaoshuo congkan 明清稀見小說叢刊 (Shandong: Qilu shushe, 1996), 639.

difficulty marrying because of her appearance. At last, he psychologically accepts Daqiao as his wife and grows old together with her. Compared to conventional love stories involving a talented scholar and a beautiful woman (*caizi jiaren* 才子佳人), this story shows originality in terms of how love is developed between a mediocre scholar and an ugly woman. Sickness plays a key role during this development, for the experience of illness elicits Lu Yousheng's emotional resonance with Daqiao based on the similar feeling of setbacks. At the end of the story, they have a long life and a lot of descendants, as a reward for their love.

In addition to family separation and economic distress, interruption of official career is another common outcome of sickness on the road. For example, the second story of *Badongtian* 八洞天 tells of an official, Sun Quji 孫棄疾, who is on the way to his post in Kuizhou when is detained in an inn due to a serious illness. In this case, sickness on the road not only brings about physical suffering but also interrupts his journey to his post. He faces the threat of death in a strange place and having nowhere to be buried. As a result, when he happens to meet a friend, Zhangsun Chen 長孫陳, in the inn, he suggests that Zhangsun use his official identification to assume his official position. "You go to my post and carry me in your carriage. If I die on the road, please put my body in a coffin and bury me. If I survive luckily, I will be able to go to Kuizhou with you to recuperate."[244]

Considering the situation at the time, Sun Quji's proposal is an optimal solution. No matter if he is alive or dead, the inn is not a good place for him to recuperate or to deposit the coffin. He is too sick to go to his post, indicating he is not able to assume the official responsibility. If Zhangsun Chen takes his place and brings him to Kuizhou 夔州, although he will lose official post, he will get a chance to survive. That is to say, in this deal, Sun Quji trades his political career for his survival.

[244] Biliange zhuren 筆煉閣主人, *Badongtian* 八洞天 (Beijing: Shumu wenxian chubanshe, 1985), 30.

In the third story of *Xihu erji* 西湖二集, the way sickness affects the patient's official career is more dramatic. Wu Yubi 吳與弼 is invited to the capital by Emperor Tianshun 天順 because of his outstanding reputation. The night before he is to meet with the emperor, he hangs his scarf on the wall. A scorpion happens to crawl into the scarf. On the next day, as Emperor Tianshun is questioning Wu Yubi about the management of state affairs, Wu is stung on the head by the scorpion. He feels too much pain to answer the emperor's questions. Ashamed, he does not accept official appointment and returns to his hometown.[245] Compared to common diseases, a scorpion sting is more sudden and accidental. Wu Yubi is not able to show his talent in the front of the emperor and loses the chance of promotion because of a scorpion sting, thus indicating the uncertainty and unpredictability of destiny. This anecdote is also recorded in the forty-third volume of Lang Ying's 郎瑛 *Qixiu leigao* 七修類稿 under the title "encountering a malignant scorpion is doomed" (*echong youshu* 惡蟲有數), and in the second volume of Xie Zaozhi's 謝肇淛 *Wenhai pisha* 文海披沙 under the title "poverty is predestined" (*qiongkun youming* 窮困有命).[246] Obviously, their motive is to demonstrate that it is futile to change one's destiny and to convey the reverence toward heaven.

The thirty-fifth chapter of *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史 includes an episode, adapted from the anecdotes discussed above, in which Zhuang Shaoguang 莊紹光 receives an imperial decree and goes to the capital but is not able to respond to the emperor's consultation due to a scorpion sting on the head. However, Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓 removes the detail of how the scorpion crawls into the scarf and describes Zhuang's response instead.

> Zhuang Zhengjun (Shaoguang) returned to his lodging and took off his scarf, finding a scorpion inside. He laughed, saying, "A petty man this is. It seems that my way does not

[245] Zhou Qingyuan, *Xihu erji* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1989), 43–44.
[246] Li Hanqiu 李漢秋, *Rulin waishi yanjiu ziliao* 儒林外史研究資料 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1984), 185.

work anymore."…He wrote ten essays and a letter requesting to return to his hometown.[247]

莊征君到了下處，除下頭巾，見里面有一個蠍子。莊征君笑道："臧倉小人，原來就是此物！看來我道不行了。"……便把教養的事，細細做了十策，又寫了一道"懇求恩賜還山"的本。

In this text, it is ambiguous why Zhuang is stung by the scorpion. The appearance of the scorpion may not be accidental, but instead the plot of some petty person. His sigh for the way is not just for his own destiny or heaven, but comes from a great anxiety about public morals and mores, which makes him decide to keep a distance from official circles and dwell in seclusion. After this episode, a high officer tries to draw Zhuang Shaoguang over to his side because he thinks the emperor will appoint Zhuang to an important position, but Zhuang refuses to join his clique. When the emperor appreciates Zhuang's ten essays and considers promoting him, the official tries in every possible way to block him. In this sense, the official intends to prevent Zhuang from being appointed, thus constructing a "retelling" of how Zhuang is stung by the scorpion. In other words, the scorpion sting symbolizes how a petty official abuses his power to stop a talented scholar's official career.

Being threatened by the danger and difficulty due to sickness, the traveler may also experience a reconstruction of his interpersonal relationships. The sixteenth story in *Stories Old and New* tells of a civil examination candidate, Fan Shi 范式, who falls ill with a contagious disease and lies sick in an inn. No one dares to get close to him. Zhang Shao 張邵 hears Fan Shi is groaning and sympathizes with him in his suffering. He invites a doctor to heal him and provides him soup and porridge every day until Fan Shi's recovery. Because of Zhao Shao's constant and good care, they develop a firm friendship and become sworn brothers. "The friendship between Fan and Zhang" (*fanzhang zhijiao* 范張之交) turns out to

[247] Wu Jingzi 吳敬梓, *Rulin waishi* 儒林外史(Zhejiang: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1993), 191–192.

be a model and a literary allusion of brother-like friendship. The twenty-ninth story in *Xihu erji* 西湖二集 is similar to this, but provides more detailed description of the patient's situation and of how carefully the stranger takes care of him. In the story, Zu Zhenfu 祖真夫 happens to meet Cao Longjiang 曹龍江, who falls ill with an exogenous febrile disease in an inn. He decocts medication for Cao and feeds him in person. Other people try to dissuade him from getting close to Cao, saying, "the exogenous febrile disease is caused by weather and is very contagious. If you are his own flesh and blood, it is your responsibility to look after him. However, since you are not his family or relative, is it worth doing this? If you are infected, it will be very detrimental."[248] Zu Zhenfu refuses their advice and concentrates on attending to the patient. "Even when Cao defecated and urinated, he did not avoid the filth."[249] Thus he becomes the person who Cao Longjiang trusts most. When Cao is dying, he insists on presenting half of his property to Zu. In the two stories above, both travelers contract illness and have no familiars by their side. Other people in the inn all keep away from them because they are afraid to be infected. Under this circumstance, the help of the strangers Zhang Shao and Zu Zhenfu is invaluable. In other words, their sickness serves as a touchstone to test human nature, through which people's morality and characters are completely shown.

In the eleventh chapter of *Silent Operas* (*Wushengxi* 無聲戲), sickness plays the role of a touchstone as well, but it exhibits how family ethics are subverted. Shan Longxi 單龍溪, a merchant from Fujian, has two sons. One is Shan Jin 單金, who has died and left a posthumous son, Yisheng 遺生. The other one is Shan Yu 單玉. Shan Longxi usually travels for business with his servant, Baishun 百順. When he gets old, he wants his son and grandson to be familiar

[248] Zhou Qingyuan, *Xihu erji* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1989), 476.
[249] Ibid.

with his accounts and social circles. So he brings Shan Yu and Yisheng instead of Baishun. However, Shan Yu and Yisheng fall sick on the road because they are not used to the place and the weather. Looking after two patients, Shan Longxi grows exhausted and himself falls seriously ill. Because he thinks his illness may be fatal, he tells his descendants where his hidden wealth is and asks them to take his bones to their hometown after he dies. However, when Shan Yu and Yisheng realize that a large amount of silver is buried in their hometown, "their hearts burned as if on fire….One day seems like a year."[250] They abandon Longxi and go back one after another. In this case, the unfamiliar space on the road causes Shan Yu and Yisheng's sickness and also implies a great distance from their home. Shan Yu and Yisheng covet the silver. They are also afraid that they will fight over Shan Longxi's estate with each other. So they make speed with their journey toward home separately, ignoring Shan Longxi's life. Compared to Longxi's utmost care of them when they are ill, their performance when Longxi is ill is cruel and callous. At that time, Longxi is just aware that as a father and grandfather he is not as important as his estate in his son and grandson's hearts. "Only money serves as their blood father and grandfather. Even if it is buried under the ground, they hurry on with their journey to excavate it, while their blood father and grandfather is dying, they treat him as a stranger."[251] Only through Longxi's illness, how Shan Yu and Yisheng weigh their family love and money is fully revealed. In the past, their greed was concealed under the peaceful surface of their family lives. Thus, in the patient's world, a brutal reality is shown. The violation of family ethics is manifested.

On the other hand, when Longxi's servant, Baishun, learns that Shan Yu and Yisheng abandoned Longxi in order to get his estate, he goes to find Longxi and take care of him. Before this experience of sickness, although Longxi has a good relationship with Baishun, he does not implicitly trust Baishun in terms of how to manage his property.

[250] Li Yu, *Wushengxi* (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006), 183.
[251] Ibid., 184.

However, his sickness is a touchstone that shows Baishun's loyalty and integrity. So he does not treat Baishun as a servant any more, but entrusts his funeral affairs and accounts to him. In the end, Longxi and his descendants become strangers and even enemies, while Baishun becomes his closest family member. Although the author emphasizes at the end that he intends to arouse readers' filial piety, the most attractive part in the story is the way it exhibits a disastrous dislocation of family ethics in the patient's world. "Descendants abandoned their flesh and bones while a servant was in a hurry to go for his host's funeral" (*Ersun qihaigu tongpu bengsang* 兒孫棄骸骨僮僕奔喪)is a tragedy of family relationships.

In the last chapter we introduced *Cuhulu* 醋葫蘆 and its story of curing jealousy (*liaodu* 療妒), in which Ms. Du is healed of her jealousy through supernatural intervention. In another Qing novel on this theme, *Liaoduyuan* 療妒緣, an effective prescription against jealousy is the rewriting of interpersonal relations caused by sickness on the road. The healing process symbolizes the salvation of the wife's body and jealousy. In *Liaoduyuan*, Zhu Lun's 朱綸 wife Ms. Qin 秦 is so jealous that she does not allow Zhu to see any other women. Zhu Lun temporarily escapes her control when he passes the civil service examination at the provincial level and has to go to the capital to take the metropolitan examination. Along the way he takes a concubine, Qiaozhu 巧珠, at whose home he has lodged, and then goes on to the capital afterwards. Ms. Qin dreams that Zhu Lun has taken a concubine and leaves home to go in pursuit of him. When she is abducted by some bandits she encounters on the road, Qiaozhu learns of it and uses her martial arts skills to kill the bandits and bring Ms. Qin home. But the whole experience frightens Ms. Qin, who falls ill on the next day. Qiaozhu and her parents take good care of Ms. Qin and invite a doctor to treat her, but her condition does not improve, and in an echo of stories of filial piety,

Qiaozhu decides to feed some of her own flesh to Ms. Qin to cure her. Ms. Qin is touched and not jealous at all.

In stories about jealous wives, although jealousy is medicalized and regarded as an illness requiring treatment, a common situation is that no medication or treatment is effective. In *Cuhulu* 醋葫蘆, the cowardly husband attempts to use a prescription from the *Classic of Mountains and Seas (Shanhaijing* 山海經*)*, a boiled oriole (*canggeng* 鴰鶊), to treat his wife's jealousy, but the satirical result is that she punishes him by making him kneel for several hours. In this story, the treatment for Ms. Qin's jealousy is Qiaozhu's actions rather than supernatural intervention or exotic medicines. Qiaozhu saves Ms. Qin from the bandits and cures her sickness with her own flesh. Therefore, the sickness that is healed by Qiaozhu is not only Ms. Qin's physical disease, but also her jealousy. Before encountering Qiaozhu, Ms. Qin considers her an enemy. Her sickness rewrites their relationship as that of family members. Ms. Qin gets along well with Qiaozhu and even respects her. During this process, the author makes good use of two factors, traveling and sickness, to put the jealous wife in an impossible predicament and highlight the significance of her salvation by Qiaozhu. In this process, Ms. Qin's sickness of jealousy corresponds with her physical condition. Qiaozhu makes every effort to cure Ms. Qin's physical disease, and meanwhile, her jealousy is cured as well. The dual meaning of Ms. Qin's sickness and recovery makes *Liaoduyuan* unique among stories on the theme of healing jealousy.

In conclusion, although fictional medical narratives regarding sickness on the road usually refer to some themes similar to those in the stories about sickness at home, for instance, the patient's identity, marriage, and interpersonal relationships, the way sickness reshapes the patient's life story is different. Since contracting illness within an unfamiliar

space indicates a "dual" departure from the patients' normal life, the transformation of patients' identity is more complex and dramatic in terms of gender transformation and madness. These extreme cases manifest how the patients are forced to redefine their identity, and more importantly, they also represent their subjective experience in terms of how they psychologically accept the new gender and social roles. They are exiled from the human relations they have established before the sickness happens and transformed into "new" persons. This process reveals the way in which a human being is defined by himself or "another." We can also see how people understand self and the world at the time.

Like the previous chapter's stories about patients who devote themselves to restoring their family identity, stories of sickness on the road commonly evoke travelers' nostalgia. For a sick traveler, returning home always represents both physical and spiritual salvation. When a patient fails to return to his family or build a new family, an endless exile or degeneration is inevitable. The authors of late imperial fiction are eager to tell a sick traveler's story, conveying repeatedly the message that it is not possible to lead a peaceful life during a journey, as the journey always represents an unsafe state. An alien romance or marriage on the road in particular usually implies a crisis, no matter whether the male traveler encounters a ghost, fox spirit, a woman with leprosy, or a marriage fraud. Even if the marital relation is based on true love between two humans, they may fail to stay together due to a great number of unstable factors on the road, including sickness. Whether as cause or effect, sickness warns travelers against falling in love with an unknown woman during a journey, implying that sexual temptations are a threat to the traveler's health and life.

As sickness and hardships on the road always interact and intensify each other, how a sick traveler confronts various dangers and difficulties receives special attention. In addition to depriving the patient of life, sickness may cause family separation, create economic distress, or end an official career. The story dramatizes how the patients lose the possibility of realizing their

life ideals and have to accept a miserable reality. In addition, the patient's social relations are reconstructed as well. Family members, friends, and strangers surrounding the patient may have different responses to the patient's condition. Sickness plays the role of touchstone, revealing sincerity or hypocrisy, which are hard to recognize before the experience of illness. In other words, after entering into the world of illness as a patient, the person may find that a close family member becomes a stranger, or even an enemy, while a stranger becomes a bosom friend. This observation may inspire readers to rethink a question: in the comparison of the perspective of a healthy person and a patient, which one is more reliable? Which one is closer to the reality?

Chapter 4 Sickness as Strategies

As the last two chapters' discussion shows, in addition to bringing physical and psychological suffering, sickness threatens to damage or even destroy the patient's identity and role within society. In *Sickness and Healing: An Anthropological Perspective,* Robert Hahn explains systems of sickness and healing everywhere as cultural systems which are organized patterns of thinking, judging, and behaving shared by the members of a society.[252] In order to determine the features of sickness that cultures have in common, Hahn argues that "the essence of sickness is an unwanted condition in one's person or self, including one's mind, body, soul, or connection to the world."[253] It is worth noting that he begins by defining sickness subjectively, in terms of the patient's own feelings and values. Generally speaking, because sickness often brings about crises of identity and social relationships, it is an unwanted condition in the patient's mind and body. However, the patient's experience in fictional works is more complicated. Although many patients regard sickness as "an unwanted condition," there are some characters who may rely on and even be attached to sickness in some specific situations so that they can free themselves from a dilemma or rid themselves of a role they do not want to play in the family or society; they may therefore be willing to "create" an illness or feign illness.

A great variety of stories about fictitious sickness reveal how patients make strategic use of illness. The virtue of chastity is a central theme in many such cases, especially in two common situations. In the first, a woman is able to refuse marriage or intercourse under the pretext of sickness. In this context, sickness plays a dual role as both destroyer and savior. In the second situation, a false report of a man's death by illness is used as a test of his wife's chastity. The

[252] Robert A. Hahn, *Sickness and Healing: An Anthropological Perspective* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 25.
[253] Ibid., 5.

man is able to learn how his wife will perform after she believes he is dead. In other words, it is a kind of rehearsal of the scene after his death. By contrast, when a false report of a woman's death from sickness spreads, it may conceal the truth that she has eloped with a man. The fake news of her death implies a critique of her morality. These stories abound because they explore the narrative potential of sickness as strategies, bringing to the forefront a tension between desire and the moral code.

1. The Benefits of Sickness

As mentioned in chapter 3, Talcott Parsons describes ill people as socially "deviant." In fictional medical narratives, when the patient is willing to give up his or her responsibility, or the patient wants to be exiled to the margins of familial or social networks, it implies that he or she expects to deviate from his or her normal life and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the meaning of sickness is completely transformed for this kind of patient. Protection of the ill patient replaces the effect of the damage the patient does by deviating from normal life. The patient benefits from sickness at the cost of physical suffering.

The seventeenth chapter of *Shanshuiqing* 山水情 stages how the patient relies on sickness to resolve a dilemma and remove the symbolic meaning of sickness. In the story, Wei Xuxia 衛旭霞 and Wu Suqiong 鄔素瓊 fall in love with each other. Xuxia plans to propose marriage after passing the civil service examination. However, a high official forces him to marry his daughter, and Xuxia has to flee to a distant place. In the meantime, Suqiong's mother intends to accept another man's proposal of marriage for Suqiong. Suqiong is extremely sad and contracts a serious illness, refusing rice and even tea and eventually becoming emaciated. Afterwards she has a fever and feels dizzy, keeping to her bed every day. Her mother invites a female doctor to

treat her. Nevertheless, the doctor can only bring down her fever. Suqiong becomes mute because of her sickness. As the story puts it, "This young lady, as pretty as a flower or jade, became mute. Her body was not feverish, and she could eat and drink as before, and so her life was saved."[254]

This process of being ill is significant because it suggests that the symptom of muteness is Suqiong's own choice, for her unwillingness to speak is emphasized repeatedly. When her mother asks her condition, "Suqiong lay on bed with no energy. She did not even answer a word." When her maid attends her, she "called her time and again, but she simply was not willing to answer." When the doctor diagnoses her, he "asked her several questions, but she did not answer at all." Her refusal to speak eventually develops into muteness. The transformation from the patient's psychological state to a physical symptom is remarkable.

After Suqiong becomes mute, the man seeking a marriage alliance refuses to provide betrothal gifts. Suqiong's mother is anxious that the sickness has caused her daughter to be abandoned. A mute woman is not able to play the role of wife and therefore risks losing her hopes for marriage. However, her muteness does give her a perfect excuse to avoid marrying another man as long as Xuxia's news is unknown. During three years before Xuxia returns, Suqiong remains mute, not cured until Xuxia obtains a magic elixir and brings it back for her. This demonstrates that Suqiong's recovery depends not on any medicine in the human world, but on heaven's will and the return of her lover, which the story refers to as "heavenly predestination" (*tianyuan* 天緣). Moreover, although Suqiong is sick for three years, her appearance remains beautiful and she is able to eat and drink as usual. "If she could speak, she would still be a normal person."[255] The only symptom of her sickness is muteness.

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[254] *Shanshuiqing* (Guangzhou: Huacheng chubanshe, 1998), 137.
[255] Ibid., 146.

This circumstance may echo various old motifs of "not speaking for three years" (*sannian buyan* 三年不言), as for example in *the Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書): the Shang dynasty king Gaozong 高宗 did not speak for three years when living in a mourning shed. In *Analects*, Confucius explained it to his disciple Zizhang 子張, "When the sovereign died, the officers all attended to their several duties, taking instructions from the prime minister for three years." Gaozong's three years without speaking likely signifies that he did not manage political affairs during that time. A ruler refusing to govern indicates his muteness in political settings. Because of mourning rituals, his stopped playing his rols as king. For the young woman, the disinclination to speak is a realization of her refusal to marry a man she does not love. The narrator adopts an archetype of a ruler's refusing participation—"not speaking for three years"—in early Chinese history but adapts it to the situation of an otherwise powerless figure.

Suqiong's willful muteness also recalls then ancient figure Xi Gui 息媯, also called Lady Xi (Xi furen 息夫人). Xi Gui married the Marquis of Xi in 684 BCE. King Wen of Chu attacked Xi in 680 BCE and brought Xi Gui to Chu. Although Xi Gui had two sons with King Wen of Chu, she refused to speak when she was in Chu. Many poets in later generations composed poems for her. For example, a famous poem was written by Wang Wei 王維 in the Tang Dynasty. His two famous verses are

> Looking at flowers with eyes filled with tears,
> She does not talk with the King of Chu at all.
> 看花滿眼淚, 不共楚王言。

Xi Gui's mute state implies that she cherishes the memory of her first husband, Marquis Xi. It also hints at her attitude toward the King of Chu, who forces her to become his new wife. Xi Gui voluntarily chooses to be silent in order to express her refusal of the current marriage. Although it is not an illness, its implication and significance are similar to

Suqiong's sickness. Since sickness often disconnects the patient from his or her social network, both Xi Gui and Suqiong are willing to be disconnected. Considering their state of powerlessness, their muteness stages a form of resistance to the new marriage when facing the King of Chu or Suqiong's mother. Suqiong's silence brings an end to the normal progress of her life and protects her marriage arrangement. On the other hand, muteness suggests that she dares not tell her mother or other people she loves Xuxia. That is to say, she does not have any chance to select her spouse. All she can do is to follow her mother's arrangement. In other words, she loses her right to declare her love. Under the pressure of being unable to tell who she loves, sickness allows Suqiong to avoid marrying another man she does not love. According to her will, if her mother accepts another man's betrothal gifts, she plans to commit suicide. In this sense, sickness protects her life instead of bringing about damage. Strategically, she kills part of herself—her speaking self—in a withdrawal that threatens the larger withdrawal of suicide. Sickness saves her and thus becomes a desirable condition, enriching Robert Hahn's definition of sickness.

When a female patient relies on sickness to protect her chastity, different sicknesses result depending on the situation. Suqiong's muteness is similar to a chronic illness, which lasts three years without endangering her life. By contrast, when a female encounters a sudden threat of rape, an acute illness can be her salvation. In the third chapter of *Yanliang'an* 炎涼岸, Yuan Qixiang 袁七襄 is involved in an old criminal case. After he is imprisoned, his wife, Madam Xie 謝, goes to the capital with two maids and her nephew to seek help. However, they are sent away by three judicial officers. On the way home, they go to a temple for food. Unfortunately, there are several licentious monks who force Madam Xie and her maids into intercourse. The women are locked in a garret, where they pray to the Guanyin bodhisattva. Madam Xie dreams that a lady in white clothing, holding a basket,

beats her head with one hand. She cries out and awakens with a severe headache. The image of the lady in Madam Xie's dream is the Guanyin bodhisattva, but according to the general pattern of how the bodhisattva rescues people in dire straits, people usually extricate themselves from the predicament directly. So a maid expresses her confusion, "if the bodhisattva saves us as expected, our hands and feet should be nimble. Why does she put the madam in pain like this?" Instead of having a pair of wings to escape, Madam Xie is still confined within an enclosed space. When facing those licentious monks' brutal force, only an acute illness can prevent Madam Xie from being raped.

> Unexpectedly, Madam Xie's headache became more serious at dawn. The elder maid massaged her, but she still cried out in bitter pain. After a while, the pain was like a knife blade stirring in her brain. She cried, "I am dying of pain!" She fell into a coma because of the excruciating pain…A monk who went to see her found that her head was red and swollen, her eyes looked like two red dates, and her body shivered with goose bumps. He touched her hands and feet, which were as cold as iron. The monk knew from this that her sickness was not fake and said, "I can wait as she nurses her body for several days. Or I will buy some medication to decoct for her. She will naturally recover." [256]
>
> 哪知到得天明，謝氏頭裡一發痛的慌了。奶子著實與他撫摩，只是叫疼叫苦，又過了一會，竟似把尖刀在頭裡攪的一般，大喊："疼死我了！"只翻天攪地痛得個昏迷不醒……和尚走去一看，只見謝氏頭已發腫，兩隻眼就像紅棗一般，身上寒顫得雞皮相似，再去摸他的手足，比生鐵還冷哩。和尚方知不是詐病，便道："等他調理幾日也罷，不然去買帖藥來煎與他吃，自然就好。"

Madam Xie's symptoms are so serious and appear so abruptly that she loses her ability to do anything. The monk therefore stops raping her. After the monk leaves, "Madam Xie's headache suddenly went away. Her eyes were not swollen any more. Her hands and feet became warm too." Neither her sickness nor her recovery is a physical process, resulting instead from the Guanyin Bodhisattva's supernatural powers. On the other hand, Madam Xie's two maids do not fall ill, and they are not able to escape being raped by the

[256] Liu Shide 劉世德, Chen Qinghao 陳慶浩, Shi Changyu 石昌渝 ed. Guben xiaoshuo congkan 古本小說叢刊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 39: 4, 1605–1607.

monks. The contrast highlights how Madam Xie depends on sickness to preserve her chastity.

It is significant that the miracle of preserving Madam Xie's chastity is shown through sickness. As mentioned before, the maid's confusion about Madam Xie's condition exhibits a gap between general understanding of the bodhisattva's magic power and the usage of sickness here. The sixty-ninth and seventieth chapter of *Journey to the West* (*Xiyouji* 西遊記) tell how the Kingdom of Zhuzi 朱紫 is plundered by a monster, who forces the queen of Zhuzi to marry him. An immortal of Ziyang 紫陽 gives the queen a piece of clothing made of palm fiber. After the queen puts it on, her body grows thorns, so that when the monster tries to touch her he feels only pain. The queen is thereby able to preserve her chastity. These thorns are tantamount to a defensive weapon, which brings about pain to the invader, thus preventing him from raping the queen. By contrast, Madam Xie's sickness brings pain to herself and destroys her somatic function, thus preventing the monk from raping her. The goal of these two plot designs is the same—to preserve the female character's chastity—but the way to achieve this goal is different. The growth of thorns on the female's body results entirely from a supernatural power, while contracting an acute illness can happen naturally. Therefore, although the illness is created by Guanyin, her function is not as prominent as that of the immortal of Ziyang. Madam Xie's sickness demonstrates how a powerless woman is able to protect herself when facing a more powerful violence. In other words, although she is powerless, falling ill gives her power.

From *Journey to the West* to *Yanliang'an*, it is clear that supernatural power has been diminished. Thorns cannot grow on the body in reality, whereas sickness is a common daily experience. More and more realistic factors were adopted by authors of vernacular fiction. In the case of Suqiong and Madam Xie, sickness and recovery seem to depend upon magical forces.

Suqiong and Madam Xie may not realize the benefits of their illnesses at the outset. In some other stories, however, female characters are able to take the initiative in strategizing with sickness, for sickness is an advantage to them in protecting their chastity. For example, in the second story of *Fengliuwu* 風流悟, when the Manchu army attacks Fuzhou 福州 in the Early Qing Dynasty, a beautiful local woman, Yin Lizhen 陰麗貞, is captured. A general forces her to marry him. Yin Lizhen at first plans to commit suicide to preserve her chastity. However, two soldiers keep a close watch on her. In order to avoid being raped by the general, she tells him that she has gonorrhea (*shalin xuebaibing* 沙淋血敗病) and is thus unable to have sex. Yin Lizhen plans to feign illness until she finds a chance to escape from the military camp. Unexpectedly, the general takes her to Kunshan 昆山. Yin Lizhen is so anxious on the road that she truly falls ill. Therefore, the general abducts other women and abandons her in a temple. Although she is forced to leave her hometown, she successfully protects her chastity. This story shows how the female character actively engages in the process of illness. She pretends to have gonorrhea at the beginning, preventing rape with the menace of a sexually transmitted disease. This demonstrates that she has fully realized the potential benefits of illness. Although she is not able to create a real illness, she eventually falls ill because of extreme anxiety, which also accords with her will. The transformation from a feigned illness to a real one exhibits the patient's subjectivity. Without any help from divine beings, she becomes a patient voluntarily and benefits from her sickness.

It is worth noting that the author highly praises Yin Lizhen's intelligence and even compares her with Chen Ping 陳平 and Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮, who are great tacticians in Chinese history, well known for their military talent. Chen Ping (?–178 BC) served as a counselor-in-chief in the Western Han Dynasty. He played a key role in helping Liu Bang, the founder of the Western Han, to overcome his rival, Xiang Yu. During the Chu-Han Contention (206–202 BCE), he was

well known for his six ruses. Zhuge Liang (181–234) served as the prime minister in the state of Shu Han during the Three Kingdoms period. He is described as the most accomplished military strategist in the most widely read historical novel, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (*sanguo yanyi* 三國演義). As females rarely have the opportunity to display their intelligence on a battleground, this accolade is especially remarkable in fictional narratives. What the author may be suggesting is that the process by which Yin Lizhen protects her chastity is similar to that of a male strategizing on the battlefield. Although she is much weaker than her enemy, she wins through her strategy of sickness, which starts as a ruse but then becomes real. The brilliance of a woman's use of illness and the celebration of her victory are further developed in Li Yu's 李漁 story, *The Female Chen Ping Saves Her Life With Seven Ruses* 女陳平計生七出 in *Silent Operas* (*Wusheng xi* 無聲戲). The protagonist, Secunda Geng, who is a smart woman in Xi'an prefecture, is directly referred to as a "Female Chen Ping" in its title. Like Yin Lizhen, Secunda is the victim of an abduction, in this case during Li Zicheng's 李自成 rebellion in the Late Ming Dynasty. Secunda devises a plan when she hears that the bandits are reaching her county. She prepares some rags and croton-oil beans and hides them in her clothing. Then she gets her husband to flee from the bandits. When the troops arrive, they are attracted by Secunda's beauty. Secunda pretends to be willing to marry a chieftain. However, when he goes to bed with her, Secunda tells him that her period has just begun. Because the rag she uses reeks of stale blood, the chieftain believes her and stops having sex with her. "Actually, this was her first ruse since leaving the cottage. It was also the reason she had provided herself with the rags, which, since she had used them before for her periods, naturally smelled of stale blood."[257] On the third day, when the chieftain expects Secunda's period to be over, her vagina swells up. Actually, this is a ruse as well.

[257] Li Yu, *Silent Opera*, trans. Patrick Hanan (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990), 85.

> She had taken one of the croton-oil beans from her clothes, squeezed the oil out of it, and smeared it around her vagina. This substance has the most drastic effects—the healthiest skin will swell up immediately on contact with it. Secunda had seen it tried out at home, and that was why she had purchased the beans and brought them with her.[258]
>
> 預先從衣帶中取出一粒巴豆，拈出油來，向牝戶周圍一擦。原來這件東西極是利害的，好好皮膚一經了它，即時臃腫，她在家中曾見人驗過，故此買來帶在身邊。

Therefore, sickness comes as the result of Secunda's own choice. She is even more active than Yin Lizhen, going so far as to bring on an illness based on ruse. The interaction between Secunda and the chieftain is similar to how Chen Ping designs a tactical maneuver to triumph over his opponents. Not only does she protect herself, she also returns home and vanquishes the chieftain. After obtaining the chieftain's trust, Secunda gets to know where he stores his loot, and asks him to leave the camp with her. When they stop at an inn to eat, Secunda crushes another croton-oil bean and mixes it with his food, bringing on a severe attack of diarrhea. During the next several days, Secunda continues to add the beans to his diet. He grows thin and loses his ability to walk or speak. Thus Secunda is able to take advantage of induced sickness to bring down her enemy, who is more powerful than her. She also acquires the chieftain's loot and reunites with her husband. When facing her husband, the chieftain admits that Secunda has maintained her chastity. Li Yu comments that "even Chen (Ping) brought off only six amazing ruses, while she managed seven."[259] Ruses (*ji* 計) are usually associated with military tactics. The process by which Secunda gains her victory conforms with the saying that "there is no objection to deceit in war" (*bing bu yan zha* 兵不厭詐). As Chen Ping's six ruses are celebrated in history, Secunda's seven ruses receive at least equal appreciation here.

There is a long tradition of Chinese writing on military strategies and tactics. It originates among the military thinkers of the Spring and Autumn period and the Warring States period. *The*

[258] Ibid., 89.
[259] Ibid., 95.

Art of War, attributed to Sunzi 孫子 (late sixth century BC?), is the earliest extant military treatise, which discussed many aspects of warfare, such as strategic attack, disposition of army, military maneuvers, intelligence and espionage, and so on. In the bibliographical chapter of "Treatise on Literature" (*Yiwenzhi* 藝文志) in the *Hanshu* 漢書, the treatises of military writers are classified into four categories: military philosophy and tactics, strategic military power, *yin* and *yang* in military, and weapon and skills. The 14th-century historical novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* details various strategies and tactics in battles, and portrays a group of military strategists from different states. Worth noting is that through the representation of several famous battles in which a state defeats enemy troops with a force inferior in number, the narrator of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* implies that military maneuvers matter more in a battle than mere numbers. A relatively weak side can even overcome its powerful opponents by the use of strategies and tactics. Therefore, the tradition abounds in stories of great military strategists. To a certain extent, it is the competition between several main strategists from different sides that determines the outcome of warfare between their rulers. The appreciation of their wisdom and ruses is dominant in the novel.

As female characters' wisdom was rarely depicted in this literary type, Yin Lizhen's and Secunda's stories signal that the authors in the Qing Dynasty began to represent female characters as strategists, thus echoing the literary tradition of military strategies and tactics. As in some strategies in *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, the "enemy" they encounter is more powerful than they are. So they become heroines who use sickness, among other resources (such as sexual attraction), in stratagems of self-defense. In previous narratives about how a female struggles to keep her chastity, the narrator usually concentrates on describing the female's strong will and her extreme actions, for example, how she refuses to remarry and even commits suicide. In these late imperial short stories, the focus shifts to a female character's ingenuity, connecting

her with the tradition of strategical literature. Compared to previous male strategists, the most significant difference is that women make use of sickness and benefit from it.

Moreover, Li Yu presents a form of moral testing or proving at the beginning of *The Female Chen Ping Saves Her Life With Seven Ruses*. The moral test is a common theme in late imperial medical narratives, but Li Yu is the first to address it in general terms.

> Loyalty, filial piety, chastity and fidelity are terms of general approbation that everyone rejoices in. The trouble is that loyalty is regularly found on the lips of traitorous officers and filial piety in the mouths of incorrigible sons, while adulterous husbands are constantly holding forth about fidelity and wanton wives about chastity. As a result it is almost impossible to distinguish true virtue from false. However, as the proverb has it: "Fierce winds reveal the sturdy plant and troubled times the loyal subject." Generally, if you want to tell whether something is true or false, you subject it to a test. The trouble is that in this case there is no test applicable. When metals are tested in a furnace, for example, the false are destroyed and the true survive. But if the people who claim to possess these four virtues are put to the test, the false will survive and only the true will perish.[260]

> 話說"忠孝節義"四個字，是世上人的美稱，個個都喜歡這個名色。只是奸臣口裡也說忠，逆子對人也說孝，奸夫何曾不道義，淫婦未嘗不講節，所以真假極是難辨。古云："疾風知勁草，板蕩識忠臣。"要辨真假，除非把患難來試他一試。只是這件東西是試不得的，譬如金銀銅錫，下爐一試，假的壞了，真的依舊剩還你；這忠孝節義將來一試，假的倒剩還你，真的一試就試殺了。

Li Yu raises a crucial question: How can we distinguish true virtue from false? As a person's natural instincts may be hidden under verbal camouflage, only his or her performance during troubled times is reliable. Thus, a test of some kind is indispensable. Secunda's story is valuable because she is able to survive various tests through her stratagems of sickness.

The theme of testing plays an essential role in fictional medical narratives, because sickness both helps female characters like Secunda overcome their powerful enemies and itself serves as a test. Patients' interpersonal relationships usually undergo a test, through which their family members' and friends' sincerity or hypocrisy can be discerned. In these stories, chastity is still the main virtue to be tested.

[260] Ibid., 78.

2. Feigned Illness

Feigned illness is a theme unique to fictional medical narratives. Professional medical texts, such as doctors' biographies, popular encyclopedias, official medical histories, and medical case books, rarely address the situation of healthy people who are pretending to be ill. In the last section we discussed the potential benefits of sickness, which can on occasion inspire people to voluntarily become patients. When eliciting a real illness is difficult or impossible, characters will sometimes feign illness.

A feigned illness can function as a real one. In the second story of *Renzhonghua* 人中畫, the father of the protagonist Shang Chunyin 商春蔭 is executed after being framed by a treacherous minister. After Shang grows up, Chancellor Meng 孟 comes to appreciate his literary talent and plans to betroth his daughter, Miss Meng 孟, to him. However, Shang wants to pass the civil service examination and avenge his father before promising to marry. The young couple are still not engaged when Chancellor Meng dies, and the word goes out that Miss Meng has cried so bitterly in her mourning that she has been left blind. Shang nonetheless insists on marrying her once he has obtained an official position and avenged his father. When he sends the betrothal presents to the Meng family, all the townspeople laugh at him: "It would be easy for a young officer in the imperial academy to take a beautiful wife. But this one chooses the blind daughter of the dead chancellor!" Shang is undeterred, and out of loyalty to Chancellor Meng he insists on marrying Miss Meng. Unexpectedly, when the formal wedding ceremony is held, he discovers that she is not actually blind. She explains:

> My eyes were not injured. Because my father had a promise with you when he was alive, he asked me to wait for you in my boudoir. There were many men who made a marriage proposal. Relying on my father's power, we were able to refuse them. However, my father died and my brother was young, as an orphan girl, how could I

sustain and respond to them? . . . So I pretended to be blind, and those wealthy and honorable gentlemen no longer came to pay their respects.[261]

妾目原未嘗損，只因先父在日，與良人有盟，命妾靜俟閨中。後以強娶者多，以先父之力，尚能辭拒。今先父見背，只弟甚幼，妾一孤女，如何撐答？……因假稱喪明，這些世情豪貴，果不來問。

Miss Meng's situation is in some ways similar to that of Suqiong, whose story was discussed in the last section. Both of them use sickness in stratagems to escape from unwanted marriages. Still, Miss Meng's subjectivity is more central to the story. Suqiong is unwilling to speak, and then her condition develops into a real physical symptom, while Miss Meng intentionally makes use of a fake illness. Suqiong's recovery requires the intervention of a magic power, while Miss Meng designs how to feign illness and when to reveal the fact on her own. More importantly, she not only conceals her real condition from the suitors she wants to refuse, but also from Shang Chunyin, whom she is willing to marry. When Shang asks what she would have done if he had not kept her faith, she answers:

My father had been looking for a son-in-law for years, but he set his mind on you as his favorite, because he knew you were a gentleman. How should a gentleman ever act perfidiously because of prosperity or decline or beauty or ugliness? If you broke your promise, you would be of low character. Wouldn't it be better to live abandoned and alone all my life than to be married to a man like that?[262]

先父選婿數年，而獨屬意良人，蓋深知良人君子也，豈有君子而以盛衰、好醜背盟者乎？若良人背盟，是世俗之人也，妾雖遭棄，獨處終身，不猶愈於世俗之人為偶乎？

In her view, feigning blindness was a way to test Shang Chunyin's faithfulness. She trusts her father's choice but would prefer to live alone if Shang turns out not to be a gentleman. Unlike Suqiong, she has never met with Shang before they marry, so her purported blindness can be seen as a test which she sets for her husband as a powerful subjective choice of her own. The test consists of maintaining silence of a certain kind in order to see how much

[261] Liu Shide 劉世德, Chen Qinghao 陳慶浩, Shi Changyu 石昌渝 ed. Guben xiaoshuo congkan 古本小說叢刊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 39: (4), 1873.
[262] Ibid., 1874.

value Shang's love for her actually has. She measures the strength of his love, since that strength will turn out to be strength she can use. This case demonstrates that although a woman may be not able to arrange her own marriage in a patriarchal society, she can use illness as a strategy to gain some power in testing her spouse.

As a self-choice, feigning sickness displays a woman's wisdom to discern a man's competence. In the nineteenth story of Zhou Qingyuan's 周清源 *Xihu erji* 西湖二集, a vice director of imperial secretariat, Liu Zhongxian 柳仲賢, sells his servant girl to Gai Juyuan's 蓋巨源 family. However, the girl despises Gai because he is too stingy. She feigns an apoplexy and falls in a faint. Then Gai sends her back to Liu. Her acquaintances are surprised because she has never had this kind of sickness. The servant girl explains that Liu Zhongxian is a generous and magnanimous man, thus she feels ashamed of serving a miser like Gai Juyuan. She feigns this sickness in order to escape from Gai's family. Hearing her words, Liu takes this girl as a concubine because of her "heroical insight" (*yingxiong zhishi* 英雄之識), which is rarely used to praise a woman. The girl is not only able to discern greatness from mediocrity, but also to use sickness as a strategy to achieve her goal. She has a strong sense of self in choosing her master, which somehow indicates her ability to determine her own destiny.

A feigned illness provides a woman some chance to control or make use of her own body. This kind of bid for control is not uncommon in fictional medical narratives. The narrator of the twenty-ninth story of Feng Menglong's *Stories Old and New* (*jingu qiguan* 今古奇觀) gives a vivid description of how a woman relies on a feigned illness to seduce an eminent monk. A governor of Lin'an prefecture, Liu Xuanjiao 柳宣教, has a prostitute, Wu Honglian 吳紅蓮, seduce Monk Yutong 玉通, because Yutong did not pay a courtesy call on Liu when he took office. Liu intends to expose Yutong and shame him when he violates his

own Buddhist precepts. Wu Honglian lodges in Yutong's temple and visits Yutong's meditation room at night. She tells Yutong that she is cold and just wants to borrow some clothes. After Yutong admits her to his room and gives her a robe, he returns to his seat and does not speak to her. In order to get close to him, Honglian pretends to have a serious abdominal pain. "The bitterly sobbing young woman leaned her body against him, letting out moans as if in pain. Then one moment she would lie down across his lap one moment, the next moment sit up to press against him, and the next moment jump to her feet with cries of pain."[263] In this situation, Yutong has to ask how to heal her. Her answer is that what she requires is a man who will take off his clothes and hold her in his arms with his warm belly against her cold one. She says, "The night being so cold, I'll surely die. If you'd be kind enough to save my life by pressing your warm belly against mine, I will be cured. If so, I'll owe my second life to your great kindness."[264] Unable to bear her pleading any longer, Yutong has to follow her suggestion, but once she has undressed, his desire stirs at the sight of her alluring body. They have intercourse on Yutong's meditation bed.

This narrative demonstrates how, with the aid of a feigned illness, a seemingly powerless prostitute overcomes an outstanding monk's strong devotion to precepts of chastity. Yutong has practiced Buddhist meditation without going out for fifty-two years. It is evident that he has followed the Buddhist percept all his life until Honglian appears. On the other hand, Honglian, though she is in some ways weak and powerless, is able in the end to break through Yutong's defenses. The feigned illness has two functions here. First, it exerts moral pressure on Yutong, since an eminent monk should accept the responsibility of saving others whenever he can. When Yutong decides to help Honglian, he thinks of a famous idiom, "Saving a human life gets you more credit than building seven stupas" (*jiuren yiming*

[263] Feng Menglong, *Stories old and New,* trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2000), 505.
[264] Ibid.

shengzao qiji futu 救人一命勝造七級浮屠). Honglian feigns unbearable pain in Yutong's presence, exaggerating her weakness and grief in order to elicit Yutong's sympathy. Second, the preposterous therapy Honglian devises gives her a chance to show her body to Yutong, to touch him, and to seduce him.

Starting outside the monastery and making her way ultimately to Yutong's bed, Honglian crosses several boundaries and eventually achieves her goal. She is the weaker party at the outset, for she is only a visitor seeking help in Yutong's temple. Nevertheless, she has an attacker's posture and gradually invades Yutong's space. Making a convenient excuse about the city gate having closed for the night, she stays in Yutong's temple. Claiming that she is in danger of freezing to death, she enters into Yutong's meditation room. Most importantly, she feigns illness and sits next to Yutong. During this process, she progressively seizes the initiative by emphasizing her weakness. It is she who controls the situation and even every step. Yutong is relatively powerful, but when Honglian clings to his body on the pretext of illness, he loses the power to refuse her. As a Buddhist abbot, he maintains a defensive posture when facing Honglian's attempt to get close to him, but fails to hold his bottom line. The shift of power achieved through feigned illness is presented clearly. This process shows that Honglian is fully conscious of Yutong's weakness and successfully transforms it into her superiority.

The story of Honglian's sexual relationship with an eminent monk has a somewhat complicated rewriting and reception history from the Song to the Ming Dynasties. Its original source is a Northern Song text, the *Gujin shihua* 古今詩話.

> There was a monk in the Five Dynasties whose honorific title was Zhicong 至聰. He had practiced Buddhism in the Zhurong Mountains for ten years and believed that he had so completely followed the Buddhist precepts that he could not be tempted. One day, he went down from the mountains and saw a beauty named Honglian on the road. His heart

was touched immediately and he had intercourse with her. The next morning, the monk got up and had a bath and then died together with the beauty.[265]

五代時有一僧，號至聰禪師，祝融峰修行十年，自以為戒行具足，無所誘掖也。無何，一日下山，於道傍見一美人，號紅蓮，一瞬而動，遂與合歡。至明，僧起沐浴，與婦人俱化。

This anecdote is different from Feng Menglong's story in terms of the monk's subjectivity. He is not seduced by Honglian, but is so moved at the sight of her that he is not able to control his desire. The earliest record about why and how Honglian seduced the monk is in Tian Rucheng's 田汝成 *Xihu youlan zhiyu* 西湖遊覽志馀, which was first printed in 1547:

It is said that during the Shaoxing period (1131–1162), Liu Xuanjiao assumed the governorship of Lin'an prefecture. When he took office, a monk from Shuiyue temple, Yutong, did not pay a courtesy call on him. Xuanjiao was resentful about this and concocted a ruse to send a prostitute, Honglian, to him. She pretended to have lost her way and went to the temple seeking lodging. She seduced Yutong into having intercourse. Yutong had practiced Buddhism for fifty-two years, keeping to the precepts strictly. At the beginning he adamantly refused, but by midnight he could no longer control his desires and had sexual intercourse with her. [266]

相傳紹興間．柳宣教者，尹臨安。履任之日，水月寺僧玉通不赴庭參，宣教憾之，計遣妓女吳紅蓮。詭以迷道．詣寺投宿，誘之淫媾。玉通修行五十二年矣，戒律凝重，初甚拒之，及至夜分，不勝駘蕩，遂與通焉。

This record contains the sketch of Feng Menglong's story, but its description of seduction is still succinct. Honglian's means of seducing Yutong is unknown. The most important turning point—why Yutong's desire stirs in midnight—is absent as well. Another collection of classical tales in the Ming Dynasty, *Lunhui xingshi* 輪迴醒世, includes a similar anecdote, Faseng toutai 法僧投胎, but the monk's name is Nengxuan 能玄 instead of Yutong. He fails to respond correctly to the prefect in Minzhong when he gives Nengxuan a salute, and the prefect sends the prostitute Honglian to seduce him. In this tale, Honglian attempts to enter Nengxuan's meditation room under a pretext of a serious abdominal pain. Compared to Feng Menglong's story, when Honglian asks Nengxuan to massage her abdomen with his

[265] Tan Zhengbi 譚正璧, *Sanyan liangpai ziliao* 三言兩拍資料 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1980), 158.
[266] Ibid.

hands, Nengxuan refuses. Honglian tells a story of how Guanyin bodhisattva tested a famous arhat, Mulian 目連, before he attained enlightenment. Guanyin bodhisattva disguised herself as a village woman and stayed in Mulian's room. In order to test if Mulian's devotion to Buddhist precepts was sincere or not, she feigned an abdominal pain and begged him to massage her belly. Mulian massaged her belly without any sexual desire and in this way passed the test. Honglian said, "If you are sure to eliminate your mortal heart, even if you sleep with me, there should be no more communication. After all, you only massage me with your hands."[267] In fact, Nengxuan is not willing to do that, but he is afraid Honglian would say his attainment in practicing Buddhism is not as good as Mulian's. So he massages her belly. Further, Honglian asks him to press his belly against hers. After Nengxuan removes his top, Honglian takes off his pants. They eventually have sexual intercourse.

Honglian's character is vague in *Gujin shihua* and *Xihu youlan zhiyu*, while she is characterized as a clever woman in the tale of *Faseng toutai*. When Nengxuan agrees to massage Honglian's belly, he is confident that he is able to resist the beauty's temptation, while Honglian rightly assumes that he will fail. In other words, Honglian's understanding of Nengxuan's human nature is clearer than his own. She tells the anecdote of Mulian to goad Nengxuan to get close to her body. That is to say, Mulian's tale is a part of her design. It is worth noting that the narrator inserts a comment here, "Through Honglian's touch, even the buddha's mind would be disturbed, let alone someone who is not the buddha."[268] Considering the motif of the buddha's and arhat's resistance to seduction in canonical sutras, this comment lays open the gap between Buddhist legends and secular life.

This gap can be further revealed through the monk's character in these stories. In *Gujin shihua*, Monk Zhicong believes he can keep Buddhist precepts when facing seduction.

[267] Cheng Yizhong 程毅中 ed. *Lunhui xingshi* 輪迴醒世 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 197.
[268] Ibid., 198.

However, he breaks the percepts at the mere sight of a beauty. This may suggest that he wrongly estimates his ability to keep the abstinence rules. The reason he can follow the rules for ten years is that he lives in solitude on the Zhurong Mountains, cutting off from the rest of the world. Once he enters the secular world, he quickly loses his peace of mind. Therefore, his will to keep to the abstinence rules is fragile, although it may be seemingly strong when he does not meet a test from the secular world. In *Xihu youlan zhiyu*, Yutong's strength in his Buddhist practice is affirmed by the omniscient narrator. In Feng's story, Yutong's virtue is praised by the head monks of various temples, "That monk (Yutong) is a reincarnation of Buddha. He has never left Bamboo Grove Peak, where he has been living for the last fifty-two years."[269] Therefore, his communication with Honglian implies an eminent monk may still have a man's desire and lose his self-control when sexual temptation is strong enough. In these stories, the monk's character is completely different from lascivious monks, who are common characters in Ming-Qing fiction, such as those monks who force Madam Xie and her maids into intercourse in *Yanliangan* 炎涼岸, which was discussed in the first section. It is not hard to find examples of this kind in vernacular fiction, which gives the impression that a monk's sexual desire is even stronger than that of other men because of the repression of their desire by the Buddhist percept.[270]

Therefore, Feng Menglong's story admits that sexual desire is almost impossible to eliminate, even for an eminent monk. It seems that the only way to control sexual desire is to keep far away from females. The story highlights the lonely monastery where Yutong lives for fifty-two years. "Situated in the midst of vegetable fields, with no farm houses in sight,

[269] Feng Menglong, *Stories old and New,* trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2000), 503.
[270] See Xue Yingjie 薛英傑, "Wenren shenfen yu tazhe xiangxiang: wanming he qingchude 'yinseng' gushi" 文人身份與他者想象：晚明和清初的'淫僧'故事, Ph.D. dissertation. The University of Hong Kong, 2017.

Water and Moon Monastery was a most quiet and undisturbed place."[271] After Honglian arrives at the Water and Moon Monastery, "Without anyone coming out, she could not very well go in. It was not until evening had set in that an old monk came out to lock the gate."[272] These descriptions indicate that Yutong's meditation room is located in a secluded place. Meanwhile, this atmosphere implies that it is vulnerable to invasion. Therefore, the Water and Moon Monastery prohibits women from entering it after Yutong fails to adhere to the Buddhist percepts. This new rule covertly acknowledges that sexual desire is somehow irresistible.

It is worth noting that although Yutong violated the Buddhist commandment against lust, he is not strongly denounced in the text. However, after he willed himself to death, even Liu Xuanjiao, who sent Honglian to seduce Yutong, felt remorseful and said, "What a monk! I shouldn't have marred his otherwise perfectly good name."[273] It seems that Yutong's death is able to atone for his sin and demonstrate his true heart: He is an eminent monk but happens to make a mistake. Honglian's feigned illness is an effective way to seduce Yutong. On the other hand, it works because of Yutong's kindness and empathy. His biggest mistake is not to lose his self-control at the sight of Honglian's body, but to allow Honglian to get close to his body. Yutong's character in the story indicates that a monk's sexual desire is admitted, and even legitimized.

In the twenty-sixth section of *Sutra in Forty-Two Sections*, when the heaven spirit (*tianshen* 天神) offered beautiful maidens to the Buddha in order to destroy his resolve, the Buddha resisted the temptation easily. By contrast, the figure of eminent monks in these vernacular stories are close to ordinary men. They make great efforts to control their sexual

[271] Feng Menglong, *Stories old and New,* trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2000), 504.
[272] Ibid., 503.
[273] Ibid., 508.

desires, but usually fail when getting close to the female body. This tendency of narrative is inherited by a Qing scholar, Ji Yun 紀昀. In his *Yuewei caotang biji* 閱微草堂筆記, he tells an anecdote about how a monk with a firm determination to practice Buddhist percepts is seduced by a beautiful woman. When he keeps a distance from her, his is steadfast. However, when he feels confident of "overcoming the demon" and allows the woman to touch his body, he breaks Buddhist percepts. The author comments, "Only a sage can be ground without becoming thin and be soaked in dark water without becoming black. People inferior to the great wise men may not be capable of the same."[274] The comment draws a clear boundary between the sage and ordinary people, thus echoing the legitimization of sexual desire in Feng Menglong's story about Yutong. It also demonstrates the goal of entertainment in vernacular story such as Feng Menglong's.

In addition to an offensive strategy, feigned sickness can be also used as a defensive tool by women. I have already discussed the stories of Yin Lizhen and Secunda Geng, in which these smart women used sickness as a strategy to protect their chastity. Another story, the twenty-eighth story of *Stories to Awaken the World*, tells of Miss He 賀, who feigns an illness to protect her lover. Miss He's father He Zhang 賀章 is appointed revenue manager for Jingzhou. While en route with his family to take up his post, he happens to meet the magistrate of Yangzhou, Wu Du, when their boats are moored to take shelter from a windstorm. Peeking at each other on the boats, Wu Du's 吳度 son, Young Master Wu 吳, falls in love with Miss He. Young Master Wu visits Miss He's boat secretly at midnight and they spend the night in each other's arms. Unexpectedly, as the storm ends that night, their boats set sail to two different directions as they sleep in Miss He's cabin. In order to keep the secret from Miss He's parents, she designs a ruse. From then on, Young Master Wu has to

[274] Ji Yun 紀昀, *Yuewei caotang biji* 閱微草堂筆記 (Tianjin: Tianjin guji chubanshe, 1994), 369.

hide under Miss He's bed during the daytime. Miss He feigns an illness. She pretends to be too weak to go out, asking her maids to bring her meals to her cabin. As she also provides Wu food, it looks like she has experienced a large increase in her appetite. Moreover, Miss He refuses to eat with her mother, staying in her cabin "alone" all the time.

During this process, Miss He fully exhibits her wisdom and courage. When Young Master Wu groans to himself in dismay after they realize that Wu is not able to return to his boat, Miss He still keeps calm and says, "Things having already come to this, panicking won't help. You stay here. We'll think of a way."[275] After careful consideration, she designs a plan in which she pretends to be ill while Wu hides under her bed. When they arrive at Jingzhou, Wu may slip out in the commotion of the moment of arrival and take a boat to Yangzhou. Then he can ask his parents to send a written marriage proposal to her parents. In fact, this plan is the best one they can choose under this situation. Although Young Master Wu eats much more than Miss He's expectation, her parents simply believe that it is a serious illness that causes her overeating. Therefore, Miss He's self-possession and wisdom even overwhelm Young Master Wu. She makes use of a feigned illness to protect her lover, distinguishing herself from other women who usually need protection from their male family members.

This story also shows doctor's embarrassed position in the case of feigned sickness. Miss He's parents are worried about her illness thus invite several doctors of good reputation to cure her, but every doctor provides a different diagnosis and treatment. Miss He smiles scornfully behind the doctors' back and dumps all the medication into her chamber pot. This is a biting satire on these doctors who are not able to discover the truth but fabricate a diagnosis to collect money from the patient's family. Meanwhile, it also implies that Miss

[275] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Awaken the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2009), 654.

He's plan is so smart that it hides the truth not only from her parents, but also from doctors. In professional medical texts, the figure of the doctor always symbolizes authority and power. Doctors are capable of controlling patients' lives and deaths, while patients are passive and powerless recipients of diagnoses and treatments. They have to entrust their bodies to doctors. In other words, when sickness is real, doctors are always dominant in the relationship with patients. Ironically, when sickness is fake, Miss He is able to fool doctors. It is she who controls the situation. She despises those doctors and pours the medication away. That is to say, through a feigned illness, the power relationship between the patient and the doctor is dramatically reversed.

While the themes of chastity and desire are usually foregrounded in stories of female malingerers, a tradition stretching back to the Spring and Autumn period (771–476 BCE) stipulates that when male figures feign illness it is usually for political reasons. With the aid of a feigned illness, these male malingerers are able to adopt either an offensive or defensive posture to achieve their political goals, just as female characters feign illness to overcome their rivals or protect themselves. Compared to a powerless female malingerer who usually faces a powerful male, the male malingerer most often assumes the identity of "patient" to deal with his relationship with a powerful party, who is often the ruler or a higher official who is able to do harm to him.

First, feigned illness can be used as an offensive tool in a plot to assassinate the ruler or political rivals. The way that Cui Zhu of Qi feigns illness and assassinates Lord Zhuang of Qi in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 is a typical example. In the 25th year of Lord Xiang, Lord Zhuang of Qi had a liaison with Cui Zhu's 崔杼 wife. "As he went often to Cui Zhu's residence, he took Cui Zhu's hats and bestowed them on others."[276] Cui was enraged at these acts and plotted to

[276] *Zuo Tradition: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals,"* tans. Stephen Durrant, Wai-yee Li, David Schaberg (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2016), 1139.

kill Lord Zhuang. He feigned an illness and did not go to the court. On the next day, "the lord went to inquire after Cui Zhu," but then spent the visit with Cui's wife. Cui's armed men assassinated the lord, saying, "The ruler's subject, Cui Zhu, is very ill. He cannot personally attend to the lord's commands. Being close to the lord's palace, we, the subjects of the lord's subject, are to make our night circuit and round up the depraved. We know of no other command."[277] In this event, Cui's feigned illness has two important functions. First, it created a chance for Lord Zhuang to enter Cui's private space, which symbolizes a reversal of power. Because the lord was an absolute authority in the court, it was too hard for Cui to assassinate him in the midst of his adherents and protectors. However, when he came to Cui's home on the excuse of visiting the sick man, Cui Zhu became the person who was in complete command of the situation, for all the people in his private space were his followers. They shot and murdered the lord, who was not able to fight back. Second, the illness provided Cui with an alibi when the lord was killed, as it seems that Cui was not present at all during the whole process. His armed men claimed that he was too ill to carry out the lord's command and that they were simply doing their duty in pursuing the depraved, although it is clear that they acted on Cui's command.

There is another similar example in *Zuozhuan*. In the 20th year of Lord Zhao, "Lord Yuan of Song would not keep his word and had many private entanglements. He also hated the Hua and Xiang lineages."[278] Hua Hai pretended to be ill and took the noble sons of Lord Yuan of Song prisoner when they came to wish him well. He then forced Lord Yuan to swear a covenant with the Hua lineage. In both anecdotes, a key step of Cui's and Hua's plot is the ruler or noble sons visit them, because it is a common act of courtesy to call on a sick subject. Through feigned illness, Cui and Hua were able to plot murder or kidnapping in order to gain

[277] Ibid., 1141.
[278] Ibid., 1573.

political power. In their private spaces, the ruler and noble sons lost their political superiority and could not even protect themselves.

Second, it is not uncommon for males to make use of feigned illness as a defensive tool in coded expressions of their political views, especially when they disagree with the ruler's acts. In *Zuozhuan*, when Lord Yin of Lu was going to visit Tang to inspect the fisheries, Zang Xibo 臧僖伯 thought it was not appropriate to a ruler because "In all cases when an object does not suffice for instruction in the great affairs, or a material in no way suffices for supplying vessels and instruments, the ruler takes no action with regard to it. A ruler is the one who guides the people into the right paths and the proper usage of objects…As for the products of the mountains, forests, rivers, and marshes, these are the materials for ordinary vessels and articles of use, the affairs of menial laborers, and the duties of petty officers; they are not the concern of a ruler."[279] Unfortunately, Lord Yin did not follow his advice and went to Tang to inspect the fisheries, while Zang "claimed that he was sick and did not go along."[280] It is worth noting that neither Lord Yin nor Zang Xibo speaks of their difference in opinion directly. After listening to Zang's remonstration, Lord Yin said, "I will inspect the borderlands."[281] Although he had in fact decided to inspect fisheries, he told Zang that he would inspect the borderlands. This suggests that Lord Yin might feel what Zang remonstrated is correct, but he did not want to give up his plan. So he provided a proper reason to go to Tang. Zang Xibo obviously knew Lord Yin had not changed his mind, but he did not further express his disagreement. Instead, he claimed that he was sick and did not go with the lord. Although he was facing a powerful ruler, he still had the wherewithal to express his objection to Lord Yin's act implicitly through a feigned illness. That is to say, Zang's feigned sickness functions as a bodily remonstration too. On the other hand, Lord Yin may also have understood that Zang's sickness was not real, but he did not respond to

[279] Ibid., 35.
[280] Ibid., 37
[281] Ibid., 37.

it. This implies that both men are familiar with these diplomatic strategies and that they have attained a subtle balance in the situation without any apparent conflicts.

Afterwards, claiming sickness became a common political message of remonstration when an official had an objection to the ruler's act or proposal. In *Zuozhuan*, during the ninth month of the 23th year of Lord Xi, Lord Huai of Jin arrested Hu Tu because his sons had followed the exiled prince Chong'er and did not come back by the deadline Lord Huai had set. Hu Tu refused to call his sons back, and Lord Huai therefore put him to death. "Diviner Yan, citing illness, did not leave his residence. He said, 'In the *Zhou Documents* there is this: 'And thereupon his greatly bright virtue brought others to submission.' If one lacks bright virtue but kills others to seek satisfaction, will there not then be difficulty? When people do not see virtue but hear only of slaughter, then what posterity will the ruler have?'"[282] Compared to Zang Xibo, Diviner Yan criticized Lord Huai more sharply. His illness is also a more transparent excuse to avoid going to the court. One imagines that if he were to face Lord of Huai and criticize him directly, it might cause an overt conflict. Therefore, Diviner Yan chose to stay at home and gave his critique, which may be transmitted to the lord too. In addition, his absence from the court conveys the message that he did not? want to serve such a ruthless ruler. It seems that he refused to communicate with the lord in person, but his feigned sickness served as a kind of silent communication in this special political context.

It is not difficult to find anecdotes of this type in *Shiji* 史記 and other early Chinese historical records. This phenomenon indicates that due to subjects' limited means for expressing disagreement with the ruler in a despotic monarchy, a feigned illness may be an effective way to remonstrate with the ruler wordlessly and to demonstrate integrity and loyalty in the process. Because this form of remonstrance minimizes face-to-face political conflict between subject and

[282] Ibid., 363.

the ruler, the subject usually does not suffer punishment, although the ruler may know his illness is fake. Therefore, this kind of strategic sickness appears repeatedly in historical records.

Third, a feigned illness can be used to protect the malingerer's life, especially when the ruler or higher officials may do harm to him. For example, in the biography of Lord Mengchang 孟嘗 in *Shiji*, slander made Lord Min of Qi suspect Lord Mengchang of being about to launch a rebellion. Lord Mengchang had to flee. After Lord Min found that Mengchang was innocent, he called him back. However, Lord Mengchang was not under the lord's command to go to court and instead claimed that he was sick, hoping to return to his fief in Xue 薛. It suggests that Lord Mengchang still felt unsafe serving Lord Min even if Lord Min's suspicion was removed. So Mengchang stays in his fief in case he is slandered again in the future. This anecdote indicates the potential danger in a man's political career. Lord Xinling 信陵 also had a similar experience. In the biography of Wei Prince in *Shiji*, when Lord Xinling held the post of general in Wei, he was slandered by someone in the presence of the lord of Wei. The lord gradually believed that Xinling was going to depose him and replace him with another person. Lord Xinling was aware that he had been framed, so he did not go to the court with an excuse of sickness. Instead, he spent his days and nights drinking with his guests. These actions indicate that Xinling was disappointed by the lord of Wei's suspicion and became willing to retire to the margins of the political situation. He made use of a strategic illness to protect his life at the cost of political power. In other words, his feigned illness served as a silent announcement that he had no intention to replace the ruler.

To escape the political frame through an instrumental illness becomes more and more common in later generations. Over time, feigning illness becomes a basic part of political communication. When a historical text makes mention of "claiming illness" (*chengbing* 稱病), "resigning because of illness" (*yi ji ci* 以疾辭), "refusing to host a guest or carry out a command

because of illness" (*xiebing* 謝病), and so on, all readers can understand the implicit message. In short, claimed illness implies a silent objection from the relatively powerless party on the political stage, or a wordless declaration that the "patient" would withdraw from his political career.

Many authors of Ming-Qing vernacular fiction inherited the theme of how male politicians feigned illness from these historical records in early China. Most of them did not go beyond the three political goals discussed above, but they characterize the malingerer's actions in greater detail. A famous anecdote about Sima Yi's 司馬懿 feigned illness comes from Chapter 106 of *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義. As the lord of Wei's illness worsens, he calls Sima Yi into the palace, and entrusts his son, Cao Fang 曹芳, to the care of Sima Yi. After he dies, Sima Yi, Cao Shuang 曹爽, and other subjects support Cao Fang as he enthrones the new emperor. However, as Sima Yi and Cao Shuang exercise power, Cao Shuang takes over military authority and makes Sima Yi a mere figurehead. Cao Shuang's brothers and supporters are all appointed to high posts. Being aware of the threat from Cao Shuang, Sima Yi claims to be ill and remains in seclusion. His two sons also resign their posts. As Cao Shuang enjoys his monopoly of military authority, he wonders about the state of Sima Yi's health and sends Li Sheng 李勝 to find out whether Sima Yi's illness is real or not. Sima Yi understands that Li Sheng is there to investigate his illness, so he removes his headdress, letting his hair fall in disorder. He stretches himself out on his his couch and asks two servant girls to help him, then meets with Li Sheng. When Li Sheng tells Sima Yi that he, Li Sheng, has been appointed as prefectural governor of Jingzhou, Sima Yi pretends to be not able to hear him clearly and says, "Ah, Bingzhou is in the north; you will have to be very careful there."[283] Li Sheng explains several times, but Sima Yi still pretends not to be able to understand. Li Sheng has to write down what he wanted to tell and show it to Sima Yi.

[283] Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中, *Sanguo yanyi* 三國演義 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1989), Vol. 3, 1389.

Further, in order to show how ill he is before Li Sheng leaves, Sima Yi points to his mouth to tell his servant girls to feed him. A girl brings some broth and holds the cup for him to drink. He is able to put his lips to the cup, but he spills the broth all over his robes. He tells Li Sheng that he is so ill that he may die at any moment. He even entrusts his sons to Li Sheng and asks Li Sheng to convey his words to Cao Shuang because he hopes Cao will take care of his sons after his death. Li Sheng is finally convinced that Sima Yi cannot last much longer. Cao Shuang gives us his suspicions after he hears from Li Sheng what he has seen at Sima Yi's home. When Cao Shuang leaves the capital with the lord to visit the Gaoping tombs, Sima Yi mounts a coup to seize Cao Shuang's military authority. After Cao Shuang returns, Sima Yi kills him and his brothers, and is then appointed prime minister. All state affairs fall under the control of Sima Yi and his sons.

In this story, Sima Yi's maneuvers to feign sickness are extremely adept. While Cao Shuang engages in an offensive posture on the political stage, Sima Yi makes use of a feigned illness as a defensive tool to hide his ambition and protect himself. After Cao Shuang relaxes his vigilance against him, he immediately shifts to an offensive posture to destroy his rival. During this process, the most prominent element is Sima Yi's excellent performance of illness. Most previous historical records focus on why a male politician needed to assume the identity of a patient and on the consequences of the feigned sickness. The pretender's performance rarely gets much attention. Only an anecdote in *Zuozhuan* briefly described the means by which Shen Shuyu declined an official appointment on the grounds of illness in the twenty-first year of the reign of Lord Xiang of Lu (552 BCE). "Just then the weather was hot. He dug a hole in the ground, filled it with ice, and set up his bed over it. He wore two padded silk robes and a fur coat, ate little, and lay on the bed."[284] His performance deceives the physician sent by the ruler of Chu. The goal of

[284] *Zuo Tradition: Commentary on the "Spring and Autumn Annals,"* tans. Stephen Durrant, Wai-yee Li, David Schaberg (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2016), 1081.

Sima Yi's performance is similar to Shen Shuyu's, for both of them make a great effort to convince the ruler's messenger that they were seriously ill. Shen Shuyu's artifice is relatively simple. The interaction between him and the physician is absent. It seems that the physician only observes his performance and draws a quick conclusion. By contrast, Sima Yi plays a role of patient more vividly. Without those props, such as the hole, ice, silk robes, a fur coat, and so on, Sima Yi gives a vivid performance of an emaciated patient leading his daily life. He is an excellent actor, and his bed is his stage. Li Sheng was not only an audience like the physician in Shen Shuyu's anecdote, but is also invited to participate in this act. Although he has some conversation with the patient, all of it is orchestrated according to Sima Yi's dramatic intentions. In this sense, Sima Yi is also a playwright who composes a play about his feigned illness. Li Sheng is guided by him to make the final conclusion, which led to Cao Shuang's failure. That is to say, Sima Yi's brilliant performance on his sickbed eventually determines his victory on the political stage.

Thus, from Shen Shuyu to Sima Yi, feigned sickness has gradually developed into a performance of an assumed patient. Compared to earlier historical records, authors of late imperial vernacular stories paid more attention to how this kind of performance can be convincing and impressive. The portrayal of the audience's reaction is indispensable. This tendency shows more clearly in a story about Sun Bin 孫臏 in Feng Menglong's 馮夢龍 *Dongzhou lieguozhi* 東周列國志 from the late Ming Dynasty. Sun Bin (?–316BC) was a famous military strategist during the Warring States period. An alleged descendant of Sun Wu 孫武, Sun Bin composed a military treatise, *Sun Bin's Art of War*. It is said that he learned his military strategies from a hermit, Guiguzi 鬼穀子. Chapters 87 through 89 of *Dongzhou lieguozhi* recount his experiences, especially his relationship with Pang Juan 龐涓, another fellow student of Guiguzi. Sun and Pang are sworn brothers at the beginning. Pang Juan goes to serve Wei and

is appointed to the supreme commander. Because Guiguzi has transmitted the art of war of Sun Wu to Sun Bin and only Sun Bin, Pang Juan is jealous of Sun. After Sun is invited to Wei and becomes Pang Juan's colleague, Pang frames Sun for treason. He reports to the lord of Wei that Sun Bin has secretly met with the envoy of Qi and will return to his hometown in Qi. When the lord of Wei makes plans to punish Sun, Pang suggests he have Sun's kneecaps removed, for Sun will not be able to go to Qi if he is permanently disabled. Pang even plans to kill Sun after he gets Sun's *Art of War*, which Sun has written out on wooden tablets. Sun Bin discovers Pang Juan's plot by accident. In order to protect his life, he follows his teacher's advice and pretends to be mad.

> On that day, when dinner was served, Sun Bin was going to pick up his chopsticks. He suddenly fainted and vomited. After quite a while, he grew enraged, opening his eyes and shouting, 'Why are you trying to do me in with poison?' He pulled all the bottles and jars to the ground and burned the inscribed wooden tablets in the fire. He fell to the ground, his mouth full of indistinct curses… On the next day, Pang Juan came to see him in person. Sun Bin's face was covered in sputum. He lay on his stomach and laughed, but suddenly burst into tears. Pang Juan asked, "My brother, why did you laugh and cry?" Sun Bin answered, "I laughed because the lord of Wei intended to kill me, but I have one hundred thousand heavenly soldiers as my reinforcements. How could he do harm to me? I cried because no one is able to be a general without Sun Bin in the state of Wei."[285]
>
> 當日晚餐方設，臏正欲舉箸，忽然昏憒，作嘔吐之狀，良久發怒，張目大叫曰："汝何以毒藥害我？"將瓶甌悉拉於地，取寫過木簡，向火焚燒，撲身倒地，口中含糊罵詈不絕。誠兒不知是詐，慌忙奔告龐涓。涓次日親自來看，臏痰涎滿面，伏地呵呵大笑，忽然大哭。龐涓問曰："兄長為何而笑？為何而哭？"臏曰："吾笑者笑魏王欲害我命，吾有十萬天兵相助，能奈我何？吾哭者哭魏邦沒有孫臏，無人作大將也！"

Compared to a general illness, madness has more performativity, for patients usually lose their reason, and all of their acts become unpredictable. Sun Bin's exaggerated actions constitute a perfect performance of the play he has scripted. It is somewhat similar to Sima Yi's case, but even more dramatic. Considering Sun's situation, the course of action he chooses may be the only wise choice. Because Sun Bin had written out some pages of his *Art*

[285] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Dongzhou lieguozhi* 東周列國志 (Nanjing: Jiangsu wenyi chubanshe, 1995), 710.

of War for Pang before he saw through Pang's plot, if he destroyed them under the name of any other sickness, Pang Juan might guess that Sun already knew the truth, and that would further endanger Sun's life. However, it would hardly arouse suspicions that a mad man should burn the text he wrote out before he became insane. So this special sickness helped Sun keep his *Art of War* from Pang and laid a foundation for overcoming Pang later.

Besides, only madness may help Sun escape from Pang's control. It is conceivable that if Sun Bin pretended physical illness instead of insanity, he would be confined to bed and could not flee to another place. Under the cover of madness, Sun Bin is able to get some freedom as long as Pang Juan believes he was really mad. At first, Pang Juan suspected Sun's madness was fake. He tested it by putting Sun in a pigsty. Sun Bin lay in the pigsty and covered his face with his tangled hair. Pang Juan asked his servant to send food and drink to Sun, but Sun dumped them on the ground and ate dogs' droppings instead. When Pang Juan's servant told Pang what he had seen, Pang believed Sun's act. From then on, he did not restrain Sun Bin from going outside, and Sun was therefore able to meet Chunyu Kun 淳于髡, who had been sent by the lord of Qi to take Sun Bin away to the state of Qi. Sun Bin commanded the Qi army as it defeated the Wei army directed by Pang in the battles of Guiling and Maling. Pang Juan commit suicide after his failure.

The struggle between Sun Bin and Pang Juan also appears in *Shiji*, but in that version Sun Bin secretly meets with the envoy of Qi after he is disabled because of Pang Juan's plot. It does not record Pang's and Sun's interactions after Sun was crippled or explain how Sun was capable of meeting the envoy of Qi. This lacuna left room for later authors to add these details. The Ming text *Lieguo zhizhuan* 列國志傳 by Yu Shaoyu 余邵魚 (fl. 16th cent.) was the first to include an anecdote about how Sun Bin feigned madness and fled to Qi. This version includes many folkloric illustrations of Sun Bin's magical spells but does not focus on his performance as a

patient. It departs from the focus on Sun's tactics and replace them with feats of magic, some parts of the plot therefore seem absurd. For example, when Pang Juan sends an army to search Zhu Hai's 朱亥 house, where Sun Bin is hiding, Sun pulls in a black cloud to conceal himself so that no one is able to see him. Sun is even capable of covering his star in the sky. When Pang cannot observe Sun's star at night, he believes Sun is dead. Sun's magic powers somehow contradict the fact that he is not able to predict Pang's plot and is framed by Pang. In the late Ming, Feng Menglong revised *Lieguo zhizhuan* as *Dongzhou Lieguozhi*. He deleted almost everything relating to Sun Bin's supernatural spells, and developed the great potential of feigned madness in his fictional narratives, making madness both a perfect performance and a defense mechanism. Thus Sun Bin becomes a wise man who makes use of a feigned illness to protect himself. Although Pang Juan had the power to do harm to Sun Bin initially, the process by which Sun Bin was able to flee to Qi with the aid of feigned madness indicates the radical change in their power balance.

Generally speaking, the development of the representation of political figures' feigned illnesses in late imperial fiction reveals two tendencies. One is to dwell on the details of the malingerer's performance as a patient and on his interaction with the audience he needs to convince. Especially through a feigned madness, the malingerer's actions are theatricalized. The other tendency is to simplify the process of how a feigned illness happens and ends, for example, by stating straightforwardly that a male character has been willing to terminate his political career on the pretext of illness. "Claiming illness to resign from his post" (*gaobing zhishi* 告病致仕) is a common phrase in cases of this kind. The Ming-Qing narrative tradition also inherited the historical tradition of feigned sickness from early Chinese texts, but it did not presume that feigning illness necessarily indicates a political difference of opinion with the ruler. Instead, the action of "claiming illness to resign from his post" tends to show that the

supposed patient is unenthusiastic about seeking political fame or wealth. Authors tend to be characterizing figures of this kind as wise and unworldly men who have a clear view of the dangers of the political engagement. In a love story about a talented scholar and a beauty (*caizi jiaren xiaoshu*o 才子佳人小說), the male who claims illness and resigns is usually the beauty's father. This move establishes a background for the beauty, who has received a good family education because her father is a retired official of great insight. In other words, as a minor character in the story, the father contributes to the characterization of his daughter. On the other hand, if the male who claims illness and resigns is an important character or a protagonist in the story, this action usually occurs at the end of the story, indicating that he would enjoy a happy life with his family far away from the political stage.

Furthermore, Ming-Qing authors also created another two types of story to develop potential functions of feigned sickness. In the first type, a malingerer feigns illness in order to adopt another person's identity. A medium-length novel in the Qing Dynasty, *Lin'er bao* 麟兒報, includes an anecdote in which a matchmaker pretends to be ill in order to take the female protagonist's place in marriage. In this novel, Xing Shaohua 幸韶華 was betrothed to Lian Qing 廉清 when they were young. However, Shaohua's mother Mrs. Xing is not satisfied with the engagement because Lian Qing's family is poor. When Lian Qing is fifteen years old, he leaves home for the provincial imperial examination together with Shaohua's brother. Shaohua's father also goes along with the young men. Mrs. Xing takes this opportunity to accept new betrothal presents from a rich man, Bei Jin 貝錦, and forces her daughter to marry him. Shaohua has to flee her home. When Bei Jin prepares to hold a marriage ceremony, as agreed upon, it becomes very embarrassing for Mrs. Xing that no one knows where the bride is. Mrs. Xing's brother suggests that the matchmaker Chu pretend to be the bride and marry Bei Jin. On the wedding day,

> Matchmaker Chu also busied herself with preparations in the front hall, and then she went to the inner hall to dress up. After a while, she covered her face with a silken

> cloth and got into a bridal sedan chair with Ning Wuzhi's (Mrs. Xing's brother) support. The chair bearers (from Bei's family) lifted the chair. Ning Wuzhi told them, "Just as Madam Chu was getting in, she felt a serious abdominal pain and could not walk. Please take care of the bridal sedan chair. She will come right after feeling better." Those chair bearers who came to pick up the bride did not care whether the matchmaker was present or not, as long as Miss Xing was in the bridal sedan chair. They responded, "Just so," lifted the chair and left.[286]
>
> 褚媒婆也在堂前忙亂了一番，便踅到房中打扮起來，不一時將錦袱遮了頭面，寧無知攙扶坐入轎中，轎人擡起。寧無知又對眾人說道："褚媽方才入內，一時腹痛不便行走，煩列位照顧新人轎子，他痛定了就來。"這些娶親人只要有了小姐在轎中，那里還管有媒婆沒媒婆，便應了一聲，擡著就走。

Because a patient is usually absent from social activities, when someone assumes another person's name, sickness becomes the ideal opportunity for excluding and replacing a person. The key step is not convincing the audiences that the malingerer's sickness is real, as in Sima Yi and Sun Bin's cases, but convincing them that the malingerer is the person he or she is pretending to be. That is to say, the malingerer does not perform illness, but takes on the larger performance challenge of impersonating someone else entirely.

The fourteenth story of *Shengxiaojian* 生綃剪, a Late Ming collection, is another example of how a malingerer feigns illness to steal another person's identity. In contrast with *Lin'er bao* above, the malingerer is a male. He pretends to be another person not for romantic or marital reasons, but for political reasons, echoing the narrative tradition of feigned illness in early China. In the story, Ji Yu 吉禹 is a talented and upright official. The Zhengde 正德 emperor (1491–1521) lives a luxurious and prodigal life, regularly indulging in the pleasures of the flesh. Ji Yu has written numerous letters of remonstration to the emperor but has received no response. The Zhengde emperor is in the habit of visiting a certain prostitute in her brothel and Ji Yu's friend, Mi Nian 米年, the head of the royal academy, always accompanies the emperor on these visits. Learning this, Ji Yu plans to go to the brothel and admonish the emperor secretly, so he asks his concubine to tell any visitors that he is sick and cannot see people for several days. Then he

[286] *Lin'er bao* 麟兒報 (Shenyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1983), 101.

pretends to be Mi Nian's servant and meets the emperor at the brothel. There the emperor finally realizes Ji Yu's loyalty and promises to change his ways. As noted earlier in this section, male officials had historically typically expressed their objections to the ruler's acts implicitly, through a feigned illness, whereas Ji Yu uses his feigned illness as a strategy in order to remonstrate directly with the emperor. Illness is not a political performance of his disagreement with the emperor's improper acts, but a tool to facilitate an encounter with the emperor. This development reveals how Ming-Qing authors tend to pursue strangeness and create dramatic effects through the patient's effort to assume another person's identity by the aid of illness.

In a second type of story about feigned illness created by Ming-Qing authors in fictional medical narratives, a malingerer uses illness in a strategem to force a lover to fulfill his or her will. In *Lin'er bao*, introduced above, after Xing Shaohua 幸韶華 flees her home, she and her female servant disguise themselves as two men to make travel more convenient. Unexpectedly, they meet an official named Mao Yu 毛羽 along the way. Admiring the looks and talent of Shaohua in her male guise, he betroths his daughter, Miss Mao, to Shaohua. At first, Shaohua plans to tell him the truth, but her servant observes that they are far away from home and that it will be difficult to deal with potential suitors like Bei Jin if other people know they are two young women. Thus Shaohua has to accept the engagement and marry Miss Mao. On their wedding night, she tells Miss Mao that she hopes to consummate their marriage after returning home and informing her parents. However, the Mao family makes no arrangements for the newlyweds to travel to Shaohua's home, and Shaohua has to claim that she is ill and confined to bed. Miss Mao's family brings in a famous doctor to treat Shaohua and brew medicines for her, but her servant secretly pours the medication away. She even pilfers food and feeds Shaohua on the sly. To the Mao family it looks as if Shaohua is so ill that she is not eating. In her extreme worry about Shaohua's sickness, Miss Mao is told that no medicine will cure Shaohua's sickness,

but that Shaohua is suffering the effects of the unfilial act of not informing his (i.e., her) parents of the betrothal. Miss Mao believes Shaohua is male and loves him so deeply that she cannot refuse Shaohua's request to return home. Once she and her parents have agreed to the plan, Shaohua begins eating normally and seemingly recovers within several days.

In this story, the target audience of Shaohua's performance of illness is Miss Mao. Because she loves Shaohua and regards her as her husband, she genuinely cares about Shaohua's health, even feeling guilty when she hears that the cause of Shaohua's sickness is anxiety about informing her parents. Therefore, the key point of this strategic use of feigned illness is the intimate relationship between the malingerer and the person who is the object of the ruse. In other words, if the malingerer's health continuously deteriorates, or the malingerer dies from sickness, the audience will suffer greatly for it. The strategy of feigned illness is thus very effective in this case, helping the malingerer achieve his or her goal.

In Li Yu's story, this strategy of feigned illness is dramatically used to produce some unexpected comic effects. The ninth story in the collection *Lianchengbi* 連城璧 tells of a handsome young scholar, Lü Zaisheng 呂哉生, who is on good terms with three prostitutes. They hope to marry him but realize that it is hard for Lü Zaisheng to regard them as his wives. So they find another beautiful girl, Miss Qiao, who will marry Lü Zaisheng and allow the three of them to serve as his concubines. However, Lü does not believe they are genuinely looking for a beautiful wife for him, so he proposes marriage to a widow, Cao Wanshu 曹婉淑. Hearing this news, the three prostitutes concoct a ruse to isolate Lü from Cao. Lü asks for help from a hairdresser, Madame Yin, who tells him to feign an illness in order to elicit the three prostitutes' anxiety:

> (Lü Zaisheng) pretended to be gloomy first, and then claimed that he was sick. After several days, it seemed as if ghosts and gods intended to help him, decking his sickly appearance with some minor illnesses, such as a cold and cough, to arouse other

people's concern. His body became cold and hot. He moaned that he was in pain. Thus those women were too anxious to eat during daytime or to sleep at night. [287]

（呂哉生）果然先作愁容，後裝病態，裝作了幾日，竟像有鬼神相助起來，把些傷風咳嗽的小癥替他裝點病容，好等人著急的一般。身上发寒发熱，口里叫疼叫苦，把那幾個婦人弄得日不敢食，夜不敢眠。

When the prostitutes invite a doctor to treat him, the doctor tells them that he is critically ill beyond remedy. "You have to ask him who he misses and what he wants to do, and treat his body and heart at the same time. Only attacking his illness from both inside and outside will work. Otherwise, if I treat only his body without dealing with anything weighing on his mind, he cannot recover, but will just hang on for a few more days."[288] At last, Lü accomplishes everything according to his wishes. He marries Miss Qiao, Cao Wanshu, and three prostitutes. Li Yu arranges the conflicts between Lü and three prostitutes over the choice of Lü's spouse as a battle of wits. The prostitutes attempt to find a beautiful wife for Lü in order to stabilize their status, and they design a ruse to humiliate Cao into breaking off relations with Lü. However, Lü's strategic use of illness eventually wins out by raising the specter of Lü's possible death from illness. This potential outcome becomes an unbearable torment to these prostitutes. Li Yu's description of this process dramatizes all the characters' actions and stages the comic effects. Lü's performance of a feigned illness is a key step in the theatricalization of this story. Moreover, the doctor who treats his sickness is also recruited by Madame Yin, who actually occupies the role of a military counselor in traditional writings on military strategies and tactics. She concocts the stratagem and helps Lü put it into practice, bribing the doctor to explain the cause of Lü's sickness according to his wishes. In fact, she quite deliberately envisions this process as a battle of wits. In her mind, the three prostitutes have plenty of deceptions and plenty of money and are therefore afraid of nothing. Only the death of their favorite person may threaten them. It is Madame Yin who leads Lü in besting the prostitutes, for she is fully aware of and makes good

[287] Li Yu, *Lianchengbi* 連城璧 (Hangzhou: Zhejiang guji chubanshe, 1988), 223.
[288] Ibid.

use of their weakness. Compared with Secunda Geng's strategical use of illness in another Li Yu's story discussed earlier in this chapter, this story shows that the imitation of traditional writing on military strategies and tactics in fictional works not only emphasizes the crucial conflict as a woman attempts to defend her chastity, but also produces a dramatically comic effect when applied to a contest of wits between a man and his lovers.

Further, it is not hard to see that this story reveals a special treatment of patients like Xing Shaohua and Lü Zaisheng. Because they make use of sickness strategically in order to achieve their goals, both of them emphasize that their sickness is "of the heart" (xinbing 心病) and that medication is therefore ineffectual, echoing the traditional Chinese idiom that states "a sickness of the heart must be cured with medication for the heart" (*xinbing haixu xinyao yi* 心病還須心藥醫). According to traditional Chinese medicine, excessive emotions may cause serious illness:

> Excessive joy causes extreme deficiency of Heart-Qi and subjugation of the heart by Kidney-Qi; Excessive anger leads to subjugation of the spleen by Liver-Qi; Excessive sorrow leads to subjugation of the liver by Lung-Qi; Excessive fear leads to subjugation of the kidney by Spleen-Qi; Excessive anxiety leads to subjugation of the lung by Heart-Qi. This is the transmitting order of diseases caused by abnormal changes of the five emotions.[289]
>
> 喜大虛則腎氣乘矣，怒則肝氣乘矣，悲則肺氣乘矣，恐則脾氣乘矣，憂則心氣乘矣，此其道也。

This passage in *Suwen* 素問 provides the theoretical foundation for Xing Shaohua's and Lü Zasheng's feigned illnesses and makes them plausible. They try to persuade their lovers that their illnesses are caused by excessive sorrow and anxiety due to the dilemmas in their interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the only way to cure them is to remove these excessive emotions. In this sense, the true problems of their interpersonal relationships are medicalized through feigned illness. Although these malingerers' lovers do not intend to solve the problem of their interpersonal relationships, or even create the problem themselves, as did the prostitutes, they

[289] Su Wen, trans. Li Zhaoguo (Xi'an: World Publishing Corporation, 2005), 253–255.

have to try their best to cure the malingerers' illnesses. So the malingerers benefit from their feigned illnesses and achieve their aims at the end.

3. False Report of Death by Illness

As discussed in the first section of this chapter, the virtue of chastity is foregrounded as a central theme when women make use of sickness strategically. In Ming-Qing fictional medical narratives, there is another special type of story about a false report of death from illness. The functions of such reports differ depending on whether the subject is male or female. The false report of a man's death from illness is used as a test of his wife's chastity, whereas the false report of a women's death from illness may provide an opportunity for her lover to marry a new wife or imply a devastating critique of her morality.

Stories about false reports of a man's death from illness show several common tendencies. First, the news of a man's death is usually spread to his hometown when he is traveling, though it can sometimes happen, as in the Feng Menglong tale discussed below, that a man sickens and dies in his hometown. Second, the performance of his wife and other family members can be considered a rehearsal of what will happen in reality after the man's death. If it stands in stark contrast to his wife's and/or other family members' attitudes towards him when he was alive, a satirical effect is the result.

The first story of this type is Feng Menglong's *Zhuangzi xiu gupen cheng dadao* 莊子休鼓盆成大道. It is the second story in *Stories to Caution the World*. Feng is the first author who designs the plot about using the false report of Zhuangzi's death from illness as a strategy to test his wife. Two anecdotes from *Zhuangzi* 莊子 are the sources for the tale. The first is the famous

tale of Zhuang Zhou's dream of a butterfly, from the chapter "Discussion on Making All Things Equal" ("Qiwulun" 齊物論):

> Once Zhuang Zhou dreamt he was a butterfly, a butterfly flitting and fluttering around, happy with himself and doing as he pleased. He didn't know he was Zhuang Zhou. Suddenly he woke up and there he was, solid and unmistakable Zhuang Zhou. But he didn't know if he was Zhuang Zhou who had dreamt he was a butterfly, or a butterfly dreaming he was Zhuang Zhou. Between Zhuang Zhou and a butterfly there must be some distinction. This is called the Transformation of Things.[290]
>
> 昔者莊周夢為胡蝶，栩栩然胡蝶也，自喻適志與！不知周也。俄然覺，則蘧蘧然周也。不知周之夢為胡蝶與，胡蝶之夢為周與？周與胡蝶，則必有分矣。此之謂物化。

This is one of the most celebrated anecdotes in the book of *Zhuangzi*. Zhuang Zhou questions the boundary between reality and dream here and characterizes it as a transformation of things. The butterfly dream, according to Robert Allinson, is an analogy drawn from our own familiar inner experience of the cognitive process involved in self-transformation. It also serves as a key to understanding what the whole of the *Zhuangzi* is about.[291] In retelling it at the beginning of his story, however, Feng Menglong abandons the philosophical dimensions and instead expounds it in a common way. According to Zhuang Zhou's teacher, Laozi, Zhuang Zhou had been a white butterfly in his previous life, and "while playing at the Jasper Pool (*yaochi* 瑤池), it stole pistils from the immortal peach blossoms, for which misdeed it was pecked to death by the green phoenix, guardian of flowers in service of the Queen Mother of the Immortals. But the dead butterfly's spirit did not dissolve. It was reincarnated in the body of Zhuang Zhou in the mortal world."[292] By replacing the transformation of things with reincarnation, Feng Menglong invents for the relationship between the butterfly and Zhuang Zhou an explanation that is much easier for common people to understand and accept. The device also explains why Zhuang Zhou is able to

[290] Modified from *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, trans. Burton Watson (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964), 45.
[291] Robert E. Allinson, *Chuang-Tzu for Spiritual Transformation: An Analysis of the Inner Chapters* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989), 81.
[292] Ibid., 22

attain enlightenment and to acquire powers of self-replication, body-concealment, and metamorphosis during his lifetime. The plot of the story depends upon these supernatural abilities.

The second *Zhuangzi* anecdote Feng refers to in his adaptations comes from "Supreme Happiness" (*"zhile"* 至樂). "When Zhuangzi's wife died, Huizi went to convey his condolences, and he found Zhuangzi sitting with his legs splayed, pounding on a tub and singing." Asked about it, Zhuangzi explains that, "In the midst of the jumble of wonder and mystery a change took place and she had a spirit. Another change and she had a body. Another change and she was born. Now there's been another change and she's dead. It is just like the progression of the four seasons."[293] This anecdote reveals Zhuang Zhou's conceptions of life and death. In his view, personal identity is to be explained not as a substance or a nature but as a continuous process of transformation. Life always exists in the whole, never in isolation. Zhuang Zhou's view of death follows directly from seeing the whole of existence as a continuum of transformations.[294] Therefore, it is not necessary to mourn for the dead. Feng Menglong retains the plot element of Zhuang Zhou's pounding on a tub and singing after his wife's death, but furnishes an entirely different reason for his actions. In Feng Menglong's version, Zhuang Zhou achieves enlightenment because of a test of his wife's chastity, and it for that reason that he pounds on a tub and sings, and then wanders for the rest of his life, eventually becoming an immortal. While Feng's narrative echoes several Yuan dramas about how Zhuangzi's attained the Way and became an immortal, such as Li Shouqing's 李壽卿 *Tan kulou* 歎骷髏 and Ma Zhang's 馬樟 *Lao Zhuang Zhou yizhen hudiemeng* 老莊周一枕蝴蝶夢, it is the first to use the false report of Zhuangzi's death from illness as a strategy to test his wife. It has inspired many imitations.

[293] Modified from *Chuang Tzu: Basic Writings*, translated by Burton Watson (New York and London: Columbia University Press, 1964), 113.
[294] Hyun Hochsmann, Yang Guorong, Zhuangzi (New York: Pearson Longman, 2007), 61–62.

The main question discussed in *Zhuangzi xiu gupen cheng dadao* 莊子休鼓盆成大道 is, to what extent can a wife's oath of chastity, sworn during her husband's life, preserve her chastity after his death? This secularization of elements of Daoist legend in vernacular literature is worth noting. Furthermore, Feng gives a vivid account of why and how Zhuang Zhou uses a feigned death by illness to test his wife and offers an insight into the couple's psychology. In his story, Zhuang Zhou and his wife, née Tian, are loving couple. One day, Zhuang Zhou meets a widow by chance when she is sitting by a new grave "with the earth upon it still damp," "fanning it with a white silk fan."[295] Zhuang Zhou asks her why she is fanning the earth, and she explains:

> "Buried in the grave are my dead husband's bones. He was very much in love with me and couldn't bear the thought of parting with me upon death. Before dying, he told me that should I want to remarry, I must wait until the funeral was over and the earth on the grave was dry. Because it takes time for the earth on a newly dug grave to dry, I'm fanning it to make it dry faster."[296]
>
> 冢中乃妾之拙夫，不幸身亡，埋骨於此。生時與妾相愛，死不能舍。遺言教妾如要改適他人，直待葬事畢後，墳土乾了，方才可嫁。妾思新築之土，如何得就乾，因此舉扇扇之。

These words stir up Zhuang Zhou's feelings. He is surprised that the woman can say that they had been in love when her husband is alive, and he returns home questioning the credibility of marital love. Hearing what he has seen, his wife Tian fiercely criticizes the widow. When Zhuang Zhou says that he does not trust women's commitment to preserving chastity and that he thinks Tian too might fail to get through even three to five years of widowhood, Tian explodes with rage and vows that she will never accept a second offer of marriage even if the misfortune of Zhuang Zhou's death does befall her.

A few days later, Zhuang Zhou suddenly falls ill and takes to his deathbed. Sobbing by his bed, Tian again swears that she will never remarry. However, on the seventh day after Zhuang Zhou's death, a young scholar arrives claiming to have had an agreement with Zhuang

[295] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2005), 23.
[296] Ibid., 24.

Zhou that Zhuang would take him on as a disciple. Upon learning that Zhuang is dead, he asks to keep vigil for Zhuang for a hundred days. Attracted by the man's good looks, Tian cannot control her passions and asks his old servant to serve as their matchmaker. On the wedding day, the man complains of a sharp chest pain and is suddenly on the verge of death. His servant tells Tian that the only medication that can cure him is human brains. When Tian splits open Zhuang Zhou's coffin with an ax to harvest his brains, she finds that Zhuang Zhou has come back to life and is sitting up. Realizing that it is Zhuang Zhou who has assumed the man's and his servant's forms through his powers of self-replication and body-concealment, Tian hangs herself from a rafter. Seeing that she is dead, Zhuang Zhou leans against the coffin and sings, drumming away on a bowl, and then smashes the bowl and lights a fire that burns the whole house down.

This story expresses considerable doubt about women's vows of chastity. The anecdote about the widow who fans the earth on her husband's grave is correlated with Tian's eagerness to remarry after Zhuang Zhou's death. Ironically, when Zhuang is alive, Tian openly despises this widow, citing the saying that "A chaste woman serves only one husband," and even repeatedly declaring herself a woman of moral rectitude. And when Zhuang Zhou says, "Before you die, they all profess wifely love; After you're gone, they all rush to fan the graves,"[297] Tian is very angry and points out that there are both chaste and unchaste women in the world and it therefore unfair to dismiss "all" women. However, in what she does after Zhuang Zhou's death she is even worse than the widow, since the widow at least tries to fulfill her promise by fanning the earth, while Tian breaks her promise immediately and remarries. This story does not introduce any chaste women but calls into question the credibility of all women's vows of chastity.

While the end of this story echoes the *Zhuangzi* anecdote about Zhuang Zhou drumming on a bowl and singing after his wife's death, it makes Tian, who is absent in *Zhuangzi,* into a hypocritical woman. In the new plot, the contradiction between her words and deeds explain why

[297] Ibid., 25.

Zhuang Zhou behaves so strangely after her death and reveals how difficult it is to discern a woman's real mind. On the other hand, Zhuang Zhou does not articulate any philosophy of life, but when he becomes fully aware of the fragility and unreliability of marital affections, he abandons the secular life to seek immortality at last. Moreover, in *Zhuangzi*, when Huizi 惠子 goes to convey his condolences and expresses surprise as the ritual impropriety of Zhuang Zhou's behavior, Zhuang Zhou explains by expounding with his unique views of life and death. By contrast, in Feng's story, Zhuang's ritual violation is explained as a reaction to his wife's ritual violation, providing an explanation of Zhuang's act intelligible in relatively commonplace terms of marital fidelity. In other words, while Zhuang Zhou's philosophy was understood to be esoteric and abstruse, in vernacular fiction treatments during the Ming Dynasty, both the butterfly dream and his bizarre mourning were explained in terms of popular morality.

After Feng Menglong's initiation of this type of story, many later dramatic authors likewise interpreted Zhuang Zhou's drumming on a bowl and singing after his wife's death as the result of a test of his wife's chastity through strategic use of sickness and death. Xie Hongyi's 謝弘儀 *Hudiemeng* 蝴蝶夢, Chen Yiqiu's 陳一球 *Hudiemeng* 蝴蝶夢, and Li Fengshi's 李逢時 *Sechi* 色癡 all followed this version. Some acts of *Hudiemeng* 蝴蝶夢 are still being performed on stage today. The enduring popularity of this story type is clear.

The motif of testing a woman's chastity through a false report of her husband's death from sickness also turns up in many other late imperial Chinese short stories. Li Yu, well known as an innovative writer of fiction, made use of this theme twice in his stories. The first instance is in the twelfth story of *Silent Operas* (*Wushengxi* 無聲戲). A young scholar and physician, Ma Linru 馬麟如, has a wife, née Luo 羅, and a concubine, née Mo 莫, and also has a sexual relationship with a handmaiden, Bilian 碧蓮. Only Mo has a son. When Ma suffers a serious illness at home, he thinks it is fatal disease and talks with his family about the affairs after his

death. Luo and Mo promise to preserve their chastity after his death, but the handmaiden does not. After his unexpected recovery, he loves Luo and Mo more but treats Bilian coldly. Ashamed of his failure in the civil service examinations, he travels to Yangzhou with a friend, Wan Ziyuan 萬子淵, to practice medicine. There he wins the favor of the magistrate after treating his illness. The magistrate takes Ma with him to Shanxi after his promotion to a post there. Wan Ziyuan stays in Yangzhou and assumes Ma's name to provide medical care. After half a year, Wan Ziyuan dies from sickness, but local people believe he is Ma Linru, and the erroneous message of Ma's death from sickness is transmitted to his hometown. Unexpectedly, Luo and Mo remarry immediately. Only Bilian stays to raise his son. This story may take Feng's *Zhuangzi xiu gupen cheng dadao* 莊子休鼓盆成大道 as a reference, for its main focus is also the possibility of a woman's preserving her chastity after her husband's death. More importantly, the conversation between Ma Linru and his family when Ma is severely ill echoes Tian's oath after Zhuang Zhou meets with the widow who fans her husband's new grave in order to remarry as soon as possible. When Ma Linru and Zhuang Zhou talk with their wives about the affairs after their death, their wives' oaths make them sound like models of chaste women. These two anecdotes serve as a rehearsal of what will happen after the men's death. However, their performance after they believe their husbands are dead stand in stark contrast to their original vows.

Based on Feng Menglong's story type, Li Yu has fulfilled the narrative potential of the strategic use of sickness. Both Ma Linru's sickness at home and the false report of his death from sickness while travelling function as tests. Unfortunately, the first test is a failure. When a sick man asks his wife and concubine to talk about their arrangements after his death, it is a test of words. That is to say, when Luo and Mo vow to preserve their chastity, it is a performance, for the point of the oaths is to convince their husband that they are chaste women, but they turn out to have been not sincere. In this sense, only the second test, the false report of the man's death

from sickness, truly tests his wife's and concubine's deeds in reality. When Luo and Mo believe Ma Linru has died from sickness, they lose the target audience of their performance, so their words lose their point and their actions exhibit their true intentions. Through this process, Li Yu raises the same question as Feng Menglong: when a man is alive, how can he detect whether his spouse is sincere in her vows of chastity after his death? Feng Menglong's answer is somewhat pessimistic, for Zhuang Zhou realizes the fragility and unreliability of marital affections and therefore pursues the Way instead. Although Luo and Mo are similar to Zhuang Zhou's hypocritical wife, Tian, Li Yu further discusses the relationship between one's words and deeds by introducing a new character, the genuinely chaste woman, Bilian, who does not promise to preserve chastity but is actually the only one who refuses to remarry and raises Ma's son after the false report of Ma's death is transmitted to his hometown.

Due to the dramatic contradiction between what Luo and Mo said and did in the two tests, it may be not hard to share Feng Menglong's gloomy conclusion that women's vows of chastity before their husbands' deaths are entirely unreliable. The seeming gap between Bilian's words and deeds even strengthens this impression. When Luo and Mo emphasize their determination to preserve their chastity, they point out that Bilian is different from them because of her low status in the family. Luo said, "We are husband and wife by the first marriage, and that is different from a concubine or handmaiden."[298] Mo said, "Since ancient times there have been wives and concubines who lived in widowhood, but where are the widowed handmaidens?"[299] Hearing these words, Bilian also admits that she does not insist on preserving her chastity, and will adjust to the situation after Ma's death. However, after receiving the news of Ma's death, Luo and Mo immediately plan to remarry. They leave Ma's coffin in Yangzhou, and Mo even treats her own son badly because she thinks it may be hard to remarry with a little boy. By contrast, Bilian

[298] Liu Shide 劉世德, Chen Qinghao 陳慶浩, Shi Changyu 石昌渝 ed. Guben xiaoshuo congkan 古本小說叢刊 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991), 39:2, 958.
[299] Ibid., 959.

spends her savings to deliver Ma's coffin back to his hometown and then stays to take care of Mo's son. When Ma comes back home alive, he realizes that Bilian is not only a truly chaste woman, but also a benefactor of his family, for he would have lost his home and his son would have died without Bilian. Nevertheless, he does not understand why Bilian did not vow chastity like Luo and Mo. Bilian explains that she had spoken sarcastically because of Luo's and Mo's contempt for her. Therefore, Li Yu once again questions the effectiveness of verbal expressions. As it is almost impossible to discover a woman's true heart through her words, no matter whether she is a chaste woman or not, Li Yu recommends a more magnanimous attitude towards her. He suggests that it may be wise for a man to encourage his spouse to remarry after his death. If his wife is chaste, this encouragement will strengthen her will to preserve chastity, and if his wife plans to remarry after his death, she will not blame him after his death. Further, Li Yu concludes that a person who is of high moral character does not rely on verbal commitments to display his or her ethical conduct. On the contrary, "it can be seen that any who declare themselves to be loyal ministers, filial sons, righteous husbands, and chaste wives during peaceful times are traitors, villains, and adulterous couples during troubled times."[300]

In this story, although Ma Linru does not make use of sickness intentionally, sickness serves as the author's narrative strategy to provide a way for Ma Linru to observe what will truly happen after his death. The reality is satire because Ma is cheated by his close family members when he is alive, whereas he is able to find the truth only as a "dead" man. Although Bilian does not remarry and stays to raise Ma's son, it is still a misfortune for Ma's family because his unchaste wife and concubine symbolize the disorder of his family ethics. As Bilian points out, "At the beginning, the *fengshui* 風水 of your family was good. There were two chaste women when you are alive. Later, the *fengshui* became bad. Just a message of your death drove two chaste women out the door…Now there is a widowed handmaiden, but not a widowed wife and

[300] Ibid., 1018–1019.

concubine. This is a reverse at the end, but not an auspicious one."[301] These words still contain an undertone of satire, indicating the tragedy of family ethics behind the seemingly happy end.

In the seventh story of *Lianchenhgbi* 連城璧, Li Yu creates a new function for the false report of a man's death from sickness. Not only serving as a test of his wife's chastity, the news of the man's death from sickness is here strategically used to tame his shrewish wife because of her failure to preserve her chastity. Taking over the traditional theme of taming a shrew, Li Yu describes the interaction between the husband and his shrewish wife as a competition of wisdom and strength on the battlefield. The husband pulls out all the stops to relieve his wife's oppression under the guidance of Fei Yingong 費隱公, a man well known for his skill in taming shrews. The strategic use of a false report of death by sickness is a key tactic to win this battle after many failed attempts.

At the beginning of the story, Li Yu states that a man should be strong, because he was born with the *qi* or air of *yang* 陽, while a woman should be weak, because she was born with the *qi* of *yin* 陰. Li Yu describes the inversion of these tradition roles in the relationship between husband Mu Zida 穆子大 and wife née Chunyu 淳于. She prevents Mu Zida from taking a concubine even though they do not have children. She even beats Mu Zida and reviles Fei Yingong when Mu tries to calm her jealousy at Fei's achievements in taming other shrews. When Fei Yingong's disciples conduct a crusade against her, she fails at first because their attack comes as a surprise. However, after being forced to allow Mu to take two concubines, she is able to turn defeat into victory. She separates Mu from the two concubines, torments them, and successfully repels Fei's disciples' second attack. Mu Zida even falls ill because of physical and psychological sufferings caused by Chunyu.

[301] Ibid., 1012–1013.

Although Li Yu highlights a shrewish and jealous woman's schemes and tactics in order to produce a comic effect in the story, her chastity turns out to be the main concern in her battle with her cowardly husband. All of Chunyu's actions have flagrantly violated the Confucian code of ethics for women, but Fei Yingong, Mu Zida and all other men are at their wits' end. According to Fei, "All the jealous women in the world are not useless. Each one is a female Cao Mengde 曹孟德. Unscrupulous careerists in times of turmoil are talented ministers in times of peace. They are all good helpmates after being transformed. It is a pity that men are not able to master them." This comment sounds like praise of jealous women's wisdom, but does refer to their virtue. It also recalls the traditional evaluation of Cao Cao (155–220), one of the leading politicians and strategists of the Three Kingdom period (189–263), who has been praised more for his strategic brilliance than for his personal virtue. In this story, although Chunyu violates moral normative models, she is able to maintain her dominant status in the marital relationship. Nevertheless, once she loses her chastity, she will immediately lose her advantageous position. This is the foundation for the effectiveness of Fei Yingong's central strategy to make use of a false report of Mu's death by sickness.

Compared to other stories in which a powerless woman gains some power through the strategic use of sickness to overcome a relatively powerful man, Mu Zida's and Chunyu's relationship inverts the gender hierarchy. In the story, discussed earlier, of how a prostitute strategically uses a feigned illness to seduce an eminent monk, the monk's weakness is his secret desire, which the prostitute discovers and exploits. In Li Yu's story, although there are multiple reasons why Chunyu refuses to preserve chastity for her "dead" husband—for example, she does not have a son—the most important is the one she articulates last: "I have been married for more than twenty years, and have not been apart from a man. It is for no other reason that that I am afraid of being lonely, so I do intend to remarry sooner or later." Therefore, sexual desire is the common reason both the eminent monk and the shrewish widow lose their advantage. Fei

Yingong makes use of Mu Zida's illness to design a ruse based on Chunyu's weakness. Fei hides Mu at his home when Mu is supposed to be on his way to take the civil service examinations, then sends Chunyu the news that Mu has died of illness. In Fei's view, the reason Chunyu is invincible is that she still holds to the central moral norm for women, chastity. That she plans to remarry after Mu's death shows that she will carry the stigma of giving up her chastity all her life and will no longer dare dominate her husband. What happens after Chunyu believes Mu is dead fulfills Fei's expectations. Fei Yingong sends a matchmaker to discuss the arrangements for a new marriage with Chunyu. On the wedding day, the matchmaker tells Chunyu that she will take her to the groom's house, but in fact they go to Fei Yingong's home, where Mu Zida has been hiding. When Chunyu sees Mu and the truth is unveiled, she feels extremely ashamed and attempts to commit suicide. After being saved by Mu's two concubines, she becomes a virtuous wife and gets along well with these same concubines. They have six sons in total at last.

As the false report of a man's death by sickness may result in his wife's remarriage, it is also made use of by a villain to force a woman to remarry. A new story type of "replacing an elder sister-in-law with a younger one" (*yishenhuanqi* 以嬸換嫂) emerges. In the fifth story of Feng Menglong's *Stories to Caution the World*, Lü Yu 呂玉 is the oldest brother in his family in Changzhou Prefecture. When he sets out on a business trip, he falls ill with boils all over his body after visiting a brothel in Shanxi. Too ashamed to return home, he takes medicine for three years to heal his skin. Rumors meanwhile spread in his hometown, saying that he has died of poisonous boils in Shanxi. His second brother, Lü Bao 呂寶, begins to pressure his sister-in-law to remarry. Lü Yu's wife, Wang, puts on mourning clothes and refuses to obey. In order to gain by keeping the betrothal gifts for himself, Lü Bao plans to sell Wang to a traveler from Jiangxi. He tells the traveler to get his sister-in-law, who is wearing mourning white on her bun hairpiece, into the sedan chair and set off in the boat under the cover of night. However, Lü Bao's wife,

Yang, is close to Wang and gives away the secret to her. Wang exchanges her mourning bun for Yang's black one. Unexpectedly, thinking Yang is the woman with a bun hairpiece in mourning white, the traveler and his confederates push Yang into the sedan-chair and race off.

In this story, the false report of Lü Yu's death from sickness is not used to test his wife's chastity, but to show retribution, as Wang keeps her chastity and Yang is forced to give hers up. Here women's chastity does not directly reflect their virtue, but is a reward or punishment for their husbands' deeds. After Lü Yu recovers from his illness, he finds two hundred taels of silver and returns it to its owner instead of keeping it for himself. Ultimately, in karmic reward for his generous act, his wife is not sold by his villain brother. As Lü Yu comments at the end, "It is by the will of heaven that I am reunited with my wife and the rest of the family. As for the treacherous brother of mine who sold his wife, he brought all this upon himself. How true it is that divine retribution never misses the mark!"[302]

However, there are still some textual gaps in this design of retribution. It is not hard to see that Lü Yu's wife actually has no strong motivation to keep her chastity. For example, after being told of Lü Bao's evil plan to sell her, Wang says, "Sister-in-law, if I have to remarry, well, that would be that. But how can I go wearing a bun of mourning? Please find a black one and exchange it with mine."[303] She even trades her mourning clothes for colored ones. Although the exchange of buns saves her, it is clear that she does not perform as a typical chaste woman who is forced to remarry. Considering that neither she nor Yang knows that the traveler and his confederate will target the woman who is wearing a bun hairpiece in mourning white, the plot allows her to preserve her chastity only by chance, and it is clear that when she is forced to remarry, although she might refuse at first, she will obey at last. This is not what a truly chaste woman would do in this situation. On the other hand, Lü Bao's wife Yang shows sympathy for

[302] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Caution the World,* trans. Shuhui Yang and Yunqin Yang (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2005), 78.
[303] Ibid., 76.

Wang: “Her husband’s words pained her heart, but as he had already made the decision, there was nothing she could do.”[304] She even tells Wang of her husband’s plan, “My husband told me not to say anything, but the two of us are such good friends that I just can’t keep you in the dark. You can go ahead and pack up any valuables you have in your room, so you won’t be caught unprepared when the man comes.”[305] Based on these descriptions, Yang is completely innocent as she tries to help Wang. However, her outcome is a tragedy. If this is a cruel retribution for what her husband has done, Wang’s response to Yang’s misfortune is too hardhearted. Watching the Jiangxi traveler take Yang away, Wang “gave thanks to heaven and earth. She closed the gate and retired to her room.”[306]

Therefore, this story places the patient’s family members’ performances after his supposed death in the framework of retribution. Whether Lü Yu’s and Lü Bao’s wife is able to keep her chastity is determined by her husband’s good or wicked conduct. This design may cause some textual inconsistency, for Lü Yu’s wife does not behave like a chaste woman and Lü Bao’s wife behaves like a kind-hearted person. Later authors reckon with this problem. The first story in *Jinxiuyi* 錦繡衣 by Xiaoxiang mijinduzhe 瀟湘迷津渡者 develops this story type but resolves the problem. Hua Yuren 花玉人 is the eldest brother of the family. When he goes to a distant town to take an official post, his second brother, Hua Xiaoren 花笑人, plans to sell his sister-in-law, Wenzi 文姿, to a merchant. He forges a letter from Hua Yuren to Wenzi, claiming that Yuren is dying from illness and will not mind if Wenzi remarries. Several days later, Xiaoren sends a man to report the news of Yuren’s death to the Hua family. He also tells the merchant to abduct Wenzi, who is wearing white mourning clothes, in the evening. Hua Yuren’s third brother tells Wenzi of this evil plan. Then Wenzi decides to make reprisals. She pretends to be happy to

[304] Ibid.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid., 77.

remarry and deceives Hua Xiaoren's wife, née Qin, into exchange mourning clothes with her. Thus Qin is abducted by the merchant, while Wenzi is able to keep her chastity and her husband returns home eventually.

Compared to Wang in Feng Menglong's story, Wenzi has a stronger motivation to keep her chastity and seek revenge against her evil brother-in-law. If the younger sister-in-law's tragedy is a coincidence in Feng's story, Qin's abduction in *Jinxiuyi* is Wenzi's deliberate arrangement. In order to avoid putting the elder sister-in-law in the dilemma of entrapping her benefactor, the person who discloses the secret is changed in *Jinxiuyi* from the younger sister-in-law to the second brother. Nevertheless, the author still expresses criticism of Wenzi, who makes Qin separate from her family. On the one hand, there are many descriptions in the story about how Qin's two crying sons miss their mother. Although it is Hua Xiaoren who is responsible for the conspiracy to sell Wenzi, it is still ruthless to separate his sons from their mother. These descriptions thus imply a critique of Wenzi's revenge. On the other hand, Wenzi's younger sister, Yazi 雅姿, directly criticizes Wenzi: "Sister, you are too cruel." At the end of the story, during Wenzi's later years, she thinks, "My younger sister was benevolent, so she had many sons. Although I was able to keep my chastity, I made my sister-in-law separate from her family. It was heartless of me. That is why I don't have any children."[307] These comments deepen the reflection upon the rationality of "replacing the elder sister-in-law with another younger one," establishing a textual conversation with Feng Menglong's story through another retribution for the elder sister-in-law.

In late imperial fictional medical narratives that employ the plot of "false report of a person's death by sickness," the patient in most stories is male. Nevertheless, there are still several cases in which the report that spreads is the false report of a woman's death from

[307] Xiaoxiang mijinduzhe 瀟湘迷津渡者, *Jinxiuyi* 錦繡衣, Guben xiaoshuo jicheng 古本小說集成 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994).

sickness. One example is the first story from *Wuseshi* 五色石, a love story about a talented scholar and a beauty (*caizi jiaren xiaoshu*o 才子佳人小說), in which the young scholar Huang Cong 黃琮 falls in love with a beauty, Hanyu 含玉. Hanyu's father plans to accept Huang's proposal of marriage after Huang passes the civil service examination. However, Hanyu's father is appointed to lead a very dangerous expedition to put down a rebellion. Hanyu is so anxious about her father that she falls ill. On the way back to their hometown, Hanyu's sickness worsens. The false report of her death from sickness reaches Huang Cong. He is very sad but before long is engaged to another lady, Bigui 碧桂. After Huang learns the truth, although both Hanyu and her father blame him, Hanyu ultimately marries Huang together with Bigui. Therefore, Huang Cong does not have to be faithful to Hanyu after she is dead. Huang is still able to fulfill the goals of his life, such as reaching the highest rank in the civil service examination and marrying two beautiful wives. The false report of Hanyu's death provides an opportunity for her fiancée to take a new wife.

Another example of a false report of a woman's death from sickness comes in the fifth story in *Shidiantou* 石點頭. The story is unconventional because it deconstructs and subverts the kind of traditional love story about a talented scholar and a beauty (*caizi jiaren xiaoshu*o 才子佳人小說) that is exemplified in Huang Cong and Hanyu's story in *Wuseshi* 五色石, discussed above. In this story, the male protagonist Mo Shuihe 莫誰何 passes the civil service examination at the provincial level, but then falls ill because of sexual excess and has to stop in Yangzhou while on his way to the capital for the metropolitan examination. He goes to the Jade Flower Temple after his recovery and there catches a glimpse of a beauty, Ziying 紫英. Mo makes every effort to seduce Ziying. When Ziying lends a scarf to Mo Shuihe to dry his hands after he has washed them, Mo exploits this opportunity to force her to meet him, threatening that otherwise

he will tell Ziying's father that she is engaged in an affair with him. Ziying has to meet him several days later. Afterward, Mo Shuihe sneaks into her bedroom and forces her to have sex with him. Some ten days later, they elope to Mo's hometown. When Ziying's father, Mr. Si 斯, discovers that his daughter and her female servant have left without saying goodbye, he guesses at the truth. Since Ziying had been betrothed to the grandson of Assistant Prefect Hu 胡, her elopement with another man would bring disgrace to her family, and Mr. Si decides to conceal what has happened. When a family servant happens to die of illness, Mr. Si claims that it is in fact his daughter who has died. He then holds an elaborate funeral to bury the servant under Ziying's name. Ziying's fiancée also comes to offer condolences from the Hu family.

Ziying's father uses the false report of his daughter's death from sickness as a strategy to conceal the truth of Ziying's elopement. This choice implies that her father would rather his daughter be dead and chaste than alive and unchaste. Because of the strategic use of illness, this story is very different from typical love stories about talented scholars and beauties, although at first it seems to develop its plot within the framework of this story type. In a traditional love story about a talented scholar and a beauty, the male and female protagonists may pledge to marry without the permission of their parents, but by the end of the story their parents are always happy to approve their marriage after the male protagonist has passed the civil service examination and become an official. By contrast, although Mo Shuihe eventually passes the examination on the metropolitan level after two years and is appointed magistrate of Yizheng county, his career success does not bring a happy ending to this story. As Ziying misses her father very much, Mo Shuihe visits Mr. Si in Yangzhou. When Mo mentions that his parents have already passed away, Mr. Si sighs, "You are sad at losing your parents, while I am an old man without any children. We share the same loneliness."[308] Both of them shed tears. The next

[308] Tianran chisou 天然癡叟, *Shidiantou* 石點頭 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1985), 139.

year, Mr. Si pays Mo a return visit. Mo thinks it is a good time to tell the truth, so he asks Ziying to come out. However, when Mr. Si finds that Mo's wife is none other than his daughter, he is filled with rage and says to Mo, "At that time, when my unworthy daughter was abducted by a robber, who was infamous, immoral, spineless, and would go to the hell, I had to make a pretext about her death to keep the secret from the family of Assistant Prefect Hu. If the truth comes out, you and I will both be ashamed. From now on, let us not see each other again, in life or death."[309] Mr. Si's responses to Mo Shuihe before and after he knows Mo is his son-in-law make it clear that he not only makes use of a false report of Ziying's death from illness to keep her fiancé's family in the dark, more importantly, he also allows himself to believe that Ziying is dead after she vanished at night three years ago. In other words, Mr. Si will be able to maintain the reputation of his family and comfort himself only if Ziying has died from illness instead of eloping with Mo. Therefore, when Mo visits in his capacity as magistrate of Yizheng county, he is able to share his sadness of losing his daughter with Mo. However, when Mo is the person who eloped with Ziying, Si refuses to recognize Mo is his son-in-law, even though Mo has been successful enough in the civil service examination. That is to say, Mr. Si categorically rejects the family reunion that is the conventional happy ending for love stories about talented scholars and beauties. From his perspective, the false report of Ziying's death from sickness redefines Ziying's identity. As a filial daughter in the Si family and a chaste fiancée of the Hu family, Ziying is truly dead, while the woman who is in Mo Shuihe's family is shameless and immoral, not his daughter at all.

Mr. Si's strategic use of illness conveys a devastating critique of Mo Shuihe and Ziying's morality. This critique, which is manifested through sickness, also pervades the whole story. At the beginning of the story, Mo Shuihe is young and dissolute. He spends his time flirting with female servants and visiting whorehouses, and his parents die from an illness caused by their

[309] Ibid., 140.

extreme anxiety. This fatal illness, as well as the illness Mo Shuihe contracts from his sexual excesses in Yangzhou, conveys a serious warning against intemperate behavior. Nevertheless, Mo Shuihe does not correct his actions, instead seducing Ziying. In the first half of the story, then, he is characterized as an unfilial and lascivious scholar. The second half of the story takes a completely different turn. After marrying Ziying, Mo Shuihe regrets his past indulgence in sensual pleasures. He does not visit brothels at all, instead concentrating on his official career. The loving couple have two sons, and Mo Shuihe is promoted to the post of chief minister in Fujian. He raises his two sons strictly in order to prevent them from repeating his errors, and they pass the civil service examinations and become officials in the capital. However, his penitence, corrections and achievements cannot win for them the forgiveness of Ziying's father. Mo and Ziying still have to pay for their earlier unfilial and unchaste behavior. Mo Shuihe dies from a strange illness in retribution for having forced Ziying to have sexual relations with him. Ziying also dies from sickness after three years. Therefore, beneath the surface of Mo Shuihe and Ziying's love, successful career, and promising offspring, all of these illnesses manifest strong disharmony in the text and keep their sins from being able to be erased.

In conclusion, although a great number of fictional medical narratives in late imperial China focus on how sickness destroys and reconstructs patients' identity and interpersonal relationships, it would be arbitrary to define sickness as a purely unwanted condition. Instead, the ways in which patients rely on or even make use of sickness is an important theme of subjectivity to explore in the experience of sickness. In late imperial Chinese vernacular fiction, many authors are eager to represent patients who may create or feign and illness and cling to it under circumstances that make such actions beneficial. During this process, with the help of an illness, a weak and powerless female patient may gain some power and overcome a powerful enemy, even if the illness is false. The virtue of chastity and desire are foregrounded in these

stories. In a story of chastity, a woman's success in refusing marriage or intercourse on the pretext of sickness is similar to the success of a general strategizing on the battlefield. As female characters' wisdom was rarely depicted in previous narratives about exemplary women, these stories signal that authors in the Qing dynasty began to represent female characters as strategists, echoing literary tropes of military strategies and tactics. In a tale of desire, a special story type tells how a prostitute uses a feigned illness to seduce an eminent monk. The seemingly powerless prostitute is fully conscious of the eminent monk's desire as his weakness, and she successfully transforms it into a position of superiority for herself. Used as a weapon to break through the monk's defenses, the feigned illness empowers a powerless woman to control her own and others' bodies. Moreover, a woman can also use feigned sickness as a defensive tool to protect her lover and even challenge doctors' authority and power. Through a feigned illness, power relations between patient and doctor are dramatically reversed.

There is a long tradition in Chinese history of male figures who feign illness for political reasons. Just as powerless female characters feign illness to overcome rivals or protect themselves, these male politicians typically use a feigned illness to reckon with a more powerful party, such as a ruler or higher authorities, and to achieve their political goals. Feigning illness even becomes a basic part of political communication with powerful individuals, either to imply a silent objection on the part of the relatively powerless party, or to signal that the male malingerer will withdraw from his political career. Later authors of Ming-Qing vernacular fiction inherited the goals and maneuvers of male politicians' feigned illnesses from these historical records in early China, but they either detailed the malingerer's performance as a patient and his interactions with the target audience, or simplified the feigned illness and made it a background of the story, showing that the supposed patient was unenthusiastic about seeking political fame or wealth. Further, they also created new story types involving feigned illness to help the malingerer adopt another person's identity or to force a lover to fulfill his or her will. Narration

of the experience of various malingerers and the benefits they derive from illness helps spotlight their subjectivity as victims and strategists.

Women's chastity is also a central theme in a special story type about false reports of death from illness. This story type is the invention of the Ming author Feng Menglong. He adapted two anecdotes from *Zhuangzi* in a way that jettisoned their philosophical dimensions and rewrote them in accessible vernacular terms, signaling that, at least in some contexts and genres, the focus of retellings of Zhuangzi's story after China's medieval period had shifted from self-cultivation and enlightenment to the question of a woman's chastity. Li Yu is another author who attempted to explore the narrative potential of this story type. The false report of a man's death from sickness is strategically used to test his wife's chastity, for it seems like a rehearsal of what will happen after his death. Ironically, when a man is alive, he is cheated by his wife and concubine as they solemnly swear an oath of chastity. Only if these women believe the fake news of their husband's death from sickness can the man observe what will truly happen after his death. That is to say, he is able to find the truth only as a "dead" man. The author thus puts the effectiveness of women's verbal expressions in question by showing the contradiction between their words and deeds. Further, a false report of a man's death from sickness can be used strategically to tame a shrewish wife because of her failure to preserve her chastity. Although the shrewish wife is more powerful than her cowardly husband, and she is able to violate almost all the societal ethics for women, once she loses her chastity, she immediately loses her position of advantage. The extreme importance of chastity also informs the story about a false report of a woman's death from sickness. Through this strategic use of illness, a father is able to commemorate a dead but chaste daughter while meanwhile concealing the truth about her elopement with a lascivious man. In order to maintain the daughter's imaginary identity as a chaste woman, the father prefers to forego a real reconciliation of the family. The story thus highlights a tension between life and death and between desire and the dictates of morality.

Chapter 5 Sickness of Qing

Representations of sickness in fiction are commonly facilitated by theme of *qing* 情 in late imperial China. The relationship between changing views about *qing* and the development of traditional Chinese fiction has been emphasized by Martin W. Huang, who argues that the rise of vernacular fiction as a narrative genre during the late Ming was closely related to the obsession with individual desire at the time.[310] According to Huang, in Ming-Qing fiction there are two kinds of *qing*: one is the issue of the physical aspects of desire (usually understood in a narrow sense as *yu* 欲); the other is the expression of romantic sentiment.[311]

In medical narratives in Ming-Qing fiction, both unfulfilled sexual desire and romantic sentiment may cause sickness. Sickness is further tied to other emotions, such as rage, fear, anxiety, grief, and so on. This chapter examines how sickness related to *qing* reflected tensions between individual emotions and social norms. In many fictional works, the psychological states of people who cannot repress their desires according to social normative models transform into physical symptoms. This may be because physical conditions are more easily accepted by society. As the medical anthropologist Robert Hahn points out, "In somatization, for example, psychological conditions and stressful mental or interpersonal conditions are experienced as bodily conditions."[312] In many fictional medical narratives, the cause, process, and result of sickness all reflect patients' emotional experiences, which are repressed in reality. Therefore, their illness experiences externalize individual *qing* as physical symptoms, which become metaphorical elements in the characterization of patients in fiction.

[310] Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 3.
[311] Ibid., 4.
[312] Robert A. Hahn, *Sickness and Healing: An Anthropological Perspective* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1995), 25.

1. Medicalization of *qing*: Lovesickness

Many medical texts pay attention to the close relation between human emotions and a person's physical condition. According to *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經, human emotions are closely related to a person's physical condition. The five organs (*wuzang* 五臟) produce five kinds of air or vital energy (*qi* 氣). Various emotions, such as happiness (*xi* 喜), rage (*nu* 怒), grief (*bei* 悲), anxiety (*you* 憂), and fear (*kong* 恐), originate from this *qi*. Excessive emotions usually impair an organ inside the body, while one kind of emotion can be repressed by another one. For instance, excessive contemplation impairs the spleen, while rage can overcome contemplation. Excessive grief impairs the lung, while joy can overcome grief. Excessive fear impairs the kidneys, while contemplation can overcome fear.[313] Further, excessive emotions cause disorders of air, which in turn result in illness. Excessive sorrow leads to contraction of the heart system, expansion and elevation of the lungs, and obstruction of the upper energizer (*shangjiao* 上焦). Excessive fear leads to palpitations, mental distraction, and uncertainty; as a result, the *qi* is in disorder. Excessive contemplation (*si* 思) leads to concentration of mind and spirit and retention of healthy air; as a result, *qi* is binding or obstructing. In addition, by cold and heat are important causes and symptoms of illness caused by emotions, for cold leads to closure of the muscular interstices and stagnation of *qi*, while heat leads to openness of the muscular interstices and profuse sweating, with venting of *qi*.[314]

Lovesickness, which is elicited by longing for a lover, is associated with excessive sorrow, fear, and melancholy, and is usually accompanied by cold and heat. The earliest extant record of lovesickness is from the biography of Chunyu Yi 淳于意 in *Shiji* 史記. A female servant suffering from back pain feels cold and hot. Chunyu Yi feels the maid's pulse and discovers that

[313] Su Wen, trans. Li Zhaoguo (Xi'an: World Publishing Corporation, 2005), 61.
[314] Ibid., 481–483.

she has fallen ill out of frustration from desire for a man (*yunanzi bukede* 慾男子不可得). This anecdote is recorded as a medical case from the perspective of the doctor, Chunyu Yi, who does not have a conversation with the female servant, but focuses instead on the evidence of her pulse. The account also mentions that other doctors treated her symptoms as disease of cold and heat, an error that Chunyu Yi corrects. Thus, the goal of this medical case is to provide evidence for Chunyu Yi's remarkable medical skills, while the patient's subjective experience is absent from the narrative. It is not known whether the patient had a lover or was just eager to have a lover, or what her emotional sufferings were beyond the physical symptoms.

In the Song dynasty, Chen Ziming's 陳自明 *Furen daquan liangfang* 婦人大全良方 further discusses women's sickness caused by unfulfilled desire. In the fourth chapter of volume six, *Prescriptions for Malaria-like Chills and Fever among Widows* (*Guafu hanre runue fanglun* 寡婦寒熱如瘧方論), Chen points out, "Buddhist nuns and widows are sole *yin* without *yang*. They long for men but cannot have them (*yunanzi bukede* 慾男子而不可得). Therefore, they become weak and weary through illness…These women dwell in the inner quarters, where their desire grows but cannot be fulfilled. Thus, *yin* and *yang* in their bodies clash and they feel hot and cold as with malaria. This will eventually result in depletion."[315] After this introduction, Chen provides five medical cases in which the female patients are healed successfully. The first patient is a widow. The second is a woman whose husband has gone away for business. The next two are virgins, and the last is a Buddhist nun. All of them have the same symptoms of intermittent cold and hot, implying a common cause of unfulfilled desire. It is worth noting that the third chapter in the same volume is called *Prescriptions for Chills and Fever among Women* (*Furen hanre fanglun* 婦人寒熱方論), a patient group separate from that of widows, nuns, and virgins who fall ill because of unfulfilled desire. In this chapter, Chen attributes women's chills

[315] Chen Ziming 陳自明 *Furen daquan liangfang* 婦人大全良方 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1977).

and heat to insufficient *yin* or *yang* or to disorders of *yin* and *yang*. In contrast to lovesickness caused solely by disorders of *qi*, these chills and fevers are related to the patient's long-term depression and rage. At the beginning of the medical case reported in this chapter, Chen points out that the female patient is sixty-four years old, implying that sexual desire is excluded as a possible cause of the disease. Thus, diagnosing a patient who falls ill with lovesickness will require investigation of her age, marital status, and relationship with her husband if she is married. This mode of diagnosis recalls the biography of Chunyu Yi in *Shiji*, because quacks may confound these two kinds of cold and hot. Chen Ziming draws a distinction between widows' chills and fever and those of other women, indicating that he fully realizes unfulfilled desire is a root cause of lovesickness, which is different from simple chills and fever.

According to these medical cases, another sign of lovesickness is that the patient's liver manifests itself like a string in the pulse in the wrist of his or her left hand (*ganmaixian chuzuokou* 肝脈弦，出左口). In *Shiji*, Chunyu Yi diagnoses the female servant based on this manifestation. In Zhu Zhengheng's 朱震亨 (1281–1358) *Danxin xinfa* 丹溪心法, he also records a similar pulse manifestation. A woman is sick and has stopped taking food. Zhu diagnoses her and finds the characteristic stringy pulse. He concludes that this woman is longing for a man but does not have one, and that the *qi* is obstructed in her spleen. Zhu is then told that it has been five years since the patient's husband left home and went to Guang 廣. He suggests that this illness can be healed by rage, echoing the theory of different emotions in *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經: "excessive contemplation impairs the spleen, while rage dominates over contemplation." The woman's father puts no faith in this treatment. Zhu slaps her in the face three times and blames her for wanting a man. The woman cries with a great rage. After that, she begins to eat. Zhu tells her father that although rage can repress her contemplation, she still needs joy to avoid being ill again. They fabricate a letter from the woman's husband, saying that her husband will come back

soon. After three months, her husband returns and she is fully recovered. There is a similar case in Wang Ji's 汪機 *Shishan yi'an* 石山醫案 as well.

In the Song Dynasty, Chu Cheng 褚澄 (?–483) claimed that widows and Buddhist nuns should be treated differently from ordinary wives and concubines. Later medical books perpetuated Chu Cheng's ideas. For example, in the Ming Dynasty, as Xue Ji 薛己(1487–1559) wrote in his *Xueshi yi'an* 薛氏醫案, "In the Song Dynasty, when Mr. Chu treated Buddhist nuns and widows, he prescribed different medications, for *yin* alone without *yang* results in a clash of blood and *qi* and intermittent cold and heat. These patients feel back pain and have chills and fever. Their liver manifests itself as a stringiness of the pulse in the wrist of the left hand. If a virgin does not marry on time, she also suffers this kind of chill and fever."[316] Xue also records two medical cases of this illness. One is a virgin with chills and fever whose liver manifests itself in a stringiness in the pulse in the wrist of her left hand. After she gets married, all the symptoms disappear. The other case is that of a maid, formerly of the imperial palace, who is now more than thirty years old and feels pain in her pelvis, especially when she uses the restroom. Xue calls her disorder "abstinence syndrome" (*nannü shihe zhizheng* 男女失合之症). Because the maid is now the concubine of a merchant who is always away on business, her sexual frustration brings on depression. Xue also cited Chu Cheng's theory that "after a woman reaches puberty, she will contract a menstrual disorder if she does not have sexual relations with a man for more than ten years. If she does desire a man within these ten years, she will also contract this disease."[317]

These medical texts give us a glimpse of how doctors in the Song through Ming dynasties understood the causes, symptoms, and treatments for sicknesses of *qing*. They hold that men and women must have sexual relations after puberty if they are not to succumb to diseases brought on

[316] Xue Ji 薛己, *Xueshi yi'an* 薛氏醫案 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1983).
[317] Ibid.

by unfulfilled desire. Most patients suffering from these disorders will experience chills and fever, and their liver will manifest itself in the pulse. That the disease can be treated with medication or by inciting other kinds of emotion, such as rage and joy, indicates that the doctors regarded the application of *qing* and will (*qingzhi* 情志) as a therapy for lovesickness. Women are represented as being more vulnerable to this disease, and in the stories almost all the patients in these medical cases are female. The reason might be that, as Charlotte Furth has observed, the female body was marked by instability of boundaries: open to invasion, now penetrated sexually or chilled by invading winds, now leaking and draining what cannot be contained.[318] As early as in the Tang Dynasty, Sun Simiao 孫思邈 (541-682) attributed women's vulnerability to their having more intense longings and desires than those of their husbands, as well as to their difficulty in controlling emotions (*qing*) such as envy and dislike, love and compassion, and grief and sorrow. According to Furth, a syndrome observed in the course of medical treatment of women (*fuke* 婦科) during the Song Dynasty was depletion fatigue (*xusun* 虛損, *xulao* 虛勞), assembled afflictions marked by slow, chronic wasting, where the sufferer grew emaciated and debilitated, accumulating a host of secondary symptoms including pallor, indigestion, shortness of breath, hair loss, hot sensations on palms of hands and soles of feet, and palpitations, while also experiencing a destabilized psyche marked by disturbed dreams or insomnia, fits of melancholy, or anger.[319]

The suffering of yearning for a lover was a standing theme in traditional Chinese poetry. Starting as early as in the *Shijing* 詩經, a great number of poems focused on how men and women miss their lovers. For example, "Caochong" 草蟲 describes in two passages the longing of a woman for her absent husband: "My lord not yet I find; Ay, and sore at heart am I" 未见君

[318] Charlotte Furth, *A Flourishing Yin, Gender in China's Medical History: 960–1665* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 72.
[319] Ibid., 79.

子，忧心惙惙 “My lord I saw not still; Still my heart must pine and yearn” 未见君子，我心伤悲. A *Ziyege* 子夜歌 song from the Six Dynasties period (222–589) uses some analogies to exaggerate a woman’s suffering from missing her lover.

别後涕流連，　　After our parting my tears flow freely;

相思情悲滿。　　The sorrow of longing for you has overflowed.

憶子腹糜爛，　　I miss you so much that my belly is rotten;

肝腸尺寸斷　　I am cut to pieces inside.

The image of being “cut to pieces inside” (literally “with intestines severed,” *duanchang* 斷腸) becomes a common description in later poems. In the Song Dynasty, the term “lovesickness” (*xiangsi bing* 相思病) begins to be used in lyrics (*ci* 詞). For instance, Zhao Bixiang’s 趙必象 *Zhegutian* 鷓鴣天 says, “There is no prescription to treat lovesickness” (無方可療相思病). Several “variety plays” (*zaju* 雜劇) of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) incorporated the following verses on lovesickness: “Of the thirty-three levels of Heaven, the highest is the sorrow of parting. Of the four hundred and forty diseases, the cruelest is lovesickness” 三十三天，離恨天最高；四百四病，相思病最苦.[320] Thus, lovesickness gradually became a standard trope in Chinese verse, usually appearing alongside images of wine, mirrors, tears, and flowers, inflected with emotions of sorrow, grief, and anxiety.

2. Lovesickness in late imperial fiction

Lovesickness is one of the most common illnesses to appear in Chinese vernacular fiction. Descriptions of lovesickness in fictional medical narrative combine elements from medical texts,

[320] Zheng Guangzu 鄭光祖, *Qianülihun* 倩女離魂.

from lyric traditions, and from numerous other sources. Typical symptoms include weakness, pallor, emaciation, and exhaustion, sometimes accompanied by chills and fever. However, in contrast to the medical cases discussed above, males suffer from lovesickness as often as females. In these stories, lovesickness always symbolizes a true passionate love that cannot be declared in words. Thus, it is expressed in physical symptoms instead.

An early record of lovesickness in classical tales is in Hong Mai's 洪邁 (1123–1202) *Yijianzhi* 夷堅志. A young scholar, Sun Yu 孫愈 and his cousin Zhenzhen 真真 fall in love, but Zhenzhen's father insists that their engagement be postponed until after Sun Yu passes the civil service examination. Unfortunately, after Sun Yu fails the examination several times, Zhenzhen's father betroths her to another man. When Sun Yu visits Zhenzhen's family, Zhenzhen tells Sun Yu that she has to marry another man. As he returns home in sorrow and dejection, Sun Yu encounters his nephew, Sun Ge 孫革. Sun Yu asks him, "They say there's such a thing as lovesickness, don't they? Every day I feel weak, weary, listless, and cut to pieces inside. I will die from this."[321] At midnight, Sun Yu hears someone calling to him. Seeing the person, he discovers it is Zhenzhen. He jumps out of bed but can no longer see her. On Zhenzhen's wedding day, she sees Sun Yu standing by her side. Shocked, she asks him, "My fifth elder brother, why are you here?"[322] She then falls ill and does not recover for a month. At the same time, Sun Yu's sickness worsens. He coughs up blood and dies. In this tale, both Sun Yu and Zhenzhen contract lovesickness and see visions of each other, but Sun Yu's condition is much more serious and ultimately kills him. At the end, the author declares that his purpose in recording this tale is to warn young scholars who have unrealistic fantasies about love. The

[321] Tao Yufeng 陶御風 ed. *Biji zazhu yishi bielu* 筆記雜著醫事別錄(Beijing: Renmin weisheng chubanshe, 2006). 322.
[322] Ibid.

author's attitude toward Sun Yu is critical, especially in the last sentence, "The girl [Zhenzhen] is still alive,"[323] which seemingly implies that it was a mistake for him to die for love.

Pai'an jingqi 拍案驚奇 includes a similar story in which both the male and female lovers fall ill with lovesickness and die, and the male also sees a vision of the female during his sickness. But here the author's attitude is completely different from that of Hong Mai. In the twenty-fifth story of *Pai'an jingqi*, a famous prostitute, Su Pannu 蘇盼奴, and a scholar in the Supreme School (*taixue* 太學), Zhao Bumin 趙不敏, secretly pledge to marry. Su supports Zhao financially as he passes the civil service examination and becomes a revenue manager in Xiangyang. Zhao tries his best to help Su redeem herself. However, because Su is extremely beautiful and talented, the music office does not allow her to discontinue her registration. After Zhao goes to Xiangyang, he still sends several persons to the capital to release Su from her registration in the musical office, but all of them fail, so Zhao Bumin is not able to marry Su Pannu. After three years, Zhao Bumin shows signs of lovesickness. His brother, Zhao Buqi 趙不器, an administrative assistant, happens to visit him. Zhao Bumin, to whom Su is appearing in visions, knows how serious his sickness is. He tells Zhao Buqi that he will die for Su Pannu and asks him to send his savings to Su. He also tells Zhao Buqi that Su Pannu has a younger sister, Su Xiaojuan 蘇小娟, who has entrusted it to Su Pannu to find a husband for her. Zhao Bumin lauds Su Xiaojuan's beauty and talent, hoping that Zhao Buqi will marry her in the future. Meanwhile, Su Pannu also falls ill with lovesickness. She and Zhao Bumin die on the same day. After their death, Zhao Buqi goes to the capital and helps Su Xiaojuan end her registration with the musical office. They bury Zhao Bumin and Su Pannu in the same grave as husband and wife. On their wedding night, Su Xiaojuan dreams that Su Pannu and Zhao Bumin have been reunited. They thank Xiaojuan and Buqi for their help and pledge to bless them from beyond. In this story,

[323] Ibid.

Sun Pannu and Zhao Buqi die on the same day from their longing for each other. Their fatal lovesickness is a visible manifestation of their love when they apart from each other. Therefore, the author praises their love as being as solid as stone and invents two ways to remedy their tragedy of being unable to marry while alive. One is that they are buried in the same grave. That is to say, they stay together in the world after death. The other one is that their brother and sister, Zhao Buqi and Su Xiaojuan, marry and lead a happy life. They are Zhao Bumin's and Su Pannu's proxies in the world of the living, implying that Zhao Bumin's and Su Pannu's eternal love endures in another sphere.

In these two tales, lovesickness is caused by obstacles to marriage, and the civil service examination plays an important role when the young scholar attempts to marry his lover. Zhenzhen has to marry another man because Sun Yu is not able to pass the civil service examination. A little rhyme in the seventeenth story in Feng Menglong's *Stories to Caution the World* captures the situation: "Anyone who wants the candlelight of a wedding night must first have had his name entered in the list of successful candidates in the civil service examination" 若要洞房花燭夜，必須金榜掛名時. Sun Yu cannot secure Zhenzhen's father's agreement for their engagement because of his failure in the civil service examination. His lovesickness manifests his frustrations in both career and marriage. In Zhao Bumin and Su Pannu's love story, Su recognizes Zhao's talent when he is a poor scholar. She supports Zhao at her own expense as he prepares for the civil service examination. As pointed out by Hsu Pi-Ching, the intense anxiety of frustrated scholars, the prominence of cultured courtesans, and a heightened interest in gender relations all contributed to the popularity of such romances about unrecognized scholars and devoted courtesans.[324] Both Su Pannu and Zhao are at the bottom of status hierarchies but appreciate each other's talent. To them, Zhao's official career is a sine qua non of their marriage.

[324] Hsu Pi-Ching, "Courtesans and Scholars in the Writings of Feng Menglong: Transcending Status and Gender," *Nan Nü*, Brill, Leiden, 2000, 42.

That is to say, the civil service examination provides them with an opportunity to rise above Zhao's social status and discontinue Su Pannu's registration in the musical office. However, Zhao's official career does not bring about his ideal marriage, but instead causes their parting. Zhao Bumin's lovesickness demonstrates that for him love comes before career. Zhao Buqi urges him to put his own well-being first: "Your body is as valuable as a thousand pieces of gold. You'd better take care of yourself and expect a recovery. Why do you hurt yourself because of an unimportant matter like this?" But Zhao Bumin answers, "When it comes to the affairs of *qing*, every man understands them in his own heart. They are the most important matters in life. Why would you call them unimportant?"[325] Similarly, in the tale of Sun Yu's tragedy, his nephew Sun Ge also attempts to persuade him not to be infatuated with a woman: "Uncle, you are young and have your parents, but you have become enchanted in this way for no reason. You will be laughed at by your relatives."[326] Zhao Buqi's and Sun Ge's opinions suggest that if a man values human emotions, especially love between men and women, more highly than his career and life, it is hard for him to win the respect of other people. In this sense, Sun Yu's and Zhao Bumin's lovesickness symbolizes their reaction against social norms. Although they cannot declare their love in words, their bodies reveal their love in the symptoms of illness.

Sun Yu and Zhao Bumin's tragedies reveal that passionate love can lead to illness and death. In keeping with the Ming Dynasty cult of *qing*, reunion after death makes love's power stand out above and beyond the brief course of human life.[327] Passionate love arises not only between young lovers engaged to be married, but also between couples that are already married. The sixth story of *Erke pai'an jingqi* tells of a couple whose spirits reunite and are never extinguished after death, even though they have been separated during life. "As one can see, even among the

[325] Ling Mengchu 凌濛初, *Chuke pai'an jingqi* 初刻拍案驚奇 (Shanghai: Gudian wenxue chubanshe, 1957), 470.
[326] Tao Yufeng 陶御風 ed. *Biji zazhu yishi bielu* 筆記雜著醫事別錄 (Beijing: Renmin weisheng chubanshe, 2006), 322.
[327] Paolo Santangelo, "Reconsidering the 'Cult of Qing' in Late Imperial China: A 'Romantic Movement' or a Conveyer of Social Values," *Mingqing yanjiu*, Brill, 2006, 138.

married couples of this world there are those who are fools for love" 可見世間的夫婦，原自有這般情種. In this story, Jin Ding and Liu Cuicui study in the same school when they are young, and an attachment forms between them. Once they grow up, they marry and lead a happy life. Unfortunately, their marital joy lasts for less than a year before the rebellion of Zhang Shicheng 張士誠 (1321–1367) which leads to turmoil and chaos in 1353. A subordinate of Zhang Shicheng, General Li, abducts Cuicui because of her beauty. Jin Ding plans a trip to find his wife. After eight years, he reaches General Li's mansion in Huzhou. Asking the house retainer to send a message to the general, he poses as Cuicui's elder brother because he dares not reveal his identity. Cuicui has been forced to marry General Li, so Jin Ding and Cuicui meet in the guise of brother and sister. All they can do is talk about their parents and hide their sorrow. Because Jin Ding is well educated, the general asks him to be his secretary. Jin Ding stays in the general's place for several months, but cannot find a chance to see Cuicui. After realizing a reunion will be impossible for the rest of their lives, Jin Ding weeps day after day and takes little food. His sadness develops into sickness and the situation becomes worse and worse. As he lies dying, Cuicui asks the general for permission to see her brother. In this second meeting since their separation, Jin Ding asks Cuicui to sit beside his bed. Struggling to raise himself, he lays his head on Cuicui's lap and dies. After Jin Ding's death, Cuicui falls ill from extreme sadness. Fully intending to die, she refuses medical treatment. In her last words to the general she expresses her wish to be buried next to Jin Ding. The general complies with her request. After Zhang Shicheng's rebellion is suppressed, a former servant of Cuicui's parents visits Huzhou and encounters Jin Ding and Cuicui, who ask him to carry a letter to Cuicui's parents. Her father then sets out to visit his daughter and son-in-law in Huzhou. But when he reaches the place where the servant saw Jin Ding and Cuicui, he finds only two tombs standing side by side. He realizes that it was their spirits that had manifested themselves to the servant. That night Cuicui and Jin Ding

come to him in a dream, and Cuicui tells him that she and Jin Ding will be reborn and become husband and wife again.

In this story, lovesickness also symbolizes a true passionate love that cannot be declared aloud. Cuicui and Jin Ding dare not speak of their love for each other in General Li's presence. When they pose as brother and sister, they hide their marital relationship and are forced to hold to a hidden love. Their lovesickness is caused by repressed emotion. In other words, their sorrow has no way to vent itself and can only be expressed in bodily symptoms. Their genuine love transcends the boundary between life and death, for their death from lovesickness brings fulfillment of their wish to be buried together. In this sense, the concept of death is redefined. Although lovesickness manifests their separation in this life, their death provides an opportunity to become husband and wife again during the next life, so their love will endure in another time and space.

Death from lovesickness not only serves as a way to a future life, but also establishes a connection with a previous life. In the fourth story of *Stories Old and New*, a young lady from a prominent official family, Yulan 玉蘭, falls in love with one Ruan San 阮三 when she hears him playing music and singing on the night of the Lantern Festival. She sends him gold ring and they get a glimpse of each other. Ruan San wears the ring on his finger but cannot find another chance to communicate with Yulan. The memory of Yulan's beauty fills him with tender longing and torment. He falls ill with lovesickness. Growing emaciated from insomnia and loss of appetite, he becomes sallow and gaunt and coughs up phlegm. When his parents question him, he refuses to explain why he is so sick. After two months he receives a visit from a friend, Zhang Yuan 張遠. Learning the truth about Ruan's illness, Zhang asks a nun from the Xianyun Convent to send a message to Yulan. The nun goes to Yulan's family and takes advantage of the opportunity to set up a date with her on Ruan's behalf. When Yulan and Ruan San meet secretly at the Xianyun

Convent, they fulfill their desire to the utmost. However, Ruan dies in her arms. The reason for his death is that he has been afflicted with a prolonged lovesickness and is so overcome by desire that his life is put in jeopardy. When he experiences the very height of love at the Convent, he loses his *yang* force and stops breathing.

Yulan becomes pregnant from this tryst and gives birth to a son. When the boy is one year old, she takes him to pay respects to Ruan San's parents and to make offerings at Ruan's grave. Ruan San appears to her in a dream that night and explains the karmic retributions. Yulan had been a courtesan in Yangzhou in a previous incarnation, and Ruan San had fallen in love with her and promised to take her as his wife. But, ultimately, he had married another woman at his father's arrangement, and Yulan had died of lovesickness. Yulan meets Ruan San in the convent in this life in order to demand redress of the injustice she had suffered in that previous life. Ruan San's immediate death comes as retribution for breaking his oath in his previous life.

The explanation of Ruan San's death from lovesickness is noteworthy. In addition to Ruan's physical condition in reality, a dimension of his deeds in a previous life is added, so his lovesickness is not only caused by his desire and longing for his lover; more importantly, it is also fated because of his unfaithfulness to Yulan during the previous life. Although his breach of promise cannot be punished by human law, he is punished through karmic retribution. The onset of lovesickness puts in place a system of heavenly predestination that transcends human limitations: Yulan died for Ruan San in a previous life, while Ruan San carries this sin into the present life and eventually dies for Yulan. The plot makes it clear that Yulan's sickness of *qing* in a previous life must be redeemed by Ruan's sickness of *qing* in this life. Through this explanation the author suggests the existence of a kind of justice that cannot be realized by human laws.

Further, the story demonstrates an attempt to legitimize a passionate love between a young scholar and a beauty that their parents could not at first permit. Yulan's parents plan to find a

worthy husband for their daughter. "First, he must be the son of an incumbent official in the imperial court; second, his looks and talents must match those of our daughter; third, he must have a *jinshi* degree…He who lacks any one of the three qualities is not even worth considering."[328] Since it is too hard to find someone who meets all of these requirements, Yulan has still not been betrothed when she has reached the age of nineteen. This is an important reason why she falls in love with Ruan San even before meeting with him in person. The preface to the story criticizes excessive fastidiousness in picking the right son-in-law. "How can youngsters who have been awakened to love withstand their desires?" "A young woman who is not anchored in a betrothal is likely to go astray, and then it's too late for regrets to do any good."[329] Therefore, although Yulan has sexual relations with Ruan San before they marry, thus violating social mores and her parents' command, her actions are somehow understandable because her engagement has been delayed significantly. After Yulan's father learns that Ruan has died and his daughter is pregnant, he has to have a discussion with Ruan's father. They eventually agree that Yulan was betrothed to Ruan San in order to eliminate the scandal of the young lovers' illicit relationship and to legitimize their child born out of wedlock. This agreement indicates that Yulan and Ruan San's marital relationship wins the approval of their parents even if it comes too late. Moreover, Yulan claims that a woman must remain faithful to a man until her own death. Although she has not actually married Ruan, she will never marry another man. Such declarations of fidelity are typically uttered by a woman who is preserving her chastity after her husband's death. From that moment on, Yulan devotes her whole heart to the raising of her son without thinking of her love. After her son passes the civil service examination, he composes a memorial to the emperor, in which he lauds his mother for having lived as a chaste widow since the age of nineteen and for having raised him. It is significant that by the end of the story a

[328] Feng Menglong, *Stories old and New,* trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2000), 94–95.
[329] Ibid., 94.

memorial archway has been erected in honor of Yulan's chastity. From a traditional perspective, it would be absurd to consider Yulan a chaste woman, given her illicit relationship with Ruan. However, in this story she eventually earns the highest commendation for her chastity, suggesting a mediation between social norms and the values of passionate love.

Feng Menglong' efforts to legitimize passionate love show up elsewhere in his fiction as well. In the twenty-ninth story of *Stories to Caution the World*, a young scholar, Zhang Hao 張浩, encounters a beauty, Li Yingying 李鶯鶯, in his friend's garden. They fall in love at first sight and exchange poems as tokens of their love. Yingying falls ill with lovesickness. When a nun, Huiji 惠寂, visits her family, Yingying tells Huiji about her encounter with Zhang Hao and asks Huiji to convey her sentiments to him. Learning the reason of Yingying's illness, Huiji discusses Yingying's marriage with her parents. However, they plan not to bring up this issue until two or three years later, for they believe that Yingying is still too young to be betrothed. The delay of Yingying's marriage leads her to have a secret affair with Zhang Hao, just as happened in Yulan's case. After two years, when Zhang Hao's uncle arranges for him to marry another woman, Zhang Hao is so afraid of his uncle's angry reaction that he does not dare mention the name of Li Yingying. He sends Huijing to Yingying with his message. Yingying tells her parents that she has had a secret relationship with Zhang, and her parents regret not having chosen a husband for their daughter earlier. Then Yingying takes her case to court, submitting their love poems as an evidence of their secret engagement. In her argument before the court, she uses the examples of Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君 and Jia Wu 賈午, both of whom eloped with their lovers, to explain her affair with Zhang Hao. She believes that as long as a woman chooses the right man, she should not be faulted for not availing herself of matchmaking services. More importantly, she expects the judge to make the right ruling, for "the law has strict codes for enforcing justice and ensuring that the rules of decorum follow the dictates of human

sensibilities."[330] It is significant that the official verdict is that Yingying should be married to Zhang Hao, since in this case all the force of official approval is invoked to sanction a love affair that violated parents' commands and the procedures of matchmaking. Yingying's parents also admit that they should have arranged a marriage for her earlier. It suggests that a person of marriageable age should marry in a timely fashion to fulfill his or her desire. Otherwise, a love affair is almost inevitable. This story presents a compromise between patriarchal and official power on the one hand and passionate love on the other.

This involvement of the lawcourt in a love affair is not a unique occurrence in Ming stories. Generally speaking, a marital relationship is established on the basis of parents' demands and a matchmaker's words. The secret engagement of a man and a woman without their parents' permission is not permitted in this society. However, Yingying's and Zhang Hao's love affair is sanctioned by official power, while Zhang Hao's uncle's arrangement of his marriage is nullified in court. That is to say, the judge intends to protect Yingying and Zhang Hao's passionate love and even to put it before the authority of Zhang Hao's uncle.

Another typical example is the thirty-fourth story in *Stories to Caution the World*. Wang Jiaoluan 王嬌鸞 is a talented beauty who is well versed in the classics and good at literary composition. Her parents are too cautious in selecting a husband for her, so at the age of eighteen she is still not betrothed. One day, she happens to see a handsome young man standing by a gap in the wall of the back garden and her passion is aroused.[331] The man is Zhou Tingzhang 周廷章 from Wujiang county, whose father is the local education commissioner. He falls in love with Jiaoluan and sends love poems to her by her maid. They exchange poems many times, and Zhou presents a marriage proposal to Jiaoluan's parents. However, because Jiaoluan's father has been

[330] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2005), 517.
[331] See Keith McMahon's analysis on "interstice" and crossing boundaries in love stories in *Causality and containment in seventeenth-century Chinese fiction* (Leiden; New York: E.J. Brill, 1988), 19, 26.

highly dependent on his daughter's services in writing his official correspondences, he does not want her to follow a husband to some distant place, and so he withholds his consent. Jiaoluan's amorous desire has been aroused but not fulfilled, and she falls ill with lovesickness. "Her temperature was low in the morning but rose to a feverish high late in the afternoon, and she forsook all food and beverage. Mr. Wang engaged physicians and fortune-tellers, but nothing worked."[332] When Zhou Tingzhang claims that he knows medicine and can diagnose Jiaoluan, Mr. Wang lets him into Jiaoluan's chamber. Jiaoluan is so overjoyed that Zhou has come to see her that her condition improves markedly. Zhou finds an opportunity to send lavish gifts to Jiaoluan's auntie, who knows what is weighing on their minds. Auntie Cao 曹 helps them meet secretly in Jiaoluan's chamber and serves as a matchmaker for them. They sign four copies of a marriage contract. As Auntie Cao suggests,

> One copy is to be burned as an offering to heaven and earth and the gods. One is to be kept by me as proof of my services as matchmaker. The two of you will keep one each, to serve as proof in the case of a reunion after a separation. Should the wife betray the husband, she shall die from a thunderbolt. Should the husband betray the wife, he shall die under myriad arrows.[333]
>
> 將一紙焚于天地，以告鬼神；一紙留於吾手，以為媒證；你二人各執一紙，為他日合巹之驗。女若負男，疾雷震死；男若負女，亂箭亡身。再受陰府之愆，永墮酆都之獄。

From then on, they meet every three or five days. Jiaoluan regains her health. After one year, Zhou's father has to return to his hometown for health reasons. Zhou is therefore separated from Jiaoluan as he visits his parents. Before he leaves, he promises to come back after no more than a year with a letter from his parents proposing marriage. However, Zhou's father has arranged his marriage with Miss Wei. Once Zhou learns of Miss Wei's unparalleled beauty as well as her family's immense wealth, he agrees to marry her.

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[332] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2005), 591.
[333] Ibid., 593.

Jiaoluan has waited for Zhou for three years and sent him many letters and poems. She neglects her meals and spends her nights sleepless. She grows emaciated and falls ill again. At last she realizes that Zhou must have entered into a new marriage. She sends a servant to Wujiang to confirm this, but Zhou asks him to return his marriage contract to Jiaoluan. Jiaoluan composes thirty-two short poems to serve as a suicide note and a long one titled "Song of Eternal Sorrow" ("Changhen ge" 長恨歌), and mails all her poems and the marriage contract to the magistrate of Wujiang county. Then she commits suicide. Magistrate Que of Wujiang receives Jiaoluan's package and forwards it to the investigating censor, Mr. Fan 樊. Deeply impressed by Jiaoluan's literary talent, Fan despises Zhou for his heartlessness. He has Zhou brought to court and beaten to death with bamboo rods in order to fulfill the curse of "dying under myriad arrows."

Structurally this story is somewhat similar to that of Li Yingying and Zhao Hao: A young scholar and a beauty fall in love with each other, but the beauty's parents are too cautious to select a son-in-law. The beauty contracts lovesickness. The lovers exchange poems and have an affair. When the scholar's elders arrange for him to marry another woman, the beauty appeals to court. In both cases, it is the female who suffers from lovesickness because she has not been betrothed at a marriageable age, and she and the scholar begin a love affair because of this lovesickness. Both stories imply a critique of the females' choosy parents, for Feng Menglong always suggests that parents should marry off their children early to avoid a scandal. "A grown son should take a wife; a grown daughter should have a husband 男大當婚，女大當嫁."[334] Further, official power plays a key role in helping female patients fulfill their wishes, whether to marry her lover or to get revenge.

There are two major differences between these two stories. The first is Zhang Hao's and Zhou Tingzhang's attitude towards their lovers: Zhang Hao still hopes to marry Li Yingying,

[334] Feng Menglong, *Stories old and New,* trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2000), 94.

while Zhou Tingzhang abandons Wang Jiaoluan. The second is the proof of their de facto marriage without parents' demand. In contrast to Zhang Hao and Li Yingying, whose poems serve as evidence of their love affair, Wang Jiaoluan and Zhou Tingzhang sign a marriage contract and invite Auntie Cao to be their matchmaker. Therefore, Wang Jiaoluan and Zhou Tingzhang have made more of an effort to hold a ceremony in order to pursue legitimacy for their marriage without parents' permission. They make a vow to the gods and burn a copy of the marriage contract as an offering to heaven and earth. Thus heaven, earth, and the gods serve as witnesses and are called on as proxies for their parents' authority. When Zhou is brought to court and his indictments are announced, they are announced as follows:

> The first indictment against you is for the crime of taking liberties with an official's daughter. The second indictment: abandoning your wife and marrying another woman. The third indictment: causing a death through fornication. Your marriage contract contains the phrase 'Should the husband betray the wife, he shall die under myriad arrows.' Lacking arrows to shoot at you, I am going to have you beaten to death with bamboo rods, as a warning to all heartless men.[335]
>
> 調戲職官家子女，一罪也；停妻再娶，二罪也；因奸致死，三罪也。婚書上說："男若負女，萬箭亡身。"我今沒有箭射你，用亂捧打殺你，以為薄幸男子之戒。

It is worth noting that the first and third indictments show that Zhou Tingzhang is accused of adultery, while the second one, the charge of abandoning his wife and marrying another woman (*tingqi zaiqu* 停妻再娶), indicates that Wang Jiaoluan is treated as Zhou's actual wife. These contradictory accusations suggest that the judge is attempting to define Wang and Zhou's relationship based on the codes of law and human sensibilities, leaving some room for ambiguity. He intends to punish Zhou Tingzhang according to the marriage contract, suggesting that their secret marriage has some validity even without their parents' permission. On the other hand, Zhou's marital relationship with Miss Wei under his father's arrangement is cast as illegal. It is

[335] Ibid., 605.

similar to the verdict in Li Yingying and Zhang Hao's case: their secret betrothal prevails but their parents' demand is hereby nullified.

Therefore, these stories follow a common logic. It is a fault on the part of parents not to marry their children on time, since this delay can cause their children to suffer from lovesickness and to try to cure themselves through secret love affairs. To a certain extent, the implicit critique of these parents calls into question their authority in arranging their children's marriage. As long as both female and male make some attempt to stage an alternative to a formal wedding ceremony, such as putting their marriage vows on paper, signing a marriage contract, and bowing to heaven and earth, just as the couples in these two stories did, they are able to establish a valid marriage status even without their parents' approval. In this sense, their passionate love and de facto marriage are legitimized and protected by the authority both of the secular world and of heaven.

In these Ming stories, the authors commonly identify *qing* as the cause of illness, a diagnosis that has basis in medical texts, which may, for example, attribute sicknesses in young men or women to unfulfilled romantic and sexual desire. The implicit critique of parents who do not marry off their children promptly also reflects doctors' opinions about marriage, which were discussed at the beginning of this section. In brief, the existence of "abstinence syndrome" (*nannü shihe zhi zheng* 男女失合之症) indicates that sexual relations are important in preserving health after puberty. Marriage is a proper way to fulfill sexual desire especially for women, who do not typically have the access to paid sexual service that men have. Doctors can diagnose this sickness based on manifestations of the patient's liver in a thready pulse in the wrist of his or her left hand. Sicknesses of *qing* can be treated with medication or the application of "*qing* and will" (*qingzhi* 情志).

However, most authors of late imperial vernacular stories do not use the diagnosis and therapies described in these medical texts. While many medical texts characterize doctors as professional, knowledgeable and skillful figures, vernacular stories often diminish the authority of doctors in diagnosing and healing lovesickness. The typical stringy liver pulse manifestation and the prescriptions for sickness of *qing* even disappear in vernacular stories. In their place appears a common expression of lovesickness, namely, that "doctors and their medicine are ineffective" (*yiyao wuxiao* 醫藥無效) in these stories. The only cure is to create a chance for the young lovers to meet each other or to ask their parents' permission to marry. For example, in the twelfth story of *Xihu erji* 西湖二集, the plot of lovesickness shows the ineffectiveness of medical treatments. Pan Yongzhong 潘用中, a young scholar, falls in love with a lady, Huang Xingchun 黃杏春. They exchange love poems secretly on several occasions. After Pan's family moves to another town, he misses Lady Huang so much that he comes down with lovesickness. His physical symptoms are minor in the daytime but serious at night. He gradually becomes weary and emaciated, coughing and expectorating every night. His father asks several doctors to diagnose him. But one of the doctors thinks Pan has a cold. Another one thinks his sickness is caused by a reverse flow of *qi* in his body (*qini* 氣逆). The third thinks that the patient is lacking vital air (*yuanqi* 元氣). Each prescribes different medications, but none of them works. One day, Pan's friend, Peng Shangshe 彭上舍 comes to visit him and asks whether there is some hidden cause for his illness. Pan says, "To be honest, my illness cannot be healed by any medicine,"[336] and tells Peng the truth. Then Peng tells Pan's father how Pan is longing for Lady Huang. Pan's father agrees to propose a marriage with the Huang family, and Pan quickly recovers. This story demonstrates that in contrast to professional doctors, an effective healer of lovesickness must be

[336] Zhou Qingyuan 周清源, *Xihu erji* 西湖二集 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1994), 210.

a person who understands the origin and significance of the patient's lovesickness and can find a solution based on the patient's passionate love instead of medical practice.

In fictional medical narrative about sicknesses of *qing*, doctors are sometimes unavailable or simply quacks, and sometimes the role of doctor is played by other people, as in Yulan and Ruan San's story discussed in this section. When Ruan San's friend Zhang Yuan comes to visit Ruan during his illness, Zhang asks to feel Ruan's pulse. When Ruan raises his left hand, Zhang Yuan finds a gem-inlaid gold ring on Ruan's finger. He thinks, "As gravely ill as he is, he is still holding on to this thing. What's more, it's not what a man would normally wear. It must be a keepsake from a woman. I suppose that is the root cause of the illness."[337] Instead of talking about Ruan's pulse, he asks Ruan where the ring come from, and Ruan tells him that it was Yulan who gave him the ring as a keepsake. This plot device can be considered a metaphor for the substitution of a doctor's role and function. Zhang Yuan intends to feel Ruan San's pulse, but his attention is attracted by the ring, which actually allows Zhang to make a better diagnosis than the pulse would have permitted. In medical practice, a doctor aimed to determine the patient's illness on the basis of the pulse, but it is clear that in fictional medical narratives on lovesickness, strictly medical knowledge is not as effective. Moreover, when Zhang Yuan tries to cure Ruan San, he does not use any medication, instead asking a nun to set a date with Yulan. For the lovesick, a meeting with the object of desire is often the best cure.

If we speak of lovesickness in terms of a medicalization of *qing*, the process of diagnosing and healing lovesickness in the vernacular story indicates a tendency toward de-medicalization. Although many generations of doctors record prescriptions for sicknesses of *qing* in their books, such as *Compendium of Women's Medicine* (*Furen daquan liangfang* 婦人大全良方), none of these prescriptions are used to heal patients of lovesickness in vernacular stories. Instead, efforts

[337] Feng Menglong, *Stories old and New,* trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2000), 98.

to heal lovesickness usually rely not upon medical treatments, but on creating a chance for the patient to meet his or her lover. On the other hand, because doctors have the ability to move back and forth across the boundary of the family, they often play the role of go-between for secret lovers. In these stories, healers are not necessarily professional physicians, but also include Buddhist nuns, female doctors, and others. For example, in the fourteenth story of Feng Menglong's *Stories to Awaken the World*, a young woman, Zhou Shengxian 周勝仙 encounters a man, Fan Er, in a teahouse. They immediately fall in love. After returning home, Zhou feels indisposed and refuses to eat, and she lies in bed for several days, aching all over and coughing. Her mother asks a certain Granny Wang to see her daughter. This Granny Wang is an elderly woman who delivers babies, sews, arranges marriages, takes the pulses of the sick, and diagnoses illnesses. Every family in the neighborhood goes to her for help. Thus Granny Wang belongs to the group referred to as *sangu liupo* (三姑六婆, literally "three aunts and six old women"), which includes Buddhist nuns, Daoist nuns, and female fortune-tellers; procuresses, matchmakers, sorceresses, madams of brothels, female pharmacists, and midwives. In Ming-Qing stories, these women usually serve as female doctors and go-betweens for young ladies in the boudoir, and for their lovers. When Granny Wang diagnoses Zhou Shengxian, she knows the cause of her illness as soon as she has heard the symptoms. "Your sickness is an affliction of the mind (*xinbing* 心病). Did you meet someone and take a liking to him before you fell ill?"[338] After Zhou tells her the truth, she attempts to persuade Zhou's mother to marry her to Fan Er. In the meantime, Fan Er also falls ill with lovesickness. His older brother also asks Granny Wang to check his pulse. Fan Er tells Granny Wang that he has a headache, nausea, and cough. Granny Wang asks him directly, "Is it because of Mr. Zhou's daughter?"[339] Then she also helps the two families propose marriage for Zhou Shengxian and Fan Er. In this story, Granny Wang visits

[338] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Awaken the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2009), 278.
[339] Ibid., 279.

Zhou Shengxian and Fan Er under the name of female physician, but she does not feel their pulse or prescribe medication at all. Since Zhou Shengxian's and Fan Er's physical symptoms present their unfulfilled desire, which they cannot tell though words, it is Granny Wang who takes upon herself the responsibility of revealing the root cause of Zhou's and Fan's lovesickness and communicating with Zhou's mother and Fan's elder brother about their marriage proposal. Compared to the traditional figure of the doctor, she is more like a go-between or matchmaker.

Consequently, a type of vernacular story involving the plot of "disguising oneself as a doctor" (*jiaban yisheng* 假扮醫生) was created. In Wang Jiaoluan and Zhou Tingzhang's story discussed before, after Wang Jiaoluan suffers from lovesickness, Zhou Tingzhang claims that he has studied medicine and is thus able to feel Wang Jiaoluan's pulse and make a diagnosis. He is therefore invited into Jiaoluan's chamber to meet her. "He caressed Jiaoluan's wrist for a considerable time, pretending to be feeling her pulse."[340] He tells Wang's father that her illness is caused by depression and suggests that she take frequent walks in some open space to take her mind off things she is worried about. With this treatment, "she would be all right again without the aid of medicine."[341] Zhou Tingzhang pretends to be a doctor but actually takes advantage of a doctor's role to meet his lover. His suggestion about taking walks also creates more chances for them to meet secretly in the Wang family's back garden. Wang Jiaoluan's condition improves significantly without medication because Zhou has managed to caress her wrist and the two are able to meet in the garden.

Another example is in the third volume, titled Xue 雪, of *Guzhang juechen* 鼓掌絕塵, a late Ming collection of vernacular stories in four volumes, each volume containing a complete story. In this story, a young lady, Ruolan 若蘭, and a young scholar, Wen Jingqing 文荊卿, fall in love at first sight. Ruolan falls ill with lovesickness. Her mother asks Doctor Zhang 張, a specialist in

[340] Feng Menglong, *Stories to Caution the World*, trans. Yang Shuhui and Yang Yunqin (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2005), 591.
[341] Ibid., 592.

women's medicine (*fuke* 婦科), to take a look at her. The doctor prescribes several medications, but Ruolan's sickness continues to grow worse. Wen Jingqing hears about Ruolan's illness from her wet nurse, an innkeeper's wife. Wen lives in the inn and knows the couple. He comes up with a plan to disguise himself as a doctor, telling the innkeeper that he has a secret prescription, handed down from his father, that can heal all the complicated diseases women face. The innkeeper's wife recommends him to Ruolan's mother. Thus, Wen Jingqing is able to enter Ruolan's boudoir to feel her pulse. He wants to tell Ruolan how he is longing for her, but Ruolan's mother is sitting right there beside the bed. He tells Ruolan's mother that there is some evil aura (*xieqi* 邪氣) on Ruolan's face and that the illness must have something to do with ghosts. He asks Ruolan's mother to pray at the shrine in another room, and after she leaves, he recites two verses composed by Ruolan. Thus, Ruolan recognizes that Wen is the scholar she loves. Gazing affectionately at him, she feels better immediately. After Ruolan's mother comes back, Wen tells her that he is confident that he will be able to cure Ruolan. Ruolan's mother invites him to stay in the guest room so that he can prescribe medications conveniently. Wen takes advantage of this chance to see Ruolan frequently. Ruolan, now happy, fully recovers after a few days, and the lovers begin a secret affair. Wen Jingqing's experience of disguising himself as a doctor demonstrates how a doctor's power to see a patient can be made use of to cross the boundaries of the family. It would be hard for an ordinary adult male to see a woman of an elite household in her inner chamber, but a doctor can see his female patient easily because of the four ways of diagnosis in traditional Chinese medicine, namely, looking, listening, questioning, and taking the pulse (*wang wen wen qie* 望聞問切). At the same time, this power can bring about some danger because a stranger may be able to enter a private space of the family in the guise of a doctor. In this story, Ruolan's mother even allows Wen Jingqing to stay in the family home, showing that an outsider may be treated somewhat as a family member because of his medical

abilities. Thus, Wen Jingqing can get close to Ruolan and eventually has a relationship with her, even though she has been raised in relative seclusion and rarely sees an adult male. In this sense, a doctor is an invader of a family. Even if some parents prefer to choose a female doctor, as Zhou Shengxian's mother did in the case discussed above, the female doctor may still bear messages for the young lovers as a go-between. Therefore, these doctors or disguised doctors challenge the authority of parents over their children's marriage. On the other hand, real doctors, whether they are characterized as quacks or as experts, are unable to diagnose and cure lovesickness. This phenomenon implies that the authors of these stories believe that curing lovesickness lies beyond the abilities of medical knowledge and practice. In other words, management of the patient's romantic, sexual, and marital relations takes the place of a prescription or other medical treatment, thus de-medicalizing the healing process of lovesickness.

In addition, vernacular stories cite a few other healing methods for lovesickness that are completely different from those found in specialized medical books. The first method is to persuade the patient to eliminate sexual desire so as to prevent illicit relations. A typical example comes from the tenth and eleventh chapters of *Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言, a full-length novel in 152 chapters that was composed by Xia Jingqu 夏敬渠 during the Qianlong period (1736–1795). When the protagonist of this novel, Wen Suchen 文素臣，and his friend Yu Shuangren 余雙人 go to the capital, they embark at Yangzhou and take the third cabin of the boat for themselves. An old Buddhist nun, Jingwu 靜悟, and two young nuns, Liaoyin 了因 and Liaoyuan 了緣, take the same boat and occupy the second cabin, right next door. Attracted by Yu Shuangren's handsome appearance, Liaoyin and Liaoyuan try to flirt with him. Yu Shuangren discusses the matter with Wen Suchen. Wen suggests that it is not proper to take these nuns as concubines, because they have just met on the boat and Shuangren feels no attraction to them in any case. But the nuns are lustful and flirtatious, and that night, Liaoyin sneaks into Yu Shuangren's cabin

through the window and climbs into bed naked and embraces him. Shuangren is awakened and calls out to Wen Suchen, "Brother Suchen, I cannot go to sleep because the weather is too hot. Let's get up and sit for a while."[342] Understanding that Shuangren does not want to have sex with her, Liaoyin has to go back to her cabin. The next day, Shuangren asks the boatman to board up the window between his cabin and the nuns' cabin, but the boatman does not have the necessary wood. So Suchen covers the window with a reed mat. Liaoyin and Liaoyuan overhear the conversation between Shuangren and the boatman and are deeply ashamed. When they arrive at Huaiguan 淮關, Suchen and Shuangren encounter the old nun, Jingwu, as she is getting off the boat to buy medications. She tells them that Liaoyin is ill: she is very thirsty and excitable, and her body is wet and hot. Because Wen Suchen understands medicine, Shuangren suggests that he diagnose Liaoyin. In the meantime, Shuangren finds that Liaoyuan has made a hole in the mat in order to spy on him. After Suchen feels Liaoyin's pulse, Liaoyuan asks him to diagnose her, for she is hot and excitable as well, and has no appetite for food or drink. Suchen also feels her pulse and tells Shuangren that Liaoyin's condition is much worse:

> "I suspect that Liaoyin is the one who came to your bed on that night. She got close to you, and that's why her sickness has become so serious so quickly. Liaoyuan has only spied on you, so her sickness has developed slowly and is not as serious as Liaoyin's…The root cause of their sicknesses is the same."[343]
>
> "大約了因是前晚俯就之人，與老弟沾皮著肉，故其病速而深；了緣止以目成，故其病遲而淺……病根都是一般。"

When the old nun Jingwu asks Suchen to write a prescription, he tells her that their sicknesses cannot be cured by medication. They will be able to recover only once they have eliminated the thoughts that are distracting them. After several days, Liaoyin dies from lovesickness, and Liaoyuan's condition worsens. When Suchen goes to see her, she asks Suchen

[342] Xia Jingqu 夏敬渠, *Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言 (Beijing: Zuojia chubanshe, 1993), Vol. 1, 105.
[343] Ibid., 108.

to persuade Shuangren to marry her. But Suchen refuses her request and instead persuades her to give up her desire for Shuangren.

> "Your sickness is caused by lust and should therefore be cured by lust. However, since you are on a boat now, and you can't just ward off hunger with a painted cake. You will die in vain. Instead, you should put your desire for Mr. Yu aside and ignore it, just as if he were dead and his corpse putrid and worm-ridden, so that you would be afraid to see him. Or as if you are dead and buried in a wild and desolate wilderness. You cannot get close to living people. You should eliminate distracting thoughts. Once your longing is cut off, your sickness will be cured."[344]
>
> "你此病既為色欲而起，須將色欲來醫；但此時現在舟中，畫餅豈能充飢，枉自送了性命！你須把餘相公一事，置之高閣，只如雙人已死，渾身向腐蛆攢，見之可怕；又譬如自己已死，埋在荒郊野墓，不能親近生人，屏去萬緣，掃除雜念，相思一斷，諸病皆除。"

Suchen also suggests Liaoyuan resume secular life after her recovery and get married. Hearing Suchen's words, Liaoyuan is filled with such fear that she breaks into a cold sweat. Then she feels better, and a few days later she is able to get out of bed. She thanks Suchen and promises to go back to her parents' family and ask them to choose a husband for her.

In this story, the author draws a contrast between Liaoyin and Liaoyuan. The former is addicted to sexual desire for Yu Shuangren and is therefore beyond remedy, while the latter follows Wen Suchen's advice and saves herself. It is worth noting that Jingwu buys medications for Liaoyin, but they do not work. As a healer, Wen Suchen points out that the only treatment is to eliminate the distracting thoughts, thus corroborating a common expression in vernacular stories: "An illness in one's mind needs to be healed by a medication of the mind (心病還須心藥醫)." Although lovesickness may present physical symptoms, these symptoms are to be removed through treatment of the patient's mind rather than medications prescribed by a doctor for the body.

[344] Ibid., 109.

The fifteenth story in *Xihu erji* 西湖二集 introduces another way to heal lovesickness. This story is about Luo Yin 羅隱 (833–910), a poet of the Tang Dynasty known for his talent, but also for his ugly appearance. The prime minister Zhou Tian's 鄭畋 daughter appreciates Luo Yin's poems. She copies these poems out and recites them day and night, then falls ill with lovesickness. Her father does not mind marrying his daughter to Luo Yin, but he worries that she does not know how ugly Luo Yin is, so he invites Luo Yin to a luxurious feast at his home, informing his daughter in advance. Miss Zheng is very happy and recovers somewhat from her illness. But when the day of the banquet comes and she spies on Luo Yin from behind a bead curtain, she is shocked to see that Luo Yin is so ugly that he looks more like a ghoul than a human being. She abandons her romantic interest in Luo Yin. "If I had married him, my life would be in vain. My desire for him is wrong."[345] Then she returns to her boudoir and gives up reciting Luo's poems. It is significant that Zheng Tian does not seek medical treatment for his daughter at all. Once he understands that his daughter is suffering from lovesickness, he attempts to detect whether his daughter truly wants to marry Luo Yin. If she does, he will betroth Miss Zheng to Luo Yin. But Miss Zheng's lovesickness is abruptly healed after she sees Luo Yin and loses her desire for him. This process stages the importance of the patient's subjectivity in healing lovesickness. Either fulfilling the patient's desire or removing the object of that desire can be an effective treatment. Further, Zheng Tian's response to Miss Zheng's lovesickness suggests that a common logic for lovesickness is fully established in fictional medical narratives. In contrast with some parents who are too cautious in marrying their daughters and thereby bring on lovesickness, Zheng Tian understands and accepts the root cause of his daughter's malady. If we say lovesickness is a silent language through bodily symptoms to present secret desires that the patient cannot declare in words, this silent language is deciphered and accepted by the

[345] Zhou Qingyuan 周清源, *Xihu erji* 西湖二集 (Nanjing: Jiangsu guji chubanshe, 1994), 256.

patient's parents here. As a father, Zheng Tian seeks a balance between parents' authority in arranging their children's marriage and his daughter's wishes in choosing her husband, thus legitimizing the patient's desire to some extent. As lovesickness reflects tensions between individual emotions and social norms, Zheng Tian's solution dispels the tensions. Thus, Miss Zheng's lovesickness is healed.

Li Yu's "Heyinglou" 合影樓, a short story from a collection of his twelve stories, *Shi'er lou* 十二樓, further stages the compromise between an individual's desire for a lover and parents' efforts to cure lovesickness through marriage arrangements. A young scholar, Tu Zhensheng 屠珍生, and a lady, Guan Yujuan 管玉娟, live in two buildings, between which lies a pond. They see each other's reflections in the pond and fall in love. Tu Zhengsheng's father seeks a match with Guan Yujuan's father, but Guan's father refuses to marry his daughter into the Tu family. Hearing that another lady, Lu Jinyun 路錦雲, has beauty and talents similar to Guan Yujuan's, Tu's father sends a matchmaker to the Lu family and reaches an agreement with Lu's father for their children's marriage. However, Tu Zhensheng insists on marrying Guan Yujuan and breaking off the engagement with Lu Jinyun. Lu's father plans to choose another son-in-law, but Lu Jinyun herself wants the engagement with Tu Zhengsheng, and she falls ill because she cannot express this secret longing. The author comments, "The man wants to abandon the woman, but the woman is longing for the man. No one has contracted this kind of lovesickness since the beginning of the world."[346] It is worth noting that when Mr. Lu hears about his daughter's illness, he supposes that she is sick because she is of marriageable age but not yet married. Once he selects a handsome and talented husband for her, she should recover without taking any medication. However, her condition worsens when Mr. Lu makes an effort to select another husband for her. Mr. Lu then learns the truth from his daughter's female servant and

[346] Li Yu 李漁, *Shi'er lou* 十二樓 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1986), 14.

discusses the marriage proposal with Tu Zhensheng's father again. Mr. Lu's thoughts and actions indicate that the cause and nature of lovesickness are commonly accepted in vernacular stories. Even parents, who in other stories present a traditional obstacle to the fulfillment of their children's desires, here have realized that it is necessary to choose an ideal spouse for their children according to their children's own wishes. Otherwise, their children would be vulnerable to lovesickness and hard to cure.

In the meantime, Guan Yujuan has fallen ill with lovesickness after hearing that the families are planning for the engagement of Tu Zhensheng and Lu Jinyun. Tu Zhensheng contracts lovesickness as well. In order to heal these three patients, Mr. Tu and Mr. Lu make a plan to marry both Lu Jinyun and Guan Yujuan to Tu Zhensheng. Mr. Lu lies to Mr. Guan, claiming that he has an adopted son, and proposes a match between this young man and Guan Yujuan. Mr. Guan, who also wants an engagement for his lovesick daughter, comes to an agreement with Mr. Lu. In the end, Tu Zhensheng marries both ladies and the small epidemic of lovesickness is cured. In the story, it seems to be common sense that the best cure for lovesickness is an ideal marriage. None of these patients' parents seek medical care for their children. The storyline is established based on efforts to arrange marriages to cure lovesickness. Lovesickness thus becomes a plot device to motivate these young lovers' parents to marry them. In other words, the traditional conflicts between parents' marriage proposals for their children and their children's own wishes are replaced by the difficulties of fulfilling all the lovesick patients' wishes at the same time.

Another short story by Li Yu, "Heguilou" 鶴歸樓 from *Shi'er lou* 十二樓, demonstrates a unique means of preventing lovesickness. Duan Yuchu 段玉初 and Yu Zichang 郁子昌 are two young scholars. After passing the civil service examination, Duan marries Raocui 繞翠 and Yu marries Weizhu 圍珠. Both ladies are so beautiful that they attract Emperor Huizong (1082–1135), who wants to take them as imperial concubines. A minister remonstrates with him

because the nation has been weakened by the threat from powerful non-Chinese groups from the Liao 遼 and the Jin 金. As a result, Huizong has to allow Raocui and Weizhu to go through with their own marriage plans. However, still unhappy with Duan Yuchu and Yu Zichang, he commands them to go to the Jin to pay tribute. It is well known that the officials in the Jin always detain Song envoys on the excuse that the tribute is not enough and ask them to make supplementary payment. Envoys who are not able to pay have to stay in the Jin for many years and find it difficult to return home. Duan Yuchu and Raocui and Yu Zichang and Weichu are both affectionate couples, but their attitudes toward being separated are completely different. Raocui makes a lot of clothing for Duan to take with him as he goes, but Duan asks her to consider their separation in life to be parting at death. That is, she should never expect his return. Duan even refuses to take this clothing made by his wife with him, instead telling Raocui that it is better to leave the clothes for another man who will marry her. Raocui is angry at Duan Yuchu, and weeps and burns the clothing, while Duan Yuchu leaves home without any reluctance, apparently not sad at all. In contrast, Yu Zichang has a strong attachment to his wife. He turns his head many times after parting with her. After arriving at the Jin, Yu Zichang's father-in-law works hard to make the supplementary payment for him, and he is able to return home after five months. However, the emperor Huizong does not want him to be reunited with his wife and sends him to monitor the troops. After three years, he commands Yu to pay the tribute to the Jin again, so Yu and Duan cannot meet their wives for eight years. Because Raocui believes that Duan is a heartless man and that they are not able to be reunited in life, she keeps her heart set on preserving her chastity. She makes a living by spinning and weaving and enjoys her life alone, even gaining some weight after several years. When Duan Yuchu and Yu Zichang finally return, Raocui is more beautiful and has a full figure. By contrast, Weizhu falls ill with lovesickness after Yu Zichang leaves. Her father asks many doctors to examine her, all of whom tell her father that Weizhu's illness can only be cured by allowing her to see her husband. At the beginning, she

tries her best to eat and drink, hoping to wait until Yu Zichang comes back. But after Yu Zichang is sent to the Jin again, she becomes desperate and dies from lovesickness.

Compared to Weizhu, Raocui survives and leads a relatively peaceful life after being separated from her husband. This implies that the best means of preventing lovesickness is to treat the parting in life like a separation by death. If the couple is not be longing for each other, they can preserve health, enjoy life, and at last be reunited. In contrast, if a person misses his or her lover too much, he or she is vulnerable to lovesickness, which may lead to death. In Li Yu's understanding, excessive emotion causes sickness and accelerates aging, while a tranquil mind can preserve one's health and youth. In the story, Weizhu's father tells Yu that Weizhu is not beautiful anymore but became all skin and bone before death. Yu also looks like an old man even though he is only thirty. Duan Yuchu and Raocui, on the other hand, are able to maintain their health and look as young as before. Duan's strategy to avoid lovesickness indicates a kind of wisdom for surviving adverse circumstances.

In Ming-Qing vernacular stories, lovesickness happens not only between men and women, but also between men. The sixth story in Li Yu's *Silent Operas* states that homosexuality is common in Fujian province and is referred to as "the southern mode" (nanfeng 南風) or *longyang* 龍陽. A famous scholar of the Jiajing 嘉靖 period (1522–1566), Xu Jifang 許季芳, is dedicated to the southern mode. A fourteen-year-old boy who lives in the same town, You Ruilang 尤瑞郎, has the appearance of a beautiful girl. "The boy's brows were like crescent moons, his eyes like autumn pools, his lips like cherries, his waist like a willow frond."[347] You Ruilang encounters Xu Jifang at a celebration of the empress's birthday, when Xu secretly puts a white silk kerchief and a heavy gold fan into You's sleeve to express his love. You also thinks,

[347] Li Yu, *Silent Operas*, Patrick Hanan ed. (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1990), 105.

"If I never have a lover, well and good. But if I ever give myself to anyone, it will be to him."[348] As You Ruilang's beauty is well known in his hometown, his name is listed in the top of the first class on the Honor Roll (*meitong kao'an* 美童考案). Many people dream of marrying him. His father requests five hundred taels for his marriage proposal. Although the practice of offering a bride-price for the southern mode is not uncommon in Fujian, the money offered is normally from a few taels to several dozen. Thus, You's wedding is delayed even longer. "His thoughts were all on Xu Jifang, but he was prevented even from meeting him. In fact, locked up in the house as he was, he could not even send a message. In less than half a month, he began to suffer the symptoms of lovesickness, for which the doctors and soothsayers could find no cure."[349]

This outcome is similar to that of lovesickness between man and wife. You Ruilang plays the role of a woman. All the descriptions of his appearance show his feminine characteristics. The honor roll is similar to the placement of famous prostitutes in some other stories. Further, because in the south a sharp distinction is drawn between the first and second marriage, You Ruilang's father does not allow him to get close to other men; as the narrator observes, if "the first fruits had already been sampled, the boy would come to be known as a fallen flower."[350] This behavior accords with the custom of regarding one partner in a male homosexual relationship, in which the *longyang* 龍陽 plays the role of the female partner. Like the young lady in some of the other stories we have examined, You Ruilang is confined to his home and unable to send a message to his lover. His lovesickness cannot be cured until Xu Jifang pays the bride-price and his father gives his consent. "Hearing that an offer had been accepted from Jifang, (Ruilang) immediately recovered on his own."[351] Xu Jifang chooses an auspicious date to welcome You Ruilang into his home. This story of same-sex love thus takes over several basic

[348] Ibid., 108.
[349] Ibid., 112.
[350] Ibid., 111.
[351] Ibid., 116.

elements of other stories of lovesickness. After one year, as You Ruilang grows into physical and sexual maturity, his sexual desire becomes harder and harder to control, and he feels an irresistible impulse to masturbate. Filled with sadness, Xu Jifang tells You Ruilang that his sexual organs will be the root cause of their separation in the future:

> From the ages of thirteen to fifteen, a boy hasn't yet emerged from childhood and has nothing to distract him. If he's with a lover, he'll naturally feel contented, like a woman with her husband. But once the sperm duct is open, his sexual desires will be aroused and he'll start longing for women. And as soon as he does that, he will look on men as the enemy…This organ of yours is growing by the day, so my luck is shrinking by the day. As your semen increases, my pleasure decreases.[352]
>
> 男子自十四岁起，至十六岁止，这三年之间，未曾出幼，无事分心。相处一个朋友，自然安心贴意，如夫妇一般。及至肾水一通，色心便起，就要想起妇人来了。一想到妇人身上，就要与男子为仇……如今你的此物一日长似一日，我的缘分一日短似一日了。你的肾水一日多似一日，我的欢娱一日少似一日了。

Xu Jifang suggests that the love he shares with You Ruilang can survive only as long as the latter is not conscious of his gender identity, that is, until puberty. Before then he can play the role of Xu's wife, but once he is sexually mature, he naturally develops sexual desire for women, and same-sex love will be replaced by heterosexual love. This view is significant because it implies that boys have attachments to male adults only as long as they remain boys. Xu Jifang appreciates You Ruilang's appearance as a woman and treats You as his wife. Their relationship is a simulacrum of a marriage between man and woman. To eliminate the possibility of his falling in love with a woman, You Ruilang chooses self-castration and assumes the role of Xu Jifang's wife both physically and psychologically. "His face and figure had differed only slightly from those of a woman, and now even this difference was removed."[353] He begins to dress as a woman and changes the lang 郎 (young man) in his name to niang 娘 (young woman) to fit his new gender role. You's gender transformation preserves his relationship with Xu and forestalls potential future lovesickness for a woman.

[352] Ibid., 118.
[353] Ibid., 121.

Baiyun daoren's 白云道人 *Yulouchun* 玉楼春 includes another same-sex love story about lovesickness. A scholar, Shao Cai 邵才, passes the civil service examinations and is appointed a junior compiler in the Hanlin Academy and army supervisor for four provinces. Traveling to the Jiangnan region, he chooses to remain incognito and pretends to be an ordinary scholar, asking his clerk to call him only "sir" (*xianggong* 相公). Along the way he encounters another official, Feng Chengming 馮成名, an officer in the Bureau of Appointments in the Ministry of Personnel. Feng is in mourning over his father's death and has thus temporarily left his post. Feng has a male lover, Xiulang 秀郎, who once served on the staff of the local government, but whom Feng now keeps at home to wait on him. Attracted to the mysterious Shao Cai, Feng makes friends with him and attempts to flirt with him, but gets no response. Xiulang suggests that Feng feign lovesickness to sound out Shao Cai's interest. Feng also sends Xiulang to seduce Shao Cai. Ironically, Feng's feigned illness develops into a real lovesickness after several days. He suffers from intermittent chills and fever, for which the doctor prescribes medicine, but he does not want to take it. Only when Shao Cai comes and persuades him to take it does he reluctantly take a sip, but he throws it up at once. Shao Cai touches him and finds that he is burning with fever.

When Shao Cai expresses his worries about Feng Chengming's condition, Xiulang takes the opportunity to tell Shao Cai that Feng has fallen deeply in love with him (*zhong qing* 鍾情) and is suffering from lovesickness. "Whether he is drinking or eating, dreaming or sleeping, walking or standing still, sitting or lying down, Mr. Shao is always in his mind. Even if he didn't want to be sick, it would be impossible."[354] Shao Cai ponders on this for a while and finds it ridiculous: "I am not a woman. Why does he favor me like this? If I don't comply with his request, I am afraid he will die. But if I am to comply, civil servant as I am, how could I do such an obscene and indecent thing?" But Shao Cai's attitude towards same-sex love seems not so

[354] Baiyun daoren 白雲道人, *Yulouchun* 玉樓春 (Beijing: Zhongguo xiju chubanshe, 1999), 134.

straightforward. When he learns that Feng Chengming sleeps with Xiulang every night, Shao Cai becomes envious. When Xiulang comes to his bed, Shao Cai has sex with him on his own initiative. However, he still considers a potential same-sex relationship with Feng Chengming obscene, so the question is, from Shao Cai's perspective, which kind of same-sex relationship is normal, and which kind is obscene?

Shao Cai's seemingly contradictory attitude suggests that the propriety of a same-sex relationship depends upon social hierarchy. A same-sex relationship between two officials who are in the same social stratum is considered a scandal, while a relationship between an official and a boy from a lower social stratum is acceptable. That is to say, a same-sex relationship is always informed by power relations. The person from a lower social stratum has to submit to the other, whose social class is higher, just as a wife customarily submitted to her husband in a heterosexual marriage in premodern China. When Feng Chengming sends Xiulang to seduce Shao Cai, his attitude seems like that of a man who sends his concubine to attend another man. As Xiulang says, "Although I am lowly and humble, I eat and sleep with my master. Other people are not allowed a glimpse of me. But he asked me to sleep with you. This is something he has never done before in his whole life."[355] His way of expressing himself indicates that he not only has submitted to Feng Chengming, but also belongs to him like property. When Feng Chengming falls in love with Shao Cai, he thinks Shao Cai is an ordinary young scholar and that there would be no scandal in pursuing a love affair with him. But Shao Cai knows that both he himself and Feng are officials, and he does not want to be involved in such an "obscene" relationship. It is significant that Shao Cai's first thought is "I am not a woman." This implies that any male lover for Feng Chengmin should take the role of a woman and assume a subordinate status in their relationship. On the other hand, Feng Chengming sends Xiulang to

[355] Ibid., 133.

serve (*fushi* 服侍) Shao Cai, thus putting Xiulang in a subordinate status in his relationship with Shao Cai. But Shao Cai cannot lower himself to serve Feng Chengming.

In order to cure Feng Chengming's lovesickness but avoid an obscene relationship, Shao Cai tells Xiulang that he would like to fulfill Feng Chengming's wish as long as the latter recovers from his illness. Hearing Shao Cai's response, Feng speedily recovers, as expected. At this point Shao Cai finds another beautiful boy, Qingxiao 輕綃, and plans to give him to Feng Chengming. When Feng sees Qinqxiao at the first time, he notes that "his color and figure are more delicate and beautiful than Xiulang's."[356] This comment implies that from Feng Chengming's eyes, Qingxiao is like a woman. He compares Qingxiao with Xiulang instead of with Shao Cai, before being told that Shao Cai was planning to give Qingxiao to him. This comparison is significant because Qingxiao and Xiulang belong to the same social stratum. After Feng Chengming learns Shao Cai's true purpose, he is glad to have Qingxiao instead of Shao Cai and to leave Xiulang to Shao Cai. In the end, Shao Cai and Feng Chengming trade boy lovers and bid farewell to each other.

In conclusion, professional medical books such as doctors' biographies, medical theory, and case studies reveal a long tradition of diagnosing illnesses duo to *qing*. According to their presentation of the causes, symptoms, and treatments of sicknesses of *qing,* women are more susceptible to this disease than men, for almost all the patients in these medical cases are female, while the main cause of their lovesickness is frustration of their desire for men (*yu nanzi bukede* 慾男子不可得). To prevent sicknesses of *qing*, men and women must have sexual activity after puberty. Patients suffering from these disorders will experience chills and fever, and their liver will manifest itself as a stringy pulse in the pulse in the wrist of his or her left hand (*ganmai xian*

[356] Ibid., 138.

chu zuokou 肝脈弦，出左口). That the disease can be treated with medication or by inciting other kinds of emotion, such as rage and joy, indicates that the doctors regarded the exercise of *qing* and will (*qingzhi* 情志) as a therapy for lovesickness.

In fictional medical narratives, Ming-Qing authors adopted some elements from professional medical discourses but omitted others. For example, the patient's unfulfilled desire and longing for a lover is still the cause of lovesickness, but in fictional medical narratives males suffer from lovesickness as often as females. The typical stringy pulse does not show up, and chills and fever are not representative symptoms in fictional medical narratives. Instead, most patients experience weakness, pallor, emaciation, and exhaustion. More importantly, the medical theory about sicknesses of *qing* provides legitimacy for a timely marriage for both men and women, since their sexual desires need to be fulfilled after puberty. Fictional medical narratives go further in legitimizing passionate love between young people that their parents could not at first permit, especially in cases where parents have delayed in arranging a marriage. In some stories, lawcourts get involved and judges go so far as to overrule parents in order to protect young people's love affairs. In other words, the judge attempts to define a love affair based on the codes of law and human sensibilities. The verdict may validate lovers' secret betrothal while nullifying their parents' commands. Such endings imply a critique of parents who do not marry their children on time, since this delay may cause their children to suffer from lovesickness and to try to cure themselves through secret love affairs. This critique suggests that a secret love affair may have some validity, in spite of its taking place without parental permission.

In sicknesses of *qing*, the patient's subjective experience is dominant throughout the process of lovesickness, which is caused by the frustration of the patient's romantic and sexual desires. The possibility of a cure depends entirely upon the patient him/herself. In this sense, Ming-Qing vernacular tales about lovesickness undermine the doctors' absolute authority in diagnosing and

treating lovesickness in professional medical books. Lovesickness cannot be cured by medicine, instead, it can be healed by creating a chance for the patient to meet his or her lover, or by giving up the desire. Doctors are sometimes either unavailable or they are quacks, and sometimes the role of doctor is played by other people. Consequently, the motif of "disguising oneself as a doctor" (*jiaban yisheng* 假扮醫生) is not uncommon in vernacular fiction. Ironically, a real doctor may not be able to cure a patient's lovesickness, while a fake doctor who is actually the patient's lover can. Therefore, if we say lovesickness is a medicalization of *qing*, the process of diagnosing and healing lovesickness in vernacular stories indicates a tendency toward de-medicalization.

Through the experience of lovesickness, patients' genuine passionate love can transcend the boundary between life and death. Some stories effectively redefine the concept of death. Although lovesickness arises from the lovers' separation in this life, their death allows them to become husband and wife again during the next life such that their love will endure in another time and space. In some other stories, death from lovesickness also establishes a connection with a previous life. Through the explanation of different lives, the author suggests the existence of a kind of heavenly justice that cannot be realized by human laws. Further, genuine love can also transcend the boundary between genders, which is represented by lovesickness in same-sex love. The power construction in same-sex love stories is noteworthy. When a man plays the role of a woman in a same-sex relationship, its medical narrative is very similar to the heterosexual versions of lovesickness stories. Moreover, the propriety of a same-sex relationship depends upon social hierarchy. For example, a same-sex relationship between two officials who are in the same social stratum is considered a scandal, while a relationship between an official and a boy from a lower social stratum is commonly accepted. The cause and cure of lovesickness in a same-sex relationship reveals how social hierarchy is disarranged and how a new balance in power relations is brought back.

Conclusion

Medical narratives flourished in late imperial Chinese vernacular fiction. Compared to previous non-fictional and fictional medical narratives, these stories pay special attention to ordinary patients' subjective sufferings and their life experiences around illness. The process of illness uncovers disorders of family, ethics, and power structures, and can lead to the remaking of patients' social identities and interpersonal relationships.

Most previous research on literature and medicine draws on literary texts for data in the study of medical history. Scholars typically focus on a few of the more prominent long novels, including *Xingshi yinyuanzhuan* 醒世姻緣傳, *Jinpingmei* 金瓶梅, *Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢, and so on. Until now there has been only limited study of medical narratives in Ming-Qing short stories. In this dissertation, fictional medical narratives not only furnish data for social or medical history, but also reveal the ways in which people understood the self, the world, their social lives, and the social meaning of illness. I focus on how fictional texts representing patients' experiences of suffering go beyond physical symptoms, diagnoses, and treatment to examine how the patients' identities and social relations were reconstructed through the experience of illness, and how patients responded to their altered circumstances and identity crises.

As an official ideology in imperial China, Confucianism presented a well-organized model of family and society. From the ruler down to the masses of people, individual self-cultivation was to be the basis for regulation of family and larger society, and in this way the state could be governed peacefully and prosperously. In this model, a family is a society in miniature. Confucius assumed that all would share his joy and awe at the prospect of a society in which friction was absent because everyone had a role to serve and served it well, that is, where

hierarchical differentiation resulted in harmonious coordination.[357] From rulers to subjects, parents to children, husband to wife, and elder brother to younger, superiors should be righteous and kind, while subordinates should be obedient and respectful, every person ideally fulfilling the responsibilities associated with his or her role. These expectations form a firm foundation for social ideals. Given this ethical framework, the Confucian classics paid much more attention to morality rather than the human body. For example, loyalty to the lord, filial piety to parents, and kindness to children and subordinates were figured as obligations that everyone should recognize and maintain. However, once a person becomes ill, he or she has to be absent from daily activities in the family life and is unable to fulfill his or her duties. The Confucian ethical framework in some ways fails to provide for this new situation. Further, disorders of a human body may bring about disorders in the whole family system and affect the outside world and social ethics beyond the domestic realm. Medical narratives in late imperial vernacular fiction reassert the dimension of the body, showing how an unhealthy body may cause an identity crisis for the patient, and they reconstruct his or her family and social relations and even disrupt the family system and larger Confucian ethical framework.

As discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, the patient may lose his or her family identity and regain it in a different way in his or her later years, or may encounter a dramatic crisis of social identity on the road. In some extreme cases, the patient may experience castration, madness, and change of gender. These stories show how patients are forced to redefine their identity, and more importantly, they also represent the patients' subjective psychological experience as they accept their transformed roles. These patients are exiled from the human relations they have established before their illnesses and transformed into new persons or beings. This process calls into question the stability of identity and foregrounds its dependence upon familial and social structures, thus revealing contemporary conceptions of the self, others, and the world. The

[357] Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *Confucianism and Family Rituals in Imperial China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press,1991), 18.

analysis of patients' identity crises shows their universal nostalgia for their former state of good health and desire to reintegrate with family. An alien space indicates a departure from the traveler's familiar environment and acquaintances, a journey filled with instability, and an exposure to factors that may cause illness. Thus, being sick in an alien space indicates a dual departure from the patient's normal life. These stories convey the message that travelling always represents a dangerous and unstable state. When a romantic love arises in an unfamiliar space, it usually signals some hidden danger. For example, in a *zhiguai*-style narrative the female who attracts a male traveler on the road might be a ghost or fox spirit. In other cases, a female might set a trap to defraud a male traveler of his money and belongings, or a girl might have leprosy and her parents might attempt to cure her by finding a male to whom the leprosy can be transferred. As a result, the traveler who has intercourse with an alien being or becomes a victim of a marriage fraud usually contracts a disease. Although the male traveler's marital tie with a woman in unfamiliar space is sometimes genuine, their marriage can easily be threatened or even destroyed by potential dangers on the road. In any case, only if a traveler is able to return to his hometown, or establishes a new family that can serve as his hometown, is he able to recover a permanent refuge. Otherwise, failure to return to his family or establish a new family identity results in everlasting exile.

In this regard, journey and home take on metaphorical meanings in the context of a widespread fear of instability and a universal attachment to security and the sense of true belonging. Travelers' experiences of illness embody hardships in their adventures and become a common theme in vernacular stories. Through representations of physical and psychological sufferings caused by sickness on the road, late imperial authors made travelers aware of omnipresent dangers and crises and warned them against sexual temptations on the road. Meanwhile, a traveler's home symbolizes not only his ultimate destination, but also his physical and spiritual salvation. Therefore, returning home is always described as an arduous journey

filled with a variety of difficulties and threats. To lose one's home and remain on the road forever becomes a metaphor of spiritual degeneration.

In addition to bringing about identity crisis, sickness may also remake the patient's interpersonal relationships. Based on the patient's role in his or her familial and social network, the bonds between parents and children, parents-in-law and children-in-law, spouses, siblings, friends, masters and servants, and other relations are tested though the process of sickness. The late imperial authors were eager to tell these stories again and again because the tensions between various close and distant relations are fully exhibited in the patient's experience of illness. That is to say, when illness enters the patient's life, his or her world may become altered beyond imagination. The patient's normal life and interpersonal relations are subverted and reconstructed. Before being ill, the patient may have filial children, a faithful spouse, and kind siblings and friends. But sickness serves as a touchstone to test human nature, drawing out the hypocrisy that was almost impossible to detect before the experience of sickness. This dissertation discusses different stories in which several children fight for dying parents' estates instead of attending to them in their illness, a daughter-in-law maltreats her sick mother-in-law, a husband takes a concubine because his wife is disfigured by illness, a brother urges his sister to poison her stepson in order to monopolize all the property, and so on. These ethical tragedies reveal some human beings' inhumanity, which during ordinary times may be hidden under the veil of seemingly harmonious family relations. In this sense, the patient may be able to observe two different worlds from his or her perspective before and during the experience of illness. These observations call into question the reliability of the reality a person faces in a healthy state. Thus, a patient's perspective might be much closer to the truth than that of a healthy person, who may not have had the opportunity to see the sides of human nature that the touchstone of illness brings to light.

The analysis of patients' experiences of illness also reinforces the dictates of women's bodies, which are sometimes overshadowed in the prescriptions of the Confucian classics. From an idealized Confucian view, a married woman who performs her role properly should be responsible for the household, serve as a helpmate, and produce offspring. Therefore, her sickness usually causes a transformation of the family power structure. This may have an effect upon the patriarch and the wider world beyond domestic affairs, which is generally controlled by males. A woman's sick body takes on metaphorical meanings in the context of a family's disorder and decline and, in some extreme situations, in the political chaos in a country.

The tension between medical and moral perspectives on women's bodies is also heightened in fictional medical narratives. In the patriarchal system, women's fertility is especially significant. A variety of medical books and theories paid great attention to infertility, and introduced various treatments from medicine to acupuncture. However, it is hard to find medical interventions for infertility in vernacular fiction. Instead, these narratives depict moral resolutions to the problem of infertility. Moreover, although failure to bear a son is a legal pretext for divorcing a wife, it happens only very rarely in vernacular stories that a husband divorces his wife because of her infertility. A more common solution is to take a concubine to bear a male heir or to adopt an heir from among the husband's nephews. The Ming-Qing authors tend to compose stories about how an exemplary infertile wife helps her husband take a concubine to bear a son, and even devotes herself to bringing up the son after her husband's death. These stories would appear to have the aim of moral exhortation. On the other hand, authors also compose stories, for example, about how a jealous wife does not allow her husband to take a concubine, and how her husband and family seek medical interventions to cure her jealousy. Therefore, infertility is de-medicalized, while jealousy is medicalized. In other words, women's physical conditions can be addressed and solved through moral interventions. However, their moral conditions are treated as real sicknesses. In this sense, an infertile woman can still be

an exemplary wife, but a jealous wife must be cured, for curing jealousy symbolizes the correction of an action that does not accord with socially normative models.

Analysis of representations of women's bodies shows that chastity and desire are foregrounded as two central themes in fictional medical narratives, especially in stories about faked illnesses. Although sickness may bring about an identity crisis in the patient and destroy his or her interpersonal relations, as discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, there are some patients who rely on and even "create" an illness in order to solve a dilemma or evade some responsibilities they do not want to fulfill. Chapter 4 pays special attention to women's strong subjectivity through their experiences of using sickness as a strategy. It is not uncommon for a woman to take advantage of a real illness or feign an illness in order to refuse a marriage or intercourse that she does not want. Through this process, she is able to gain some power or overcome a powerful male enemy. Earlier narratives about chaste women had always highlighted their strong will to preserve chastity. In contrast, the Ming-Qing authors tend to characterize these chaste women as heroic strategists. Their heroic wisdom is praised on a par with male generals strategizing on the battlefield, echoing literary tropes of military strategies and tactics in Chinese history. In another type of story, a prostitute strategically uses a feigned illness to seduce an eminent monk. Therefore, the feigned illness empowers a powerless woman to control her own and others' bodies.

Based on this focus on women's chastity and desire, a new story type about a false report of death from illness emerges during the Ming and Qing dynasties. After a man travels to a distant place, a false report of his death from illness spreads in his hometown. As a rehearsal of what will happen after his death, it serves as a test of his wife's chastity. Ironically, while a wife's oath of chastity might help her deceive her husband, the false report of his death allows him to learn the truth about his wife's wishes. He sees the world as it would be if he were dead. Further, a false report of a women's death from sickness might conceal the truth of her

elopement with a lascivious man, with the attendant devastating critique of her morality. Through this strategic use of fake sickness, the woman's family is able to redefine her identity as a chaste but dead girl and celebrate her chastity with her disappointed fiancée.

Lovesickness further signifies a considerable tension between desire and the dictates of morality. In professional medical texts, women are much more prone to lovesickness than men, while in fictional medical narratives, men and women are equally susceptible to this illness, which is caused by their unfulfilled desire. Since they cannot control their romantic and sexual desires according to normative social models, their psychological states are transformed into physical symptoms, such as weakness, pallor, emaciation, and exhaustion, sometimes accompanied by chills and fever. Such symptoms coincide with those of more ordinary illnesses may help conceal the inappropriate social illness of the unrequited love affair. On the one hand, the occurrence of lovesickness reveals the tension between individual emotion and social norms. On the other hand, the progression and resolution of lovesickness reflects the Ming-Qing authors' great effort to legitimize young lovers' romantic and sexual desires. These stories imply a critique of parents who do not marry their children on time, for young people's desires need to be fulfilled after puberty. In some cases, the involvement of the lawcourt even validates young lovers' secret betrothals while nullifying their parents' commands. This tendency echoes Ming-Qing authors' attitude towards eminent monks' desire, which was analyzed in Chapter 4. Feng Menglong's story about Yutong and Honglian implies that although an eminent monk has a strong and sincere will to uphold precepts of chastity, his sexual desire is still hard to eliminate entirely. Therefore, the only way to avoid violating Buddhist precepts is to keep far away from women. This view also to some extent legitimizes human desire. That is to say, it is not a fault if a person cannot repress his or her sexual desire. The only thing that merits critique is the indulgence in sensual pleasures.

As suggested at the beginning of the dissertation, the existence and the experience of the patient constitute the central feature of fictional medical narratives. In this respect these narratives are completely different from non-fictional medical narratives, which focus on doctors' diagnoses and treatments of illness. The figure of the doctor is not as prominent as in professional medical texts, and is even absent from many fictional medical narratives. Further, doctors' authority in diagnosing and treating diseases, unquestioned in professional medical books, is often challenged and undermined in vernacular stories, especially when the patient's strong subjectivity is represented. For example, as mentioned in Chapter 4, when a woman strategically uses feigned sickness to fulfill her own desire and protect her lover, the doctor's authority is undermined and even ridiculed. That is to say, if the sickness is real, a doctor is usually dominant in the relationship with the patient. However, power relations between patient and doctor are dramatically reversed in the case of a feigned illness. Chapter 5 discussed the tendency to de-medicalization in the diagnosis and treatment of lovesickness. It is commonly accepted in vernacular fiction that no medicine is effective in curing lovesickness. A traditional Chinese idiom is often cited in these stories: "a sickness of the heart must be cured with medication for the heart" (*xinbing haixu xinyao yi* 心病還須心藥醫). Two effective treatments for lovesickness are either to fulfill the patient's desire or to get rid of it. In the story type of "disguising oneself as a doctor" (*jiaban yisheng* 假扮醫生), a real doctor is unable to cure lovesickness, but a fake doctor, who is actually the patient's lover, can cure it. In this sense, this dissertation defines fictional medical narratives in late imperial China in terms of a unique perspective from which to enter the world of patients and explore the social meaning of illness.

Although the doctor's diagnosis and treatment are not brilliant in fictional medical narratives, the occurrence, progression, and outcome of sickness still take on significant metaphorical meanings. There can be a variety of causes, but these all indicate a disequilibrium (*shitiao* 失調)

in physical, psychological, moral, and social systems. Based on correlative cosmology, the body of the individual human is at once an integrated and autonomous organism and bound up in close ties with family, community, and state, as well as with all sorts of natural elements and forces. An unhealthy state in the body can therefore bring about disorder in the whole family system, in social ethics, and even in broader political relationships in a country. Meanwhile, through the progression of illness, the disorder of larger frameworks of natural force and society are made visible. As long as the patient's body is healed, the order in a family or society can be restored. Villains commonly die of sickness at the end of stories. Although this kind of medical narrative is simple, it illustrates a belief in karmic retribution and heavenly will and in the ultimate return of order.

Centering on patients' subjective experience of illness, this dissertation reflects the set of fundamental concerns that define the medical humanities. Medical humanities is an inter- and multidisciplinary field that explores contexts, experiences, and critical and conceptual issues in medicine and health care, while supporting professional identity formation. It tends to focus on the cultural and historical contexts, emotional and existential dimensions, and literary and artistic representations of medicine.[358] As health care professionals have struggled with dehumanizing tendencies of medicine, for instance, modern technology that shifts attention to machines rather than patients, "a biomedical reductionism that attends to pain but not suffering and to disease but not illness," medical humanities attempts to re-humanize medicine.[359] There has been a paradigm shift from medical reductionism to medical holism, which has tried to incorporate social and cultural issues as well as personal experience into medical history.[360] In other words, patients are

[358] Thomas R. Cole, Nathan S. Carlin, Ronald A. Carson, *Medical Humanities: An introduction* (New York: Cambridge press, 2015), 12.
[359] Ibid., 1
[360] Raimo Puustinen, Mikael Leiman, Anna Maria Viljanen, "Medicine and the humanities–theoretical and methodological issues," Medical Humanities, 29(2), 2003, 77.

regarded as whole persons in contexts and relations.[361] This dissertation explores the literary representations of illness rather than disease, and patients' sufferings rather than physical symptoms and diagnosis. More importantly, since Ming-Qing authors made a sustained effort to represent the individual emotions and experiences of illness, as well as humane and inhumane responses to the illness from the patient's family and social relations, we can conclude that these vernacular stories reflect the humanization of medicine, transforming the typology of patients in non-fictional medical narrative into various descriptions of patients as "whole persons."

Narrative medicine, defined as medicine practiced with the narrative competence to recognize, absorb, interpret, and be moved by the stories of illness, has opened up new approaches in medical education.[362] According to Rita Charon, if doctors are eager to know "what patients endure at the hands of illness and therefore to be of clinical help," they should "enter the worlds of their patients, if only imaginatively, and to see and interpret these worlds from the patients' point of view."[363] Fictional medical narratives provide a great many patients' stories, which can help doctors acquire a better understanding of identity crises and the reconstruction of social life their patients may go through in the course of their physical illness, and get a clear sense of how the representation of sickness reflects contemporary understanding of the social meanings of illness in a unique way not found in medical texts. As medical humanities is closely linked to newer reforms of medical education that address the impersonal quality of relationships between patients and health care professionals, this kind of learning will contribute to their practice as healthcare professionals and will help them form closer relationships with their patients.

The study of fictional medical narrative in pre-modern China has a considerable potential to develop in the future. This dissertation mainly focuses on how short stories handle relatively

[361] Thomas R. Cole, Nathan S. Carlin, Ronald A. Carson, *Medical Humanities: An introduction* (New York: Cambridge press, 2015), 8
[362] Rita Charon, *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 4.
[363] Ibid., 9.

simple medical narratives, although full-length novels are sometimes used to provide examples. As the most famous novel in Chinese literary history, *Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢 epitomizes a peak of fictional medical narratives. This dissertation looks at how Wang Xifeng's 王熙鳳 sickness affects the power structure in the Jia family, and how her physical condition symbolizes the rise and decline of the Jia family.[364] Also, sickness of *qing* plays a key role in characterizing its three protagonists, Jia Baoyu 賈寶玉, Lin Daiyu 林黛玉, and Xue Baochai 薛寶釵, whose experiences of illness and healing symbolize a kind of deviance and the submission to social norms. Chapter 29 of the novel indicates that Baoyu has been deplorably eccentric since childhood and that Daiyu is eccentric as well. They are kindred spirits but cannot articulate these feelings. According to Martin Huang, Baoyu is able to postpone public judgment, such as whether he can achieve success in an official or literati career, because of his perceived youth and the claim that he is still a young child.[365] Correspondingly, all the girls except Li Wan living in the Grand View Garden are still in their youth. In other words, they have not entered the world of adults symbolized by marriage. Therefore, Baoyu always feels sad once he has realized the truth that his sisters will one day marry and leave the garden. Daiyu and Baochai have both had in them the beginnings or "root" of illness (*binggen* 病根) since they were born. And both of them encountered a monk, who gave them different prescriptions. However, Daiyu does not follow his prescription but enters the Jia family, while Baochai makes up the prescription of cold fragrance pills (*lengxiangwan* 冷香丸) and is eventually healed by this medicine. Perhaps Daiyu's root of illness is deeper, so that no medication can address her *qing*. The only way for her to avoid tragedy is to keep her distance from the Jia family, and especially from Baoyu. A symptom of her illness, hotness, is described in Chapter 34 of the novel. After she writes three

[364] Chapter 2
[365] Martin W. Huang, *Desire and Fictional Narrative in Late Imperial China*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2001), 279.

poems on the handkerchiefs sent by Baoyu, her entire body is hot and her flushed cheeks are redder than peach blossoms. Daiyu's illness would appear to be caused by a congenital tendency toward overheatedness (*redu* 熱毒). The latter is explicitly identified as the cause of Baochai's illness. But where Baochai is cured by her cold fragrance pills, Daiyu does not and cannot heal. Daiyu dies before becoming an adult, while Baochai grows up safely and marries Baoyu. Chapter 42 shows that although Baochai read improper books such as *the Western Chamber* (*Xixiang ji* 西廂記) when she was seven and eight years old, she came to understand the dictates of women's morality after her elders stopped her and burnt the books. She gives up these books and submits to the adult world and its expectations for women. This transformation implies a process of healing and a reorientation to social norms. Although Baoyu has to get married, he still refuses to submit to the adult world and eventually leaves his home and becomes a monk. The contribution of the experience of illness and the metaphor of illness to the characters' identity-formation in full-length novels bears further exploration in light of the phenomena observed in shorter vernacular fiction.

Although pre-modern Chinese vernacular fiction may serve as a substantial resource for our understanding of medical narratives in modern Chinese literature, the connection has not yet been explored. In the nineteenth century, when Western medicine was introduced to China and first exerted a profound influence, its intersection with traditional Chinese medicine challenged authors' knowledge paradigms and also changed the style and convention of fictional medical narratives. I will continue my research by considering questions such as: How did the two kinds of medical system interact in medical narratives? How did authors take in new medical concepts as a part of their knowledge base to produce medical narratives? How did these changes affect narrative method, the plotting of vernacular fiction, and the metaphorical meaning of sickness?

And perhaps most importantly, what does fictional medical narrative tell us about the relationship between literature and society?

Appendix: Notes on Major Textual Sources

1. Medical Sources

For this dissertation, I consult professional medical texts about traditional Chinese medical history, focusing on some representative theoretical books and medical cases in the Ming-Qing period. Here, I introduce some examples of them.

1) The *Inner Canon of the Yellow Lord* (*Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經) [366] has been considered the fundamental doctrinal source in traditional Chinese medicine, which is "comparable to that of the Hippocratic writings in ancient Europe."[367] It consists of two texts: *The Basic Questions* (*Suwen* 素問), which covers the fundamental theories, and *The Numinous Spindle* (*Lingshu* 靈樞), which discusses acupuncture therapy in detail. In the 20th century, the work was generally dated to between the late Warring States period (475-221 BCE) and the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE).[368] This work was first mentioned in the bibliographical chapter of *The History of the Han Dynasty* (*Hanshu yiwenzhi* 漢書 藝文志). Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐

[366] Wang Bing 王冰, ed., *Huangdi neijing* 黃帝內經 (Beijing: Zhongyi guji chubanshe, 2003).
[367] Paul U. Unschuld, *Huangdi neijing suwen: Nature, Knowledge, Imagery in an Ancient Chinese Medical Text*, (Berkeley: University of California Press. 2003), ix.
[368] David Keegan, the first Western scholar to write a dissertation on the structure and origin of *Suwen*, believed that the language and ideas in all the versions of *Neijing* were composed between 400 BCE and 260 CE. See Unschuld, *Huangdi neijing suwen*, 1–3.

(215-282) was the earliest known person to have produced a standard version in 18 volumes (*juan* 卷). In the Tang Dynasty, Wang Bing (王冰, ca. 710-804) revised *Neijing*, and published a new, annotated edition titled *Huangdi neijing suwen* 黃帝內經素問 in 24 volumes, around 762. Wang Bing's edition was revised again and accepted as an official edition in the Song dynasty.[369] This edition was also accepted and annotated by many physicians and scholars in the Jin, Yuan, Ming, and Qing dynasties.

2) *The Treatise on Cold Damage Disorders* (*Shanghan lun* 傷寒論 or *Shanghan zabing lun* 傷寒雜病論) was compiled by Zhang Ji 張機 (courtesy name Zhang Zhongjing 張仲景, ca. 150-219) at the end of the Han dynasty.[370] Because of the social chaos after the collapse of the Han Dynasty, some parts of this work have been lost. Wang Shuhe 王叔和 (210-258), a chief court doctor in the Jin Dynasty, collected the rest of *Shanghan lun* and divided it into two books: *Shanghan lun* and *Jinkui yaolue* 金匱要略. In the Song Dynasty, both of these were first published in 1065 under the title *Shanghan lun*. *Shanghan lun* is a canonical work in traditional Chinese medicine because Zhang Ji not only summarized previous medical theories, but also provided a systematic method of diagnosis (*bianzheng* 辯症) and specific treatments. The prescriptions recorded in *Shanghan lun* were called "classic prescriptions" (*jingfang* 經方) in the Ming-Qing period.

3) *The Origins and Symptoms of All Diseases* (*Zhubing yuanhou lun* 諸病源候論 or *Chaoshi zhubing yuanhou lun* 巢氏諸病源候論) was compiled by Chao Yuanfang 巢元方 around 610

[369] The title of the edition in the Song dynasty is *A New Annotated Edition of Huangdi neijing suwen* (*Chongguangbuzhu Huangdi neijing suwen* 重广补注黄帝内经素问).
[370] Zhang Ji, *Shanghan lun*, in *Yingyin wenyuange sikuquanshu* 影印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taibei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1986), v. 734.

CE. This work includes 50 volumes and is the first monograph on etiology and pathology in traditional Chinese medicine.[371]

4) *Danxi's Mind Methods* (*Danxi xinfa* 丹溪心法) was written by Zhu Zhengheng's 朱震亨 (courtesy name Zhu Danxi, 1281-1358) students in the Yuan Dynasty and was first published in 1481.[372] This book collected Zhu's major medical theories and practices, which had a profound influence during the Ming-Qing era.

5) *Famous Doctors' Classified Cases* (*Mingyi lei'an* 名醫類案) was compiled by Jiang Guan 江瓘 (1503-1565) in the Ming Dynasty and was first published in 1552. It was revised and reprinted in the Qianlong period (1735-1796) by Wei Zhixiu 魏之琇 (1722-1772). This work was the first casebook that used the term "case" (*an* 案) in its title and was edited according to different categories of diseases.

6) *Zhangshi's Treatise on General Medicine* (*Zhangshi yitong* 張氏醫通) was written by Zhuang Lu 張璐 (1617- ca. 1700) in 1695 and printed after the author's death. [373] This is a comprehensive medical book that included a wealth of knowledge of internal medicine, surgery, ophthalmology, pediatrics, otolaryngology, and gynecology. Under every category of disease, Zhang Lu citied many famous doctors' discussions, and also provided comments based on his own practice.

7) *Compendium of Materia Medica* (*Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目) was compiled by Li Shizhen 李時珍 (1518-1593) and first printed in 1596.[374] This work includes 1,892 entries along with

[371] Chao Yuanfang 巢元方, *Chaoshi zhubing yuanhou lun* 巢氏諸病源候論, in *Yingyin wenyuange sikuquanshu* 影印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taibei: Guoli gugong bowuyuan, 1986), v.734.
[372] Zhu Zhenheng 朱震亨, *Zhu Danxi yixue quanshu* 朱丹溪醫學全書, Tian Sisheng 田思勝 ed. (Beijing: Zhongguo zhongyiyao chubanshe, 2006).
[373] Zhang Lu 張璐, *Zhangshi yitong* 張氏醫通 (Beijing: Zhongguo zhongyiyao chubanshe, 1995).
[374] Li Shizhen 李時珍, *Bencao gangmu* 本草綱目, in *Yingyin wenyuange sikuquanshu* 影印文淵閣四庫全書 (Taibei: Guoli

illustrations. It made a great contribution to traditional Chinese medicine because it not only corrected mistakes and misunderstandings of the nature of herbs in previous medical literature, but also developed the taxonomy of herbs and animals in Chinese medicine.

8) *Huixi's Medical Cases* (*Huixi yi'an* 洄溪醫案)[375] was compiled by Xu Dachun 徐大椿 (1693-1771) at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty and was first printed in 1855. The cases included in this book focused on internal medicine and kept Xu's many insightful opinions about treatments.

9) *Compendium of Benefits to Women* (*Jiyin gangmu* 濟陰綱目)[376] was compiled by Wu Zhiwang 武之望 (1552-1629) and first printed in five volumes in 1620. Wang Qi 汪琪 reprinted it in 1665 with 1430 comments and edited it into 14 volumes. This work summarized previous *fuke* 婦科 theories and was one of the most famous monographs of gynecology in traditional Chinese medicine.

10) *Golden Mirror for Medicine (Yizong jinjian* 醫宗金鑒) was compiled in 1742 by Wu Qian 吳謙 (1689-1748) and Liu Yuduo 劉裕鐸(1686-1757) in accordance with Emperor Qianlong's decree.[377] It summarized almost all the representative theories of traditional Chinese medicine before the 18th century. After publication, it became one of the most important medical textbook for students and exerted a considerable influence in northern China.

2. Fictional Sources

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gugong bowuyuan, 1986), v.772–774.

[375] Xu Dachun 徐大椿, *Huixi yi'an* 洄溪醫案 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2002).

[376] Wu Zhiwang 武之望, *Jiyin gangmu* 濟陰綱目 (Beijing: Keji weisheng chubanshe, 1985).

[377] Wu Qian 吳謙, *Yizong jinjian* 醫宗金鑒 (Beijng: Remin weisheng chubanshe, 1990).

1) *Three Words* (*Sanyan* 三言), including *Stories to Instruct the World* (*Yushi mingyan* 喻世明言, aka *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說),[378] *Stories to Caution the World* (*Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言),[379] and *Stories to Awaken the World (Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言),[380] was the collective name of three collections of short stories edited by Feng Menglong 馮夢龍 (1574-1646). Each collection has forty stories. Those stories were probably completed at the beginning of the Tianqi 天啟 era (1621-1627) in the Ming Dynasty. Hanan pointed out that Feng himself wrote 22 of the stories in total, nineteen in *Yushi mingyan* and three in *Jingshi tongyan*. He also considered Feng the possible author of thirteen stories in *Jingshi tongyan*.[381] *Yushi mingyan* was first published around 1621, *Jingshi tongyan* in 1624, *Xingshi hengyan* in 1627.

2) *Two Slaps (Erpai* 二拍), including *Slapping the Table in Amazement (Paian jingqi* 拍案驚奇)[382] and *Slapping the Table in Amazement II (Erke paian jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇),[383] was edited and composed by Ling Mengchu 凌濛初 (1580-1644). *Paian jingqi* is considered the first collection of vernacular stories created by a literatus independently. It was published by Shangyoutang 尚友堂 in 1628. *Erke paian jingqi* was first published in 1632. Unfortunately, its original version is no longer extant. The extant version is a later reprint by Shangyoutang.

3) *Words as a Model for the World (Xingshiyan* 型世言) is another important collection of short stories.[384] It was attributed to Lu Renlong 陸人龍 and was first published with Lu Yunlong's 陸雲龍 comments around 1632. This collection includes forty stories.

[378] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Gujin xiaoshuo* 古今小說 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1958).
[379] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Xingshi hengyan* 醒世恆言 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1991).
[380] Feng Menglong 馮夢龍, *Jingshi tongyan* 警世通言 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2009).
[381] Patrick Hanan, *The Chinese Vernacular Story* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981), 104.
[382] Ling Mengchu 淩濛初, *Paian jingqi* 拍案驚奇 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1991).
[383] Ling Mengchu 淩濛初, *Erke pai'an jingqi* 二刻拍案驚奇 (Wuhan: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1996).
[384] Lu Renlong 陸人龍, *Xingshiyan* 型世言 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993).

4) *The Stone Awakened from Drunkenness (Zuixingshi* 醉醒石) includes fifteen short stories that were composed by Donglu Gukuangsheng 東魯古狂生.[385] The author's real name is unknown. This collection was completed and published at the beginning of the Qing Dynasty.

5) *A Country Codger's Words of Exposure (Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言) is a full-length novel in 152 chapters that was composed by Xia Jingqu 夏敬渠 during the Qianlong era period.[386] The title originates from *Liezi* 列子, which tells of a poor farmer who basks in the sun to warm himself during winter. He considers it a good way to keep warm and wants to tell the emperor in order to receive a reward. The allusion of "being a countryman suggests exposure to the sun"(yeren xianpu 野人獻曝) is used as a modest expression indicating one's shallow but sincere words. It was first circulated in handwritten copies and later published in 1881.

6) *Romance with a Fox (Huliyuan* 狐狸緣) was attributed to Zuiyue shanren 醉月山人,[387] whose real name is unknown. This novel has twenty two chapters and was published by Dunhoutang 敦厚堂 in 1888.

7) *Parallel Words of Waking and Dreaming (Xingmeng pianyan* 醒夢駢言)[388] is a collection of vernacular stories which were adapted from twelve classical tales in *Liaozhai's Records of the Strange (Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異).[389] The editor's pseudonym is Puya zhuren 蒲崖主人. His real name is not known. The first version was printed by Jiashixuan 稼史軒 during the Qing dynasty, but the publication date is not indicated. It is not a pure translation from the classical language to vernacular. The editor also changed several main figures' names and some plots.

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[385] Donglu Gukuangsheng 東魯古狂生, *Zuixingshi* 醉醒石 (Zhenzhou: Zhongzhou guji chubanshe, 1985).
[386] Xia Jingqu 夏敬渠, *Yesou puyan* 野叟曝言 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004).
[387] Zhuiyue Shanren 醉月山人, *Huli yuan* 狐狸緣 (Beijing: Beijing Shifan daxue chubanshe, 1992).
[388] Puya zhuren 蒲崖主人, *Xingmeng pianyan* 醒夢駢言, in Editorial board of *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* 古本小說集成編委會, comp. and ed., *Guben xiaoshuo jicheng* 古本小說集成 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1994).
[389] Pu Songling 蒲松齡, *Liaozhai zhiyi* 聊齋誌異 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2012).

8) *The Second Collection of West Lake* (*Xihu erji* 西湖二集) is a collection of vernacular short stories attributed to Zhou Qingyuan 周清源.[390] It includes 34 stories about West Lake, and was published during the Chongzhen 崇禎 era (1628-1644). Its title and content implied that there should be another collection titled *The First Collection of West Lake* (*Xihu yiji* 西湖一集). Unfortunately, *Xihu yiji* was lost.

9) *An Idle Commentary on Monsters* (*Taowu xianping* 梼杌闲评) was composed in 1644 and was published sometime during the Kangxi 康熙 (1662-1722) and Yongzheng 雍正 (1723-1735) eras with sixteen illustrations.[391] The author is unknown.

10) *A Sequel of Stories to Awaken the World (Erke xingshi hengyan* 二刻醒世恆言) is a collection of twenty-four short stories in the Qing Dynasty.[392] It is attributed to Xinyuan zhuren 心遠主人, whose real name is unknown. The earliest extant edition was published in 1726.

11) *Silent Dramas (Wusheng xi* 無聲戲) is a collection of twelve vernacular short stories attributed to Li Yu 李漁 (1611-1680).[393] The extant edition was printed during the Shunzhi 順治 (1644-1661) era, which is kept in the Zunjingge 尊經閣 library in Japan. It also includes twelve illustrations, and some commentaries at the end of each story.

12) *The Plum in the Golden Vase* (*Jingpingmei* 金瓶梅) is a full-length novel with 100 chapters.[394] The author's pseudonym is Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng 蘭陵笑笑生, but his real name is unknown. The manuscript of this book began to be circulated among literati as early as 1592. There are two editions printed in the Ming Dynasty. One is titled *Xinke Jinpingmei*

[390] Zhou Qingyuan 周清源, *Xihu erji* 西湖二集 (Beijing: Renmen wenxue chubanshe, 1989).
[391] Anon., *Taowu xianping* 檮杌閑評 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2005).
[392] Xinyuan zhuren 心遠主人, *Erke xingshi hengyan* 二刻醒世恒言 (Beijing: Beijing daxue chubanshe, 1990).
[393] Li Yu 李漁, *Wusheng xi* 無聲戲 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 2006).
[394] Lanling Xiaoxiaosheng 蘭陵笑笑生, *Jinpingmei cihua* 金瓶梅詞話 (Beijing: Renmin wenxue chubanshe, 1985).

cihua 新刻金瓶梅詞話, which was printed during the Wanli 萬曆 (1572-1620) era. The other is titled *Xinke xiuxiang piping Jinpingmei* 新刻繡像批評金瓶梅, which includes illustrations and commentaries. It was published during the Chongzhen era. In the Qing Dynasty, there was another important edition published in 1695 with Zhang Zhupo's 張竹坡 commentary.

13) *Dream of the Red Chamber* (*Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢) is the most famous novel in Chinese literary history.[395] The first 80 chapters were written by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹 (1715-1763), and the last 40 chapters were completed by Cheng Weiyuan 程偉元 (1745-1819) and Gao E 高鶚 (1758-1815). During Cao Xueqin's life time, the first 80 chapters were not printed. They were circulated in manuscript form and titled *The Story of the Stone* (*Shitouji* 石頭記) with commentaries including one by Zhiyanzhai 脂硯齋, known as the *Zhiben* 脂本. There are eight editions of the *Zhiben* according to the dates of the handwritten copies. In 1791, Cheng and Gao collected different versions of handwritten copies and sequels and first published *Honglou meng* in 1791. In the next year, they revised the first edition and republished it. These two editions are called *Cheng jiaben* 程甲本 and *Cheng yiben* 程乙本. In addition, there are also two handwritten copies that mixed the first 80 chapters from the *Zhiben* and the last 40 chapter from the *Cheng jiaben*. They are called the *Yangben* 楊本 and *Mengben* 蒙本.

14) *Orchid Fragrance in the Grove (Lin lan xiang* 林蘭香) is a full-length novel with 64 chapters composed in the Qing Dynasty.[396] The title consists of three characters respectively from Geng Lang's 耿朗 three wives and concubines. The author's pseudonym is Suiyuan

[395] Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹, *Hongloumeng* 紅樓夢 (Beijing: Renmin chubanshe, 2005). David Hawkes and John Minford ed. and trans., *The Story of the Stone*, vols. 1–5 (New York: Penguin, 1973–1986).
[396] Suiyuanxiashi 隨緣下士, *Lin lan xiang* 林蘭香 (Shengyang: Chunfeng wenyi chubanshe, 1985).

xiashi 隨緣下士 but his real name is unknown. The earliest extant edition was published in 1838. This novel was republished in 1847 and 1878.

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